



Civil Aviation Authority
SAFETY NOTICE
Number: SN-2021/002



Version 2 Issued: 23 February 2023

General Considerations for Managing Distractions During Aviation Activities

This Safety Notice contains recommendations regarding operational safety.

Recipients must ensure that this Notice is copied to all members of their staff who need to take appropriate action or who may have an interest in the information (including any 'in-house' or contracted maintenance organisations and relevant outside contractors).

Applicability:	
Aerodromes:	All Aerodrome Operators All Ground Handling Organisations
Air Traffic:	All ATS
Airspace:	Not primarily affected
Airworthiness:	All Airworthiness Organisations
Flight Operations:	All AOC, NCC and SPO Holders
Licensed/Unlicensed Personnel:	ATO and Registered Facilities

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this Safety Notice is to support the industry to find ways to avoid or mitigate distractions when they happen. It should be read alongside [SN 2020/11 on Human Factors](#).
- 1.2 Distractions to people are common in the working environment and have been noted as a contributing human factor in many safety events across all areas of the industry. Distractions may be even more likely as the industry recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic because normal workflows may have been changed or disrupted. See below: [Distractions are a performance influencing factor \(PIF\)](#).

2 Safety Concern

- 2.1 It is likely that workflows for many people in all parts of the aviation industry will be changed or disrupted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was raised in SN 2020/11 and further guidance for the industry was considered useful.
- 2.2 Distractions in the current situation may occur due to many reasons including change in workflows and staffing, concern around health and / or wellbeing of self or others, and financial pressures on both individuals and organisations. At times it may be possible to avoid distractions, however it is more likely that they will need to be mitigated when they occur. The

approach to understanding and mitigating distractions should be developed from a systems perspective rather than expecting this risk to be solely managed by individuals.

- 2.3 The infographic included in below provides strategies for dealing with distractions. The link to the higher resolution PDF of the graphic is included [here](#).

3 Further Information

- 3.1 Further useful information to support the management of human factors can be found at the CAA Human Factors web pages www.caa.co.uk/humanfactors.

- 3.2 EASA Guidance is also available:

[TE - Report \(europa.eu\)](#)

4 Queries

- 4.1 Any queries or requests for further guidance as a result of this communication should be addressed to the Organisation's CAA assigned oversight team in the first instance.
- 4.2 Otherwise, queries should be addressed to the Human Factors team at: human.factors@caa.co.uk.

5 Cancellation

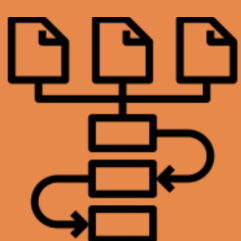
- 5.1 This Safety Notice will remain in force until further notice.

DISTRACTIONS

Managing and mitigating options for everyone in the aviation system



Check Workflows



Wherever possible structure workflows and manage priorities to avoid distracting people - especially during critical tasks. Aim to complete critical tasks early in a work shift when people are at their most alert. If this is not possible, consider support options such as breaks, help from others and cross-checking. Designate others to deal with 'pop up' tasks to avoid distracting people doing critical tasks. For those working electronically, use digital tools such as email rules to limit distractions. Managers have a responsibility to help set suitable workflows.

Communicate about priorities

Early and continuous communication between colleagues and organisations about priorities and task flows is helpful. Prior planning for emergencies or urgent situations can provide an immediate focus if a distraction occurs. Communicating with families and loved ones about priorities for sleep, and deferring non-urgent personal issues until after work can be helpful.



Avoid Interruptions



Avoid interrupting people working on a critical task unless there is an urgent safety issue. If you need to interrupt them, give them time to back-track to regain their workflow, and consider adding an additional check at the end of the task. In dynamic situations, help them to re-start their task by providing critical information to aid awareness. Organisations should support people who need to stop or defer a task for safety reasons.

Monitor your own wellbeing

Starting work refreshed and alert is important, and the fitter you are the better you may be able to prevent and deal with distractions. Reach out to company and personal supports if you need help to manage any aspect of your wellbeing. Organisations should maintain an open dialogue with employees about how best to support wellbeing, with signposting to sources of help and advice as appropriate.



If you are distracted



Whenever possible take your time getting back into your task, consider taking a break. If working on a checklist or process go back to the last step you remember, or if you can't remember re-start the process. Have someone else cross-check your work. Prepare for dynamic situations with clear safety goals (for example the 'Aviate Navigate Communicate' priorities used by flight crew).

Feedback

Ensure safety reporting tools have a way to capture distractions and their impact, to feed into your ongoing safety and resource management systems. If you notice that a colleague is distracted, help them to mitigate the effects or seek further support.

