

# PF Olsen Toolbox Safety Alert 84

<b>Date:</b> February 2025	<b>Focus Group:</b> All Drone Operators
<b>Topic:</b> Drone Planning and Operation	<b>Issued by:</b> Hamish Macpherson

**Background and Incidents:** During an approved drone flight at Rotorua Forest Nursery, the airport control tower attempted to contact the operator six times over 10 minutes to request landing for an approaching aircraft. Due to an unexpected Bluetooth connection between the operator’s mobile and laptop, calls were silently diverted and went unnoticed, delaying the aircraft’s landing.

**Risk & Contributing Factors:** While no harm occurred, this was a high-potential airspace safety incident. A delayed response to air traffic control could have led to a near-miss or collision. The key risk factors include:

- Unintended Bluetooth connectivity disrupted critical communication.
- No secondary communication method was available.
- Sun glare and task focus prevented noticing incoming calls.

**Safe Behaviours:** To prevent recurrence, policy updates and best practice include:

- Provide a second communication method and include details in the pre-flight application to Airways NZ.
- Disable Bluetooth on primary communication devices before flights.
- During drone operation, keep mobile devices visible and check them regularly.
- Always complete and follow pre-flight checklists and confirm communications.
- Updated ‘*Drone / UAV Pre-flight Safety Checklist*’ can be found [here](#)

**For Site Manager:**

Print and complete the following:

1. Discuss with employees/operators:
2. Place on-site notice board or in file:

**Site Manager:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** / /  
(initials)

