



# ARCS News



San Antonio, Texas

Alamo Radio Control Society

[www.alamorcs.org](http://www.alamorcs.org)

AMA Charter 603

July 2020

**CLUB FLYING SITE** Is located just west of Macdona at 10025 Shepard Road

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### Club Meetings

Held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of  
each month (except Dec)

7:00 PM to 9:00 PM at

**Golden Corral Buffet**

**9111 N. Loop 1604 W.**

**San Antonio, TX**

**78249 210-695-2366**

**Due to the Covid-19 virus the club is not having indoor meetings. The July meeting, like June, is scheduled to be at the flying field on Fun Fly Sunday, July 25. Come fly and meet, and maintain social distance and the usual care.**



Hello RC flyers! This will be a short edition of the newsletter since I used most of the previous fun fly photos in the June edition. With this edition I hope to stir up interest in the combined meeting and fun-fly this Sunday, July 25.

The photo at left is a typical scene on a Thursday morning, Club President Bill Ponseigo mowing and then blowing the grass off the runway. Thanks to him, we have a smooth grass runway to land on if needed.

The last meeting was a success. At the field you can maintain "social distance." When the group is together, even 6 feet apart, it may be advisable to wear a mask. It may rain Sunday. Bill says if it isn't a blowing storm, we could have a meeting anyway under the shelter. Stand by for that.

There has been almost normal flying activity through the Covid-19 experience. The group, especially the jet crew, get out early, at 8 AM usually. They fly until about 10 or 10:30 when the day starts to heat up. Your editor doesn't get out that early and so when he arrives everyone starts to leave. If I didn't know they'd been flying and wanted to leave before the heat set in, I'd worry my deodorant had failed!

The temperature has been under 90 until about 2 in the evening. The weather otherwise has been ideal for flying. The wind, even when its usual crosswind, has not been too fast. Guys tell me that the conditions in the early morning time have been ideal with very low or no wind. The hot weather has brought on thermals, rising air. You can tell because when you fly across the edge of one your airplane does a sudden move that is startling; can make you think the airplane is suffering a "glitch." When you're flying low and slow, the rolling wind caused by thermals and such can upset an airplane flying just above stall. Don't ask how I know.

One thing the club emphasizes is safety. I remember when, at a club in Virginia where I used to live, we had a fellow from the Federal Aviation Administration talking to us about RC models and their sharing airspace with the human carrying kind of airplane. When asked if the FAA was going to make special rules for RC models he replied, "Why, they're airplanes aren't they? We already have rules for those." The question of regulating RC flying (we did not have drones in the 1980s) has been around a long time. It has always been related to safety.

In my trades I once acquired an almost built Aeromaster Biplane. I wound up selling it. Some months later a lawyer called and asked if I'd done any building on it. I replied it had just passed through my hands. The guy that bought it had made a hard landing that broke off the tail. He repaired it at the field with 5-minute epoxy and flew it again. The tail came off and the airplane hit the only other guy at the field, killing him. That is why safety deserves our close attention.

## Anatomy of a Crash

I occasionally watch TV shows like “Air Disaster” where officials analyze a crash to see what caused it. This is a vital part of what makes airline travel as safe as it is. The causes tend to group into succinct categories. Some crashes are caused by equipment failure and that is often traced to either design or maintenance problems. Other crashes are due to pilot error. That is brought on by other factors, the training and experience of the pilots; the attitude of pilots or “get there” syndrome where pilots take chances because of a desire to reach their destination; then there’s pilot workload overload; then familiarity causing a pilot to take shortcuts or not follow established procedures. Accidents often happen when some little things come together and push the situation over the edge. All these factors can come to play when flying RC aircraft too. After all, they are airplanes, aren’t they?



One of the first things RC flyers need to do is the pre-flight checks, just like on the full-scale planes. We should have a specific procedure to check connections, control linkages, look for damage, do a range check and control surface movement; a checklist. The 10cc Valiant in the photo above is mine, the electric version. It is an example of why we need to do preflight checks. I was in a hurry one day to get it into the air. I put a battery in, taxied out and hit the throttle. It went down the runway and lifted off. I moved the aileron stick left for my usual left departure, and nothing happened. The ailerons did not work. The first rule in facing an in-flight problem is to “...fly the airplane.” The next thing is get it down on the ground as quickly and safely as possible. The rudder, elevator and throttle worked. So I gingerly steered it with rudder doing flat turns back over the west end of the field. There was the usual blustery crosswind so landing on the runway without ailerons was out of the question. I put it down in the grass off the west end of the runway. It bent up the landing gear, but fortunately no other damage. I discovered I’d plugged in one of the aileron servos backwards. When you do that, it cancels out the channel and it won’t work. If I’d done my pre-check of wires and control movements I’d have noticed the ailerons weren’t working. My bad.



The next series of photos show Lupe Talamantez’ Super Sportster. You may remember him showing the “bones” of the uncovered airplane at one of the club meetings at the old location. It was powered by an OS 61 nitro engine. Lupe put it up and made a turn back to the west. Off the west end of the runway, it started doing some unusual movements. He flew it back eastward over the fence. As he tried to adjust trims the airplane suddenly nosedived into the grass field just opposite the wind sock on the fence. Sadly Lupe took a bag and picked up the pieces. Why did it crash? Lupe had flown it several times with no problems and he is an experienced RC flyer. I’ll let Lupe take up the story:

*“The yellow plane. The Super Sportster went out of control due to the rudder and elevator servo mountings coming loose. You might recall me telling a story about tripping on the plane and pushing the elevator control surfaces to a severe down elevator deflection. That happened the last time I flew the plane successfully. That incident caused a hairline crack in the epoxy joints of both servos. On yesterday’s flight, both if not one servo, was working its way loose. The destruction is too excessive to cause me to repair it any time soon.”* And further: *Anytime I have to do a maiden flight, I get really nervous and anxious. I forget where all the switches, trims, and knobs are. I forget to slow down the flight speed. And I forget to ask for an assist. I will try again.”*

Lupe’s story illustrates another causes of crashes, a maintenance issue caused by something that seemed unimportant at the time. In Lupe’s case the hairline cracks may not have been evident in a pre-flight. How many of us have bumped an airplane when moving or storing it? All seemed to be working in the first parts of the flight. We do need to periodically inspect our airplanes just as full size planes get periodic inspections to verify airworthiness.

The “got to get there” syndrome affects full-size pilots and RC pilots too. Lupe had brought 3 airplanes to the field to test fly them after some modifications and was in a test mode for this flight. When the airplane exhibited an unusual move, Lupe continued his objective test mode, adjusting trims and such. Just after the “glitch” Lupe had control, or it seemed.

The primary rule for pilots is, "No matter what is going on around you, first fly the airplane." Like airline pilots who start flipping switches to adjust the electronic control system, Lupe's attention was briefly diverted from flying the plane. Whether or not the servos would have stayed attached long enough to land we can't know. Any time an airplane starts acting erratically, even for a moment, it is time to land.

So when something happens, keep flying the airplane. Abandon the original flight plan and get it down as quickly and safely as possible.

RC flying is a fun hobby and it has a remarkable safety record. Our airplanes are generally reliable, tuff little critters and will take quite a bit of abuse without failing. However, unrelated things can add up and when they do they cause a crash. There is an AMA video on U-Tube about checklists. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68lbGZSXg1s> Here are some of the items:

- Consider the weather, and wind speed. Will it badly affect the flight of the airplane?
- Consider location of the sun. Have sunglasses if needed.
- Consider field conditions. This is in reference to flying at non-club sites.
- Check the model's center of gravity.
- Charge batteries for airplane and transmitter.
- Check condition of the airplane.

In addition:

- Range check on first flight of the day,
- Before installing the wing, check servos, pushrods, battery and receiver security and wiring.
- Check security of all control linkages.
- Check landing gear function and security. Yes, I've had a wheel fall off because the set screw was loose!
- Before every flight, always check control surface direction.
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Our checklist need not be long, likely we can memorize it. But we need one. If we have a set practice, doing things the same way all the time without skipping a step, we'll help increase safety and prevent those unintended interactions with the ground.

Jim Neff