



Practical Guidelines for CIVL/FAI Category 1 Competition Organisers Chapter 8

*Fédération
Aéronautique
Internationale*

2013 Edition
Effective August 2013

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8 Procedures in Case of Accident, Casualty & Emergency

8.1 Introduction

Unfortunately, however vigilant we are to make our events safe, hang gliding and paragliding are risk sports. These notes are intended as general guidance to Competition Organisers who may have to deal with a serious accident. Competition Organisers of FAI Category 1 Championships will be sent a copy of the latest edition of the FAI document, Guidelines in the Event of a Casualty or Serious Accident in FAI Airsports Events. Although this document is largely focused on aircraft operating from an airfield, it is largely relevant to paragliding and hang gliding.

Remember that in accepting the organisation of an event on behalf of the FAI, organisers have both responsibilities and potential liabilities.

8.2 Planning and Preparation

Much has already been covered in earlier chapters, but here is a check list of actions that the Competition Organiser should ensure have been completed before the event starts:

- Raise NOTAM for the event, if needed
- Check Event Insurance to cover liability, rescue charges and other costs. Remember you may also be liable for accident or injury to staff, officials or spectators.
- Advise local police, rescue and other medical emergency services of dates of event
- Investigate national laws, rules and procedures in the case of an air accident or fatality. Always operate in accordance with them
- Ensure you collect at Registration full contact details of all pilots (and Team Leaders), insurance and Next of Kin (NOK) information, special medical conditions or needs
- Ensure this information is readily (centrally) available during the competition
- Make a plan for dealing with incidents or accidents

Ensure that the key staff are involved in producing the plan: Competition Organiser, Meet Director, Safety Director and PR/Communications Officer. Other key people who should be fully cognisant of the plan include: Launch Marshal, Goal Marshal/Chief Judge, HQ Manager, Retrieve Coordinator.

The plan should include the following elements:

- Handling the incident itself (overall coordination, who goes to the scene, who calls emergency services, communicating with emergency services, confirmation of pilot identity and extent of injuries)

- Communication with pilots in the air who witnessed incident; changing frequency to avoid distressing competitors still flying
- Collecting witness statements (MD/SD); Accuracy: collecting video coverage if at target
- Contact with Team Leader; informing NOK and team members
- Accuracy: keeping all people not immediately dealing with the incident clear of the casualty
- Recovering glider and equipment
- Informing FAI
- Official statements/Press statements – release of names, extent of injuries
- National accident investigation procedures
- Continuation of task/event

Additional preparatory actions:

- Make a list of all staff, volunteers and officials who have any formal First Aid training.
- Make a list of medical/emergency numbers, including hospitals, local doctors, paramedics for easy reference.
- Print out a few blank copies of the CIVL Incident Report Form, which are useful for pilots, team leaders and staff to use when collecting or collating incident information.
- Identify at least one further radio frequency that key staff can switch to in order to handle an incident without using the main competition safety frequency.
- Brief video operator at target not to continue filming; to save footage of incident if recorded; and to switch off any live feed to large screens, tv, internet etc.

8.3 Dealing with an Incident

8.3.1 Incidents reported

In cross country competitions, incidents are usually witnessed as pilots fly in gaggles. In such cases, reports are likely to be received by radio on the main competition safety frequency. The Safety Director and Meet Director will have experience in handling these reports and establishing immediate procedures and actions. Much will depend on the nature of the incident, how quickly it can be confirmed whether the pilot requires medical assistance, whether a witness pilot can/should land to assist, etc.

From the perspective of ground staff, it is vital that all reports of incidents that are received during a task are fully verified. It is possible that more than one incident can occur. Do not automatically assume that multiple reports will refer to the same incident.

Live tracking can be both a help and a hindrance in terms of dealing with an incident. At 2013, the software is not always sufficiently reliable to identify or pinpoint the precise location of a pilot suspected of being involved in an incident. Devices can stop working and the pilot will appear to be no longer flying. GPS coordinates from the software can be error-prone. Further, be aware

that with reports of an incident, Live Tracking spectators will speculate on which pilot(s) may be involved.

8.3.2 First actions

It is important to note timings (first reports, emergency services called, verification of pilot identity, extent of injuries etc), track staff involvement, subsequent actions etc.

As soon as possible, try to move communication to a separate frequency, reassuring competition pilots that the incident is being dealt with. If applicable, report back to pilots that the pilot involved in an incident is uninjured, or not badly injured.

In PG Accuracy competitions, incidents are likely to be on launch or at the target. In either case, competition flying may need to be halted for a while. At the target, it is important to protect the injured pilot from being moved before medical staff can check for back or neck injuries. Keep all unnecessary people at a distance, especially the media and public (Judges can do this). Try to prevent photographs/video coverage of the victim.

If helicopter evacuation is required, pilots may need to be alerted and the task/round may need to be stopped.

8.4 Aftermath of an Incident

8.4.1 Incident Report Forms

Whenever possible, the pilot involved in an incident should complete an Incident Report form. This is available on the CIVL website. It need not be the pilot involved who enters the information. Anyone with a CIVL ID can do it. As much information as possible, or is known, should be included (the pilot can remain anonymous). It is better that some data is recorded than none.

Alternatively, the pilot, or Team Leader can start by completing a printed version of the form, so that information is not lost or forgotten. The Competition Organiser should have forms available as an 'aide memoire'.

Try to get witness statements in writing as soon as possible after the incidents, and before they talk to each other or hear others' views on what may have happened, weather conditions experienced along the course, etc. The MD, SD or Competition Director can interview witnesses and complete the forms if necessary, but they should be checked and signed by the witness.

Collate all incident forms and statements with incident logs (of more serious incidents) showing timings and actions, as soon as possible after the incident. Keep copies of all statements and keep them secure.

8.5 Dealing with rumours

Rumours circulate rapidly after reports of incidents and accidents. Do not believe them without independent confirmation from organisational sources. Do not confirm the rumours until the incident coordinator or Competition Organiser makes an official statement. Try to persuade those with unconfirmed incident information not to publicise it until official confirmation is received.

Unfortunately, it is extremely easy for information to be published very rapidly on blogs and social

media. It can be extremely distressing if the NOK of a victim finds out about an accident through such unofficial, unconfirmed channels.

8.6 Releasing information

It is critical that names of casualties are not released, particularly to the media, but also to fellow pilots and others involved in or observing the competition, until NOK have been informed. All staff should be briefed not to confirm rumours, even if they have been personally involved, until an official statement is made. Do not even confirm that a particular pilot was not involved in a particular incident. There may have been more than one incident during the day.

The organisation should make an official statement (verbally, written statement, website announcement etc) as soon as information has been confirmed. This is essential to quash incorrect or misleading rumours, to avoid speculation, and to demonstrate to the media that official information is forthcoming. Statements can be updated regularly; only release confirmed facts and avoid opinions or assumptions, especially on the cause of incidents. For example:

1. "We can confirm that we have heard reports of an incident on launch/on the course line/at the goal field, but we have no further information at this stage. As soon as we have confirmation, we will issue a statement."
2. "We can confirm that there were two reserve deployments during today's task. We will confirm the names of the pilots involved in a second statement to be issued shortly."
3. "We can report no serious injuries from the two incidents during today's task. Pilot x from A and Pilot y from B, who both deployed their reserve parachutes in separate incidents today, have been retrieved. Pilot B has been taken to the local hospital to check out a possible minor injury, but is expected to be back later today."

All statements should be made in conjunction with, or in communication with the appointed PR Officer. The PR Officer can prepare more formal announcements and subsequent statements as necessary. A spokesman (usually the Competition Director, but may also be the MD or PRO) should be appointed to speak to the media.

For more serious accidents or fatalities, statements should be made as soon as the facts can be confirmed and NOK have been informed. Keep to the facts, stating the name and nationality of the pilot, extent of the injuries (when relevant), regrets/condolences, statement to the effect that the accident is under investigation, no conclusions possible, further statements will be made if more information comes to light. Draft statements are available in the FAI Guidelines document.

Statements should be posted on the website and on the competition noticeboards.

8.7 Next Actions

At the next daily briefing, the Meet/Safety Director should inform pilots of the basic facts of the incident(s), follow up, and actions taken.

In the case of a fatality, the competition may be suspended for at least the following day. In any case, the Competition Organiser, Meet and Safety Directors should review the situation, especially

if any potential safety issues have arisen as a result of an incident. It may be appropriate to adjust competition procedures if it can be shown that safety can be improved.

Decisions on the suspension or stopping of a Championship should be made by the Competition Organiser/Meet Director. Such decisions should not be put to a vote, which adds controversy to tragedy.

8.7.1 Communication with other authorities

National laws will dictate which Air Accident Investigation organisations need to be contacted to report incidents. The emergency services may do this also.

Reports should also be sent to the NAC/Federation and to CIVL/FAI.