Board Report, SSA BoD meeting, Durham, NC  2/23/2019

This Soaring Safety Foundation (SSF) report covers the fall and winter period of 2018/2019. During this period the SSF Trustees wrote the Society’s annual safety report, which will be published in April. A summary of the report will be printed in April issue of SOARING, and the full report will be posted on the SSF’s web site (http://www.soaringsafety.org/accidentprev/ssfreports.html). This report will show that NTSB accident data indicates a significant 41.2% increase (24 vs 17) in the number of accidents and a significant increase in the number of fatalities (11 vs 3) from seven fatal accidents in 2018 compared to 2017. As of this report, all fatal accidents are still being investigated by the NTSB. The SSF takes both NTSB reports and insurance company incidents and accidents into account when developing safety programs and seminars. However safety reports are based only on the data found in the NTSB aviation accident database.

2018 continues a trend from started in 2012 where the number of accidents has decreased (down from 30 to 24) but it also indicates a disturbing trend where there have been increases over the past 2 years. The Costello insurance agency also reported a small (4%) increase in the number of claims SSA group insurance members made in 2018 vs 2017. To continue driving down the number of accidents, especially fatal accidents, the SSF continues to push strongly on teaching and using glider oriented Risk Management / Aeronautical Decision Making skills.

As all directors know, the numbers presented above represent only a part of the safety picture for glider pilots in the US. The number of accidents needs to be converted to a statistical number by knowing the number of flight hours or launches conducted over the same time period. Only then can we determine if an increase or decrease in the number of accidents represents an increase or decrease in the accident rate. Historically the SSF has been unable to obtain flight data from the clubs/chapters/COBM schools. Last year the SSF sent letters and emails to every soaring operation is the US and approximately 30% of them responded. In February the SSF again sent notices to these soaring operations and we are waiting for a response. The SSF is also talking with the contest community to see if we can obtain flight data from contests. The SSF will keep the SSA board informed of our progress and problems in obtaining this flight data.

The SSF has continued advertising more in SOARING, informing the membership of our existing training ans safety programs. For the past few years the SSF has also been using a direct mail program, sending over 200 letters out to clubs, chapters, SSA Directors, and SSA State Governors. These ‘Stop Crashing’ letters describe the SSF programs and
encourage members to contact the appropriate SSF Trustee for more information on each program.

The following list of activities updates the status of the existing SSF programs. SSA Directors should continue to inform your SSA members/constituents about how to access these training and safety programs.

1. Flight Instructor Refresher Course – This ongoing program is the major outreach activity for the SSF. There are five (5) FIRCs currently scheduled for the 2019 calendar year. We expect to serve approximately one hundred (100) instructors and glider pilots. Details for clinic locations can be found on the SSF web site. The SSF began sending postcards to potential attendees in a region surrounding a FIRC location. This advertising appears to be increasing attendance. The FIRC presentations continue to evolve the Scenario Based Training program started in 2014. This approach uses SBT techniques to teach the FIRC and emphasis’s RM/ADM training by providing instructors the opportunity to practice these skills.

2. Site Survey program – See previous bluebook reports for details on the site survey program. The SSF completed ten (10) site surveys across the country during the 2018 calendar year. The SSF will continue to over deliver on this program when clubs, chapters, or Commercial Operators request a survey.

3. Safety Seminars – Tom Johnson continues to manage the Safety Seminar program. As of this report, there are three (3) requests for seminars in 2018. Requests for additional seminars will be processed by Tom on a first-come first-served basis.

4. The Accident Reduction Program, started in 2006, will continue into the 2018 season. The SSF trustees will continue to write monthly columns that will be published in SOARING. The SSF Trustees take turns writing articles and all 5 trustees actively participate in the editing and review of articles before they are submitted to the SOARING editor for publication.

5. The SSF Trustees continue to assist the SOARING magazine editor by reviewing articles dealing with training and safety issues.

6. In August of 2018 Richard Carlson, the SSF Chairman, was officially approved to be co-chair of the international OSTIV Training and Safety Panel (TSP). The OSTIV-TSP committee consists of the chief flight instructor from most European and Scandinavian countries along with Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the US. The TSP meets every other year to exchange flight training techniques and safety issues among the member states. The next meeting is scheduled for fall 2019.

7. In November of 2018 the SSF completed the task of revising and updating the on-line Bronze Badge Study Guide. This guide, an on-line reference to help pilots prepare for the Bronze Badge written test, provides 290 questions in seven subject areas with detailed references to help the applicant understand why the answer is correct. Previously the questions were stored in a series of flat files and a java-script program provided 20 questions at a time to the applicant. In addition, the main reference was the
Soaring Flight Manual. The revised program now stores the questions in a database allowing the application to obtain 20 random question, 20 sequential questions starting at a specific question, or 20 random questions with 10 questions coming from one of the seven subject areas. The references were also updated to point to currently publications from the FAA and major soaring authors in the US.

The SSF Trustees continue to look for ways to reach out to the US Soaring community. Traditional programs, such as those described above, and new programs, based on Internet technologies will be used to spread the SSF’s message as widely as possible. All SSF programs are reviewed on a regular basis, to determine how they can be improved and new programs are considered as ideas are presented to the Trustees.

Ss: Richard Carlson  
SSF Chairman