

Avoiding collisions – a monthly update from Director UK Airprox Board giving some learning themes for recreational pilots.

The December Airprox Board meeting assessed 11 drone/UAV reports and 10 aircraft-to-aircraft incidents. Of these, 10 were assessed as risk bearing (4 x Category A and 6 x Category B) although 6 of these risk-bearing incidents involved drones. The main themes discussed this month were: late-sightings/non-sightings in 5 events; poor airmanship decisions in 4 incidents; and 2 Airprox involving pilot inaction on detecting or being informed of a conflict situation. Both of these latter incidents could have been avoided by a little pro-active defensive flying rather than relying on seeing the other aircraft or assuming that the other pilot would give way - other pilots can only do this if they have seen you and so relying on this is a flawed plan. Also on this theme, a circling helicopter often denotes either ambulance/rescue or police activity where their pilots may be focused on tracking activity on the ground or preparing to land or winch casualties; do give them a wide berth because they may unexpectedly change their flight path and may not necessarily be aware of you in the vicinity. Most police and ambulance/rescue helicopters are fitted with TCAS/TAS equipment these days, so please also fly with your transponder on and with Mode C/Alt selected; this will give them (and others) valuable situational awareness of traffic in their vicinity as they conduct their tasking.

My **Airprox of the month** this month reflects this situation. **Airprox 2016160** was a Category C incident involving a police EC135 helicopter and an EV97 that came into proximity near Weston-super-Mare. The EC135 was on task and orbiting at about 1000ft under a Basic Service from Bristol. The EV97 was listening out on Bristol's frequency and squawking their listening-out transponder code. The EV97 pilot saw the EC135 and was monitoring it to assess its motion but did not expect it to turn towards him. For his part, the EC135 pilot received a late TCAS alert and initiated a rapid descending turn, during which the crewman saw the EV97. The Board focused on the fact that the EV97 pilot had continued pretty much on track and commented that, depending on how his orbit unfolded, the police helicopter may well have been required to give way to the EV97 but the police pilot had not seen it. They said that the EV97 pilot would have been better served by avoiding the orbiting EC135 by a good margin on the assumption that its flight path would be unpredictable in that its crew might be task-focused in looking at the ground area and responding to the unfolding incident below. The full report can be found on the UKAB website at (www.airproxboard.org.uk) in the 'Airprox Reports and Analysis' section within the appropriate year in the 'Individual Airprox reports' tab.

