

To all BGA Gliding Instructors

April 2007

SAFE WINCH LAUNCHING

Introduction

Just over a year ago, the Safety Initiative Team produced their "Safe Winch Launching" leaflet. Since then the team have had a lot of useful dialogue with many of you. In parallel, and we hope as a result of both the advice given in the leaflet and the consequent debate at club level, there appears to have been a reduction in serious accidents associated with winch launching.

Our task now is to reinforce the message lest we revert to our old habits.

Modified Advice

The safety leaflet has been re-printed with slightly modified text. The changes in the text result from further reflection on the theory and practice of winch launching and the excellent feedback received.

The revised text for avoiding a stall/spin during rotation in the Table reads:

"Maintain a shallow climb until adequate speed is seen, with continuing acceleration"

"Ensure the transition from level flight at take-off to the full climb (typically 35°) is controlled, progressive and lasts about 5 seconds".

The supporting text in Further Guidance has been similarly modified.

A new heading 'On the Ground' has been added to the further guidance.

In the Launch Failure below 100ft section of the Further Guidance text, the first bullet point now reads "Pushover g should be vigorous unless the ground is very close.

The phrase "or signal if the excess speed is now moderate' has been added under 'High speeds'.

These changes are subtle but important.

Next Steps

Chapter 16 of the BGA's Instructors' Manual contains sound winch launching advice. The manual will shortly be revised to incorporate the additional points made in the leaflet. Some pilots do not follow these recommended winch launch procedures. This can result in launches that are hazardous and therefore potentially dangerous and should be firmly managed at club level.

There is inevitably a healthy level of debate on winch launching techniques which should be encouraged to aid better understanding of what is a complex task. One point that really does need to be emphasised however is the need for the pilot to keep his/her left hand firmly on the release during the initial part of the launch.

Please use the re-printing of this leaflet as a good opportunity to review safe winch launching techniques with your students both individually and in groups. Remember, "Old habits die hard" and thus regular re-inforcement is required!

Teaching safe winch launching

Your students rely upon you for an adequate understanding of the hazards of winch launching, and how to avoid or manage those hazards. We hope this revised leaflet will continue to improve that understanding. If you have any questions or need any further information please consult your CFI or contact safetyinitiative@gliding.co.uk

Don Irving
Chairman of the BGA Instructor's Sub-Committee
Member of the BGA Safety Initiative
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