European Union Aviation Safety Agency

Balloons

What approval is required for navigation, radio and transponder equipment for balloon operations?

Answer

EASA published the 'Balloon Rule Book - Easy Access Rules', which is a 'one stop shop' book gathering texts relevant to balloons. You will find there the requirements BOP.BAS.355 for radio-communication equipment and BOP.BAS.360 for Transponders. They both fall under the umbrella of BOP.BAS.300, that states that '(a) Instruments and equipment required by this Section shall be approved in accordance with Annex I to Regulation (EU) No 748/2012 if one of the following conditions is fulfilled: (1) they are used to comply with points BOP.BAS.355 and BOP.BAS.360; (…)'.
Radio-communication and transponders therefore need to be approved, and this is a hook to 21.A.305. This latter requirement states that 'In all cases where the approval of a part or appliance is explicitly required by Union law or Agency measures [that is the case here because of BOP.BAS.300], the part or appliance shall comply with the applicable ETSO or with the specifications recognised as equivalent by the Agency in the particular case.' In the absence of an equivalent specification, the transponder or radio-equipment should comply with the corresponding ETSO standard. This can be easily demonstrated by holding an ETSOA or an equivalent foreign TSOA that is automatically accepted by EASA (e.g. FAA TSOA or TCCA CAN-TSOA).
Further BOP.BAS.300, that states that (b) By way of derogation from point (a), all of the following instruments or equipment, when required by this Section, shall not need an approval: (1) instruments or equipment used by the flight crew to determine the flight path;
Further EASA considers balloon equipment as portable equipment, if it is fixed by velcro, carabiners or put in pouches, meaning no tooling is required to install the equipment in the balloon. Portable equipment does not require an installation approval.

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