BGA SAFETY FLASH

Tug Upsets

These happen when the glider gets excessively high, pulling the tug tail up uncontrollably. Sometimes the glider suddenly zooms above the tug in an unstoppable manner after an initial pitch-up, putting the tug into a steep dive requiring as much as 400 feet to recover. The sequence of events occupies only 2-3 seconds, giving little chance for either the glider pilot or tow-pilot to recognise the problem and pull the release in time.

Some years ago the BGA ran a successful campaign to stop the resulting fatalities to tug pilots, but several years without incident now appear to have ended. This year there have been two reported upsets and at least one other not reported. Fortunately none resulted in crashes.

Six factors make upsets more likely. Three or more together should be considered unacceptable:

- **Lightweight glider, low wing-loading**
- **C of G hooks intended for winch launching**
- **Short ropes**
- **Pilots with little aerotow experience**
- **Near aft C of G.**
- **Turbulent conditions**

C of G hooks are the worst factor but the presence of any of these factors increases the danger.