

LOUISVILLE SOARING CLUB

June 2009 SAFETY MATTERS

*---Good Judgment Is Usually the Result of Experience...
...Which is Usually the Result of Bad Judgment---*

Take a look at some recent events:

--- Over the past few weeks, two separate club members thought it was OK to land in the grass while another glider was staged for takeoff at the far end. Even though the runway was clear, a grass landing seemed prudent because they 'knew' they could land and stop with no problem. The first case ended with no problem. The second case ended with a problem.

--- Last weekend one of our pilots entered the pattern low, felt an updraft on downwind and thought it reasonable to turn **away** from the field for one turn before landing in the grass. He was not concerned. Everyone on the ground was.

--- Within the last week or so, one of our pilots surprised another by sneaking up on him and dusting him off as he flew by at high speed. (Ask me about an AF incident like this where one of my friends was killed).

--- Last weekend, one of our pilots let a guest run his wing on takeoff. He got lucky. Last year a guest doing this almost put one of our gliders in the ditch.

Lady and Gents - our enthusiasm is clouding our judgment and we're starting to do stupid things. It's time to slow down and cultivate a safer, more conservative, professional approach to our sport before we bend metal or worse:

1) **Come prepared to fly.** The sport's standard practices are well spelled out in our flight manuals, the FAA Glider Handbook, Soaring Magazine, etc. If your friends on the field get even the slightest hint that you're not prepared or your brain isn't engaged - you're not going to fly.

2) **Take the time to preflight.** We must never have a takeoff with a tail dolly still attached or a solo 2-33 flight with the back seat not tied up. Forget about the glider entering the pattern. Slow down and attend to your own business.

3) **Use your checklists.** Always, always, always. Slow down. Do them out loud, do them in sequence. If interrupted, start over. Crew chiefs - feel free to ask. Make sure the dive brakes are locked. Make sure the L-33 canopy is locked. Have a rope break game-plan already prepared and adjusted to the day's conditions. If you think this is overkill, see me.

4) **Pay attention on tow!** Do it by the book: stay low until the tow gets airborne; use proper crosswind techniques; stay in position; use proper signals. Tow pilots should refuse to tow anyone not prepared or not paying attention.

5) **Pay attention to the winds.** Do not get caught downwind. If you do, a well executed off field landing is always better than a questionable return.

6) **Clear.** Clear before release, clear in thermals, clear near the IP and in the pattern.

7) **If the grass is occupied, land on the runway.** If the runway is also occupied, land WELL short using an off-field landing technique. A runway landing gets an Atta-boy. A close call gets you grounded.

8) **No thermalling in the pattern!** This has been preached for years! Once you enter the pattern, commit to landing.

9) **No low, flat, slow finals.** Manage your energy to remain in the sweet spot - a descent angle requiring half dive brakes from base to final is perfect. Make your pattern decisions based on the angle and distance to your touchdown point - not on a geographic position. This will change daily with the winds.

10) **Watch those guests!** They ought to be under the tent or closely supervised. The only people permitted to be a crew chief or wing runner is an appropriately checked-out club member.

Lastly, I need some help. Gentle ribbing for certain soaring indiscretions worked well in the past, but I think we're now in need of a more active, collective approach until we arrest this trend. Speak up! A culture of enforcing adherence to safe procedures will only come from a group effort.

Cheers MC
President