

Training – Transmitter “Challenges”

In this Training Column back in March, we talked about the advances in transmitters over the years and further “bragged” about all the advantages of the new 2.4 GHz systems and we listed the major ones. One item on that list in particular is worth further discussion because while it remains true, there is a situation or “challenge” which has come to light that can lead to a **serious issue** for new and experienced pilots alike. I refer to the advantage we listed which said: “No other type device can interfere with your connection to your plane”. Yes, but.....what I would like to add to this discussion now is that **we as pilots (constructors of our planes and operators of the transmitters) CAN interfere with the connection to our planes if we are not very careful! It can happen ever so easily and produce troublesome results!** For this reason, it is both a safety issue **and a training issue!** It is something worth learning right from the very beginning.

In the last issue (June issue) of the “Pilot Talk” newsletter, our club President, John Backes explained the issue as clearly as I think it can be explained, so we will **repeat here** what John said and then I will tell a true story. John also explained the issue to those present at the June club meeting and because it is so important, we will focus on it again in this column. Here is what John said in the last issue of Pilot Talk:

“Possible 2.4 GHz radio challenges

I was originally going to title this “Possible 2.4 GHz radio problems” but that is too strong. Most of the 2.4 GHz radios have a failsafe function built in and the fail safe is set to wherever the sticks are when you bind the receiver. After you have properly set up the airplane, you need to reset the fail safe. On some radios that means rebinding the receiver, on others there is a separate fail safe procedure. Failure to properly set the fail safe could cause problems. The biggest problem would be if the throttle is set to full and you inadvertently turn off the radio at the end of flight. On some radios the throttle trim is right next to the on/off switch and I know several people have accidentally turned off the transmitter while trying to kill the engine. If the fail safe is incorrectly set, the plane will go immediately to full throttle and is pointed into the pits.”

Your humble “Training Coordinator” can speak to this issue as well as most people because as owner of one of the earliest 2.4 GHz systems in the area, I have actually had this problem happen myself and it was more the fault of the pilot (as radio installer and operator of the transmitter) than the radio system itself. Perhaps we can all learn from “how” it happened. Let me briefly tell the story.

It was a beautiful day and I was flying my plane fairly well and trying new things. One of our other club members was flying a relatively new plane and he and I were the only two pilots. All of a sudden I heard him voice major distress and WHAM, his plane hit the ground just about ten feet from my pilot station. I glanced but kept focus on my plane and decided to land to help console him and perhaps help pick up the pieces. As I taxied back toward the pits I cut the throttle in the usual place and rushed over to “shut it off”. As I was walking I reached for the throttle “trim” to cut the engine, but in my rush I skipped that step and cut off the power switch

right next to the trim. About two seconds later, the engine went wide-open and the plane accelerated with amazing speed right into the second fence line (right toward the pits) and smashed into one of the fence poles. The result was one badly broken wing and one broken prop along with some other minor damage.

The good news is that no one was taxiing out, or standing or walking in the area and so no one was hurt by the runaway plane, but I am sure you all can see the potential for injury this situation represents!!!

And so the purpose of this month's column is to add an important item to the list of things a new pilot must think about and do. Let's just restate part of what John said: "**After you have properly set up the airplane, you need to reset the fail safe. On some radios that means rebinding the receiver, on others there is a separate fail safe procedure.**" That is the most important lesson, but a secondary consideration is to work hard to train yourself to never turn off your transmitter without first cutting off the engine.

If John's message and the content of this column prevent just one injury it will have been very worthwhile. If the explanation of the problem is not clear, please discuss it with a member of the training staff or other experienced club member.

Until next time; remember to try something new each time you fly.

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