



GRAPEVINE

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THE SERVICES REGION FLIGHT SAFETY BULLETIN

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CRASH....

The P2 was handling the glider during a winch launch failure. He took the correct recovery action but then rather than land on the hard runway ahead, he elected to land on a piece of grass at a runway intersection alongside crop. The wing dropped on the ground roll and the glider was damaged in the subsequent ground loop into the crop. The instructor did not take control.

Late takeover of control is one of the most common accident causes in gliding. Instructors must be ready to take control early enough to deal with the situation before it develops into something difficult or impossible to retrieve. To give yourself a fighting chance, ALWAYS closely guard the stick and airbrakes below 50'. The only way to really understand how far you can let bloggers get it wrong is to know your limits as a pilot and instructor - it's not easy. Take over too early and the worse that can happen is you may feel obliged to pay for the launch. Take over a bit too late and the price is invariably much higher.

The best advice is to be cautious, and if in doubt, there is no doubt - take control.

BANG....

The pre-flight checks were carried out in the two-seat glider, including "canopy secure". At 400', the rear canopy opened and broke away.

This accident could easily have resulted in damage to the tailplane and elevator.... What about "canopy locked and does not yield to upward pressure"?

WALLOP....

The experienced instructor was flying the glider with P2 observing. The normal landing area was aligned crosswind. A decision was made to land into wind, taking into consideration known curl-over from a rise in the middle of the landing area. The approach was made too close/too high and at 65 knots. The glider landed too long, rolled down the slope and hit a tractor.

LATE FIELD SELECTION

Due to bad weather (among other problems), this pilot had flown very little in the 10 months prior to setting off on a cross-country flight.

A late field selection resulted in an attempted landing over obstacles into a sloping field. The glider was seriously damaged and the pilot suffered minor injuries.

The current FMD problems mean that many pilots will be lacking in currency of one sort or another. Please be cautious - common sense and good supervision will make the difference.

It may be good advice for club CFI's to develop some kind of local plot to ensure that if/when we get the green light to fly cross country, everyone has had the opportunity to revisit their field selection and field circuit flying skills in a motor glider.

NOW WHAT?

We don't suffer many technical failures in gliders. But when something fails in flight it can easily become catastrophic. These guys were lucky...

While carrying out a "beat up" at 300' and 125 kts (not above Vne), the pilot started to pull up. As he did so he experienced severe elevator flutter and lost pitch control, causing the glider to "flip vertical". After this interesting experience, the pilot was able to recover normally and land in one piece!

A repair in the elevator drive had partially failed.

A pilot was practising spinning in his single seat glider. After successfully recovering from a left hand spin, he then entered a right hand spin. During the attempted recovery he could not move the rudder, which was stuck on right deflection. Moving the stick forward stopped the spin and the glider was flown somewhat untidily to a successful recovery. The pilot eventually discovered that by moving his foot off the right rudder pedal, the jam cleared.

A cracked rudder pedal bracket caused applied pressure to jam the rudder pedal against the cockpit wall.

THINK BEFORE YOU FLY

An accident is rarely caused by one problem...

A K21 was winch launched with two experienced pilots on board at a site that is predominately aero tow. At the top of the launch the cable would not release. The winch driver failed to operate the guillotine but instead continued to wind in the cable. Fortunately, and just in time, the cable was released and thanks to some skilled flying, the glider landed safely.

In this case, the additional problems that nearly caused disaster were that the conditioning and lack of awareness of those present meant that this winch launch was "probably" flown on the nose hook....and it appears as if a slightly incorrectly rigged or worn release system can, in some cases, result in a jammed nose hook on this glider type (although in this case no-one was aware that the problem existed on this particular K21). Has anyone reported release problems with your K21?

A jamming nose hook is worrying, but certainly not normally life threatening in an aerotow situation if dealt with correctly. Would you know what to do?

MORE WINCH LAUNCHING EXCITEMENT...

For his first launch on type, the pilot had been briefed to back release the cable – something he did not normally do, because he had been taught to release conventionally. At the top of the launch, the pilot waited for the back release to operate, but was suddenly pitched down with such a force that his head banged on the left side of the canopy. After a 'moment' of confusion, the pilot found himself pointing vertically at the ground, apparently with the cable attached. He stated that he found the release very hard to pull. After eventually releasing the cable, the pilot eased out of the dive and while doing so experienced a 'loud bang'. He then elected to land ahead regardless just in case the glider was damaged. A field landing resulted in some minor damage. The loud bang was the centre section fairing breaking off.

As is often the case, the detail of this accident is blurred in a few seconds of action. Either the pilot was suffering from reduced g sensitivity and flew the glider into it's diving predicament or, more likely, the winch driver thought the cable had back released as the glider flattened out at the top of the launch and suddenly applied lots of power. Either way, this disturbing occurrence gives food for thought. Could this happen at your site?

ON TOUR

When groups of pilots head off to 'expedition' sites, either in the UK or more frequently these days, to Europe and beyond, there is a tendency for the group common sense approach to flying that normally exists back home to travel with them. It's all part of the club pilot ethos that helps us remember our limits and, if needed, stops us getting too carried away!

An individual or pair that sets off on a similar trip tends not to have the same 'protection'. Some organisations (like the ESC) apparently provide excellent back up, briefing and appropriate advice at their sites. However, the French for example are concerned that in many cases, the visitors that fatally spear themselves into mountains every summer in the Alps are not in the area with a club group (or attached to an organisation), but looking after themselves. The French solution is to try to offer better supervision at their already well-run airfields. But to be fair, how can the, say, duty French supervisor at a busy site be expected to keep in regular contact with 40 Germans, Swiss and Brits thrashing around the mountain slopes or expect to know each pilot's experience and limitations?

Incidentally, one European proposal to deal with the high fatality rate in the Alps two years ago was to issue mountain-flying 'ratings' - a move that would have prevented 90% of visitors flying in the region. *Common sense works well in most parts of the world, but we need to prove it to prevent future strangling regulation.*

So the best advice is that if you are planning to glide at an expedition or other unfamiliar site, get involved as a group. If that's not possible, get as closely involved with the locals as possible, as well as seeking the best briefings and local advice available (a site check can be invaluable). That way you'll get help to understand your limits and, just as importantly, have lots more fun.

WHO HAS CONTROL?

A few years ago, an assistant instructor was giving a 'site check' to a visiting Silver C pilot in a privately owned Janus C. The conditions were good, and they were able to cruise around the local area at height. Anyway, the P1 took the opportunity of demonstrating the use of flap, thermalling techniques and anything else that he thought was useful. Having done so, he asked the P2 if he would like to "explore the glider" and then sat back and relaxed. After the second, very untidy, wing low loop, the P1 suddenly felt a bit queasy and asked the P2 if he could take control. "Oh," said the P2, "I thought you were flying it....!"