

GA1364

Posted on 15.05.2024 by Steve Forward

Category: [General Aviation](#)

Report Title Airspace infringement

Initial Report

I would like to 'own up' in the interests of preventing a similar occurrence. I readied my [aircraft type] from my home airfield for a 45min cross-country flight to visit a friend for lunch, somewhat tight on time. PPR was rapidly completed and the task was entered into my SkyDemon with a plan to fly under [Airport] TMZ at 1300ft QNH.

Start up and checks were carried out as normal and, as I taxied to the hold point, I glanced back at the syndicate SkyEcho 2 stuck on the rear passenger window that I'd switched on during the pre-flight. It was now indicating flat and out of battery. My own SkyEcho was sitting on the rear seat in its case and, to save undoing my straps and fixing mine onto the mount, when I stopped for power checks I reached across, pulled the syndicate mount from the window, attached my own SkyEcho and, for ease, placed it on the window next to the empty right-hand seat. It was functioning perfectly and, after final checks, I took off and headed for the TMZ, trimmed for my planned 1300ft transit. I put [Airport] on frequency and squawked their listening squawk, entering the TMZ at 1300ft, 200ft below the height limit of 1500ft.

All went well for a few minutes until, very suddenly, my SkyEcho dropped off the window, bounced off the front of the seat squab and disappeared out of sight up towards the rudder pedals. My immediate reaction was to try and retrieve it ASAP, concerned about a potential control jam. After loosening my straps and trying to reach it, I ended up having to remove my headset, undo my straps and lean into the footwell with my left hand on the stick. Success, or so I thought... As soon as I put my headset back on, I got a call from [Airport] telling me I was busting their airspace by 300' and I replied that I would exit as quickly as possible, which I did. It was a turbulent, thermic day and without doubt I'd managed to climb despite being what I thought was trimmed correctly at the start of the cruise. The rest of the flight was uneventful except for a cursing pilot over his misdemeanour, terrified of the consequences. The emails started to arrive a week later and I served out my retraining requirement, rightfully dished out by the CAA a month later.

Lessons Learned: This was entirely my fault and completely preventable. Firstly, I should have stopped the aircraft before taking off, removed the SkyEcho and replaced it with mine and put it back on the rear window. I could also have flown without it of course, but that's not a preferred option. Secondly, when the instrument fell, I should have contacted [Airport] immediately,

explained I'd had a malfunction and asked for more clearance to sort the problem out. I did neither of course and rightfully paid the price.

Comment

This is another frank and open report for which we thank the reporter in altruistically airing their dirty washing for the benefit of all to highlight an incident that was not their finest hour.

So, in addition to the reporter's own thoughts, what else can we all learn from this incident? Firstly, although the reporter is to be commended for using EC equipment as an aid to collision avoidance, as CHIRP has commented before (see previous report [GA1309](#)), if positioning removable items of equipment within the cockpit then best practice is to ensure that they are secured to something with a lanyard such that if they do fall down they do not foul the controls or end up in a difficult place to retrieve as was the case in this instance; in this respect, [EASA CS-STAN CS-SC105b](#) refers, stating: *"If suction mounts are used inside the cockpit or cabin, a suitable secondary retaining lanyard or strap should be attached to the unit to prevent any damage or a control jam if the primary suction mount becomes detached"*, and gives other guidance on suction mounts and fixing removable items in the cockpit. Also, suction mounts should be checked for security before flight, especially in hot temperatures when any air in the suction mount can expand and cause the mount to fall off.

The first priority in such circumstances is, of course, to prioritise flying the aircraft and ensure its safety but we also agree with the reporter's assessment that it would have been better to have informed ATC of their problem before trying to retrieve their fallen SkyEcho (having hopefully trimmed the aircraft to ensure straight-and-level flight first). There appears to be a general reluctance to talk to ATC for fear of appearing a fool when, in reality, there are many benefits in doing so even in normal flight circumstances; controllers really are quite friendly folk who would rather help at an early stage than help pick up the pieces afterwards. We accept that R/T is in effect a different language that has to be learned, and some people are reluctant to use the radio for fear of getting it wrong, but if in doubt just use plain language to express your problem rather than keeping quiet because you can't think of the right words to say. Those who were trained at or regularly use establishments with ATC are likely more proficient and accustomed to talking to controllers. This is something that instructors at non-ATC units could usefully bear in mind in order to ensure that their students (and, dare we say, themselves) gain as much exposure to ATC as possible so that some of the fear is dispelled and people become comfortable with talking on the radio.

Key Issues

The following 'Dirty Dozen' Human Factors elements were a key part of the CHIRP discussions about this report and are intended to provide food for thought when considering aspects that might be pertinent in similar circumstances.

- **Resources** – did not attach the SkyEcho using a lanyard.
- **Distraction** – retrieving the fallen SkyEcho.
- **Communication** – did not inform ATC of the problem before retrieving the SkyEcho.
- **Deviation** – did not properly secure the SkyEcho before take-off.

lack_of_resourcesResources

distractionDistraction

poor_communicationCommunication

normalisation_of_deviationDeviation



