

RISK ASSESSMENT

Safety Management System provides tools to improve safety at the organisation (manufacturer, school, club) level, but the pilots need something more basic for their everyday's practice. The purpose of the Risk Assessment table is to provide a "safety Swiss knife" to be used while making decision.

Risks can be defined mathematically in a rather simple way, as the likelihood of hazards multiplied by their consequences. To the question "Am I going to hurt myself?", instead of "It should be OK, let's go!", this table is a more structured answer. We are all different at assessing risk, some have a strong preservation instinct, some are self-confident and like thrill. This tool helps taking time, stepping back and watching calmly the situation. It simplifies the hazard identification process of the SMS, making it easy to know by heart and use in an instant, before or during a flight.

Hazards				
Effects	Chance	Catastrophic	Manageable	Negligible
Probable		High	High	Serious
Occasional		High	Serious	Low
Improbable		Serious	Low	Low
		Risks		

The green zone represents where flying looks reasonable, the conservative approach. In the yellow zone, other factors should be assessed: personal worries (divorce, unemployment), "currency" (first flight of season, new equipment), pressure (short on time), fitness (tiredness), weather... One may enter this zone, but staying aware that the odds are higher. The red zone gives access to the statistics. "Is this flight worth my life, the catastrophe for my family, the mourning of my friends and club, the bad impact on my sport?" The decision should be just not to fly. Some examples: aerobatics cannot be green as an adverse outcome is at least possible, cliff or towed launches cannot either as the effects can be catastrophic.

More generally, being a weather expert is considered as normal for pilots. They should have the same expertise in launch and landing skills, psychology and safety knowledge, especially about the human factor. Meanwhile, let us remind the traffic light: "Am I going to fly in the green zone, or in the yellow or red one?" Let us enjoy the green!

Raymond Caux (2015)
CIVL safety officer