

Organizer's Contest Safety Procedures Checklist and Possible Safety Talk Topics

Contest safety procedures are like the “critical assembly” check, a short condensed list of the most important safety-oriented contest procedures. This list is written to enhance general awareness of critical safety procedures, and to help organizers and pilots all make sure they happen. Disclaimer: Omission of an item does not mean it’s not important.

Ground and Tow operations

- Is there a daily safety briefing as required by rules? (9.1). A list of suggested topics for safety briefings is at the end of this document.
- Are spectators, dogs, children adequately kept off the runway and away from dangerous areas?
- Do procedures clearly define the times and places when people and cars use runways (to grid), and times when airplanes use runways and people and cars do not?
- Is the critical assembly check with signed wingtape procedure in effect?
- Are towropes in good condition, with Tost rings (6.10.2)?
- Are procedures in place to ensure that there are no people, spectators, objects, cars, in front of launching gliders?
- Are tow pilots consistently using appropriate tow speeds for ballasted gliders, and achieving that speed before climbout? (10.6.2.9) (Slow tows are a perpetual problem.)
- Do towplane patterns ensure that ropes don’t drag in dangerous places?
- Are there clearly established relight procedures, including radio calls/frequency, pattern, landing spot, and recovery procedure?
- Are there clearly established finish procedures, including pattern, landing, runway-clearance and recovery?
- Is a “safety box” in place? (9.8)
- Critical procedures such as the above should be written, printed, distributed and on the contest website, and then covered in briefings. Do not rely only on verbal briefings.

Start and Finish

- Is start height guidance followed--at least 500' below cloudbase or top of dry thermals? (10.8.5.1.2)
- Is the finish type appropriate to airport and situation?
 - A cylinder with high minimum altitude is advised when there is a) poor terrain around the airport b) limited landing space c) power or other glider activity during launch and landing d) arrivals from many directions (MAT tasks).
 - If a finish line is in use, head-on traffic between flying finishers' landings and rolling finishes should be avoided. There should either be separate runways, or the final leg should be upwind.
 - If a finish line is in use, finishers will cross the wrong way if there is any doubt. The final leg should not approach at right angles to the line.
- Radio.
 - Is the procedure in the rules being followed: a) All on 123.3, or b) Switch from alternate frequency after tow release, and/or switch to it before 4 mile call.
 - Does the CD or delegate monitor the radio and coordinate with power traffic during launch and landing?

Task Guidelines

- The CD should use Advisers to assess the safety and fairness of the task, especially in the 5-10 minutes before the task opens. (10.8.1.2)
- When possible, avoid tasks which lead to head-on traffic, especially with cloudstreets or geography which concentrates traffic, poor visibility, and in assigned tasks or assigned part of MAT tasks.
- When possible, send different classes on separate tasks to reduce gagging.
- When possible, the task should be set across ridges in very weak ridge lift, and the task should keep pilots away from poor terrain in weak or low thermal lift (Hobbs caprock, Uvalde hill country, etc.). Beware of overly large turn areas or unrestricted MATs in such conditions.
- It is better to set A, B, C tasks on the ground than to call entirely new tasks in the air. (Most flight computers allow entry of multiple tasks.) If tasks must be changed, try to minimize reprogramming time. Leave adequate time between task change and start open.
- Spratt guidelines of 2500' AGL to launch, 3300' AGL to start, should be followed unless there is a good reason.

Recourse

If a pilot feels that important safety-related procedures are not being followed, he or she should:

1. Talk to the CD, CM, contest committee (3.14) and task advisers. Please be polite, we're all interested in safety.
2. Explain the problem to other pilots and get them to talk to the CD, CM, contest committee, and task advisers.
3. Contact the SSA contest committee or chairman (Ken Sorenson).
4. File a protest. (See rule 9.0 and 11.1.3 as well as the rules describing the particular situation.)
5. **Don't fly.** Remember, *the final responsibility for safety always lies with the pilot in command* (FAA, SSA rule 9.3). Nobody ever "makes" you do something unsafe!
6. **CD:** Rule 9.0 trumps all the other rules and traditions. It is never the case that the rules force you to do something unsafe, or prohibit you from addressing the development of an unsafe situation.

Suggestions for Safety Talks

Best practices dictate that each pilot meeting includes a short safety talk given by a pilot. In addition to the usefulness of the content of the talk, this also serves to reinforce that safety is a key value in our racing culture.

Safety topics that are specific to a given site or set of conditions are apropos; and following is a list of additional topics that is by no means exhaustive but can be used as a starting point.

General

1. Pilot responsibilities
2. How to handle safety issues without being a jerk
3. Checklists
4. Preflights
5. Critical assembly checks, overview and how to use
6. Ground operations - pilots need to care too. Takeoffs, spectators, cars, towing
7. Sun protection
8. Relief systems, should be considered required equipment
9. Spot, ELT
10. Collision avoidance devices: Transponder, Flarm, Benefits and limitations
11. Survival kit & procedures
12. Hydration and nutrition
13. Trailing

Technique and Decision Making

1. Start procedures, pre-start flying
2. Thermal entry techniques
3. Gaggle flying
4. Midair avoidance techniques
5. Risk taking: Hard decisions; turning around, stopping a close final glide, giving up on
6. How to make better decisions. Time to abandon the race.
7. Oxygen use and equipment
8. Bad weather
9. Thunderstorms
10. glider race pilot hazardous thought patterns
11. Terrain decisions: approaching passes/mountains, how close to the hill.
12. Parachutes and bailout procedures
13. Radio communication procedures and resources
14. True airspeed, density altitude
15. Final glides
16. Off-field landings: wires; committing too late, too low, tight or no pattern are common mistakes
17. Finish procedures, landing procedures, clearing the runway