

Ultralights come in for a landing

Continued from page A8 require permits, depending on whether they are student, private or commercial flyers.

Student flyers must be at least 14 years of age and take their training from a fully qualified ultralight pilot. They then need five hours of flying time and 25 take-offs, landings and circuits. Commercial ultralight pilots follow more stringent regulations to get their permits.

However, ultralights and hang gliders will be exempt from a number of Canadian Air regulations concerning permits. Ultralights next year will have to have registration markings, will not be able to fly at night, and unless it's a two-seater instructor model, only one person will be allowed on an ultralight.

It's not difficult to learn to fly an ultralight; hence the activity's increasing popularity.

"It's no easy to get into this," Mr. Meurer said. "But people have to be mature about it and avoid acrobatic stunts. It's strictly good clean fun flying."

Ultralights have been making inroads for commercial and public service use.

TWO EAGLES
Mr. Meurer has a number of ultralight brochures and one of them shows two Eagles being used to promote a U.S. brewery. American police forces are looking at ultralights for traffic patrol and observation because they are easy to handle and use fuel sparingly, unlike a helicopter which requires a well-trained pilot.

"Flying an ultralight is substantially safer than hang gliding," he said, having done both. "You

don't need high hills to get aloft like you do for hang gliding. The ultralights fly under their own power and (like hang gliders) will glide if the engine cuts out and can't be restarted."

(The dying engine, he stressed, is a rarity and can largely be avoided if the machine is well-tuned at all times.)

At about \$1,600 a plane (for a model such as the Eagle), ultralight travel "is the most inexpensive form of motorized flying," Mr. Meurer said.

"People who couldn't afford to fly before can fly now. A simple rule of thumb to follow is don't exceed what you can't

handle in the air."

Like any lasting investment, ultralights should be thoroughly researched and examined before purchasing. Mr. Meurer advises. He gets his ultralights in a kit from New Mexico which includes the engine—a modified snowmobile power system.

These are assemblies and test flies before selling them. And he ensures that the purchaser is thoroughly trained before he takes delivery of his ultralight.

An hour's ultralight flying will consume about \$5 in gas, he said, pointing to the tank tucked into a sleeve below the wing.

Unless fitted with oxygen masks, most flyers prefer to fly at a few thousand feet or less.

WHAT TO BUY

There have been a few fatalities from ultralight crashes in North America. However, Mr. Meurer attributes these to inexperienced or badly trained pilots and, occasionally, badly made planes.

Because of the sport's novelty, he urges purchasers to beware of (pardon the expression) "fly by night" distributors.

One way of finding out

what to buy and what to avoid is by dropping in on the ultralight exhibition at the Canadian National Exhibition centre in Toronto. The event will be held Feb. 4, 5 and 6 and tickets are available by calling Mr. Meurer at 877-7765.

Meanwhile, one should let the onset of cold weather and snow stifle one's zeal for getting airborne in an ultralight. In fact, Mr. Meurer said, there's some excellent flying to be enjoyed in the winter as long as one is dressed properly and

keeps the engine in good repair.

"It's actually the nicest season for flying, although it can get a bit chilly," he said. "Winter gives a nice smooth ride and the denser colder air is good for engine performance."

Performance can vary on the size of the ultralight and the engine propelling it forward. The Eagle has a maximum

speed of 50 miles an hour, cruises at about 30 and will fly at a slow speed of 20 mph.

Ultralights are stress tested to points far exceeding anything they are likely to encounter while airborne, Mr. Meurer said. They can take off and land on a strip no longer than the length of a football field and can lift a 240-pound man skyward.

In search of a home

Having moved out of the Orangeville Airport, Ace Aerolights is looking for a new base of operations in the Georgetown Halton Hills area. Ace Manufacturing, Mr. Meurer's laminating firm is moving from its present Armstrong Avenue location to Limehouse (in the old Halsey's Originals location), but the firm also needs some place to set up its ultralight operation. An empty barn near a field would be ideal, Mr. Meurer said, and would allow the firm to increase the services it currently offers. If anyone can help the search, call Mr. Meurer at 877-7765.

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