

VOLCANIC AIR SAFARIS LTD

Trading as



Marine Safety Awareness

In certain areas of New Zealand, floatplane operate on areas of water which are also used by other marine vessels.

The purpose of this handout is to inform you, the mariner, of floatplane practices and their interface with you and other waterway users.

Common questions asked of floatplane operators include:

- Why are floatplanes permitted in water areas with other boats?
- How does a floatplane pilot determine a take-off or landing direction?
- Who has right of way on the water?
- Can a floatplane manoeuvre effectively on the water?
- Should a conventional (power or sail) vessel manoeuvre to avoid a floatplane?
- How can I help with a floatplane in the vicinity?
- Where can I get more information?

Permission For Floatplane Operations

floatplanes operate in several areas of New Zealand. They are permitted to operate in any area where a conventional power boat is also allowed, but special approval is sometimes required to allow floatplane to operate on waterways otherwise restricted to sail craft.

Take-Off And Landing Directions

Almost all aircraft are designed to operate best when taking off or landing into the wind. This is because the wind provides 'free' airspeed – the aircraft needs a certain speed to lift off and a headwind assists in this process. On a similar basis, aircraft also land into the wind, as they will then touch down at a slower speed relative to the water surface, resulting in less 'impact' on landing. Most aircraft can also take off or land either across the wind or even downwind, but these types of take-offs and landings are generally less common and can only happen on light wind days. Because of this a floatplane does not have a set runway when taking off or landing, but will still abide by marine law, i.e. 200m away from the shore, 50m away from another vessel above 5knots

Right Of Way On The Water

When a floatplane is taxiing on the water it is considered a power-driven vessel and normal right of way rules apply. For take-off and landing, under marine regulations applying in New Zealand no person navigating a vessel (including for example windsurfers and kite boards) shall impede a floatplane in the process of landing and take-off. Although this is law, a floatplane pilot will not continue with landing or take-off procedures unless they have first determined that the path is clear and will remain clear of boats.

Can A Floatplane Manoeuvre On The Water?

floatplanes are often described as fairly poorly designed boats; however, they can manoeuvre quite effectively on the water, either when taxiing slowly or at speed. One training exercise requires the pilot to turn the floatplane in circles, slowly and quickly! The aircraft achieves these turns by the use of small rudders or by the use of the aircraft's 'air' control surfaces when moving more quickly. In strong winds it is often more difficult to turn the aircraft downwind, as its streamlined shape gives least resistance when pointed into wind, hence it does not like turning away from a strong breeze. When this occurs, the pilot will often undertake a controlled drift downwind and use the aircraft's engine to 'tack' across the breeze.

Should Another Vessel Manoeuvre To Avoid A Floatplane?

As regards 'right of way' rules on the water, treat a floatplane as you would any other power boat and manoeuvre accordingly. Common sense applies in most instances. The floatplane pilot will be expecting you to act as if he was just another power boat. In most instances it will be sufficient to just continue what you are doing – so long as this isn't going to bring you into an imminent collision situation.

How Can I Help?

The most difficult situation of any vessel captain is when another vessel is being operated unpredictably. Try to avoid sudden changes of direction, particularly when operating at speed. If your vessel generates a large wake, then try to avoid crossing just ahead of a taxiing aircraft, as he/she is in a similar situation as a small boat and will not thank you for getting some 'rock and roll'

Where Can I Get More Information?

If a floatplane is moored near you, talk to the pilot or please feel free to contact Volcanic Air

Contact: **Volcanic Air**
info@volcanicair.co.nz
Tel. (07) 348 9984