



## International Bücker Meeting

31/08/2018 until 02/09/2018

Airfield Thun, Switzerland

Thun, 22 May 2018

## MEDIA BULLETIN 04

### “In the Alps we are closer to the Earth”

*“Safe flying in the Alps”:* This workshop is offered by the organizers of the International Bücker Meeting in Thun from 31 August to 2 September. The instructor Daniel Knecht from the Swiss Transportation Safety Investigation Board (STSB) will explain, what kind of abilities a safe flying in the Alps is demanding from pilots.

“The only danger of flying is the earth.” For Daniel Knecht, this quotation by Wilbur Wright, a flying pioneer, “gets to the heart of the challenges a pilot in the Alps has to tackle.” Knecht goes on: “In the Alps, we are mostly a bit closer to the earth than out there in the lowland.” For 19 years, Daniel Knecht’s job has been to deal with the moments when pilots and their airplanes came too close to the earth. First, he worked in the office for accident investigations, now he works for the newly built Swiss Transportation Safety Investigation Board (STSB). The STSB investigates accidents and dangerous incidents involving trains, aircraft, inland navigation ships and seagoing vessels. Knecht is the manager of the aviation department. (see chart: To the person).

“However, I actually don’t want to focus on accidents, even though I like to be active at the front”, means Knecht, because “flying is a safe way of moving.” Even in the Alps? “Yes, in the Alps as well.” What about those really tiny and small flying devices? “It is safe, even in small airplanes, if you pay attention to certain issues.”

### The challenges

For these “certain issues”, the organizers of the International Bücker Meeting would like to sharpen the pilots’ eyes by offering a workshop called “Safe flying in the Alps”. “Thun is an ideal airfield to address these issues”, says Knecht, who will lead this workshop. “Towards the north, we have mostly open land, towards the south, the mountains of the Alps are very close.” If you want to travel successfully – say without any accident – these challenges for the pilots “are high”, says Knecht. “Especially, if you consider, that most pilots fly alone, where as in an airliner there are two pilots in the cockpit.” In other words: In a small aircraft, the whole responsibility for the flight usually lies on one single person’s shoulder: The operation of the airplane, the navigation and the orientation in the terrain. “Therefore, it is crucial to have a plan B close at hand for every situation. E.g. you should move in the terrain only in the way that you can react quickly. That means, you should be able to turn around if you realise that you are flying in the wrong valley”, says Knecht. Situations such as choosing the wrong valley is easily possible especially if you do not read the map carefully. “Aircrafts with weak engines often need a longer distance to fly over a mountain pass or to turn around on time.” That means, if you want to get out of the way upwards, this is only a limited option: Above 3500m above sea level (11’500 feet) human beings and aircrafts can easily react in a way they should not due to the lack of oxygen. Such as divers are afraid of the rapture of the deep, the high-altitude euphoria can be a real danger for pilots. The lack of oxygen in the brain can lead to euphoria or an exaggerated opinion of oneself, that can quite often lead to disastrous consequences. “Therefore, it is most important that pilots are in control of all the standardized procedures by heart and can easily retrieve them in difficult situations.” It isn’t uncommon that these procedures would not correspond to instinctive action. “That’s why these procedures must be trained again and again,”, says Knecht.

### The weather

The weather in the Alps is always an important topic. “In the lowland you can see from far if a thunderstorm cell is developing. However, in the mountains a thunderstorm can develop behind a mountain ridge out of your

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sight", explains Knecht. "On the other hand, a pilot should not be surprised by the weather nowadays. He must use the appropriate equipment correctly." Another potential danger could be the lack of time. "In case of emergency you might have to leave an airplane on an airfield and go home by train. The next day you can go and get your plane again," says Knecht. "The needed time has to be budgeted."

### **The fascination**

Despite the great challenges, Daniel Knecht describes "flying in the Alps as one of the most beautiful kinds of flying. There are so many marvellous places – mountain peaks, lakes, glaciers – which you can admire from the air, that is fantastic." For a successful flight in the Alps, Knecht gives the following advice: "The preparation of the flight is crucial. In addition, you need to calculate enough reserve on all levels – material, fuel, topography and time – and you will experience an unforgettable event."

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### **To the person:**

Daniel Knecht, 52, studied science: mathematics, chemistry, physics. In the Swiss Air Force he flew the Tiger F-5-fighter jet and trained fighter pilots with the PC-7-training airplanes. In 1999, Knecht changed to the office for accident investigations where he helped to build the successor organisation, the Swiss Transportation Safety Investigation Board (STSB).

Knecht was born in Interlaken; his place of origin was Diemtigen in the Kanton of Bern. Today, he lives together with his wife and three children in the region of Zürich, in the Zürcher Oberland. In addition, Daniel Knecht serves as an airline pilot for civil airlines and for helicopters. He is a co-owner of a Bücker (HB-UUM) and will lead the workshop "Safe flying in the Alps" at the International Bücker Meeting in Thun, 31 August – 2 September 2018.

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### **The Event**

From 31 August till 2 September 2018, there will take place an International Bücker Meeting on the airfield of Thun (LSZW) in the Berner Oberland, Switzerland. In the centre of the 3-day-event is an international meeting with machines and pilots coming from all over Europe. Beside the legendary biplanes the organizers expect many ancient airplanes and guests. So far there are more than 60 planes registered.

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**Information:** [www.bueckertreffen.ch](http://www.bueckertreffen.ch) or [info@air-thun.ch](mailto:info@air-thun.ch)