

## **What the GNZ Operations Team is Talking About . . .**

A summary of key items discussed at the Operations Team on-line meeting on 1 March 2022.  
David Moody (North), David Hirst (Central), Wal Bethwaite (South) and Martyn Cook (NOO).

### **1. New Appointment to Operations Team**

Warwick (Wal) Bethwaite has agreed to serve as Southern Region Operations Officer following the resignation of Gavin Wills. Warwick brings a wealth of experience to the position, having served as President, Secretary, Treasurer and CFI of the Canterbury club in recent years. A vote of thanks is due to Gavin Wills for the great effort he has made during the last 18 months as Southern ROO.

### **2. Incident Reports for January - February 2022**

- Oudie caught fire after landing and removing from glider - burned 8-10 mins, lots of smoke \*
- duplicate inspection after rigging - picket found in the belly of the glider behind main wheel
- tall pilot in back seat, moderate turbulence on aerotow, head struck canopy and cracked it \*
- main wheel retracted on single seater during landing roll - gear had been locked down
- outlanding in mature crop 2.4m high - no injury but significant damage to glider \*
- potential tow upset - glider climbed high behind tug - glider released before rope became tight
- glider descended vertically and crashed onto ridge shortly after release - suspect stall/spin \*
- glider on tow behind car - wingtip caught on fence - significant damage to glider and car
- pilot failed to visually confirm aerotow rope had released before turning away, rope broke \*
- glider on winch launch came close to another glider circling in a thermal 2/3 way up launch

#### **Commentary on Selected Incidents:**

*Oudie caught fire:* The device had been removed from the glider at the end of the flight and placed in its protective case in a bag on the ground. The flight computer started issuing a steady stream of noxious smoke which continued until most of the flammable plastic had burnt, and the remains were barely recognisable as an electronic item. The pilot comments that if this fire had happened in flight, the cockpit would have filled with enough smoke to make vision and breathing difficult. There are no other known incidents of this type, and the cause of the smoke and fire has not been identified. All aspects of handling and charging have been investigated. There is no record of other Oudie devices spontaneously combusting. However, pilots are reminded that Lithium-Ion or Lithium-Polymer batteries and power packs do have a history of catching fire - remember the Samsung cell phones a few years back.

If you use such a device consider having a plan for dealing with a smoking Lithium-Ion or Li-Po battery, including in your phone or an auxiliary power pack if carried in flight. Toxic smoke can quickly incapacitate the pilot. It may be prudent to jettison the canopy to clear smoke from the cockpit.

*Tall pilot cracks canopy with head:* Tall pilots (and passengers) should be well anchored if their head is close to the canopy. The tall instructor in the rear seat was wearing a baseball-style cap with the button still fitted. This style of cap is not recommended for gliding because the wearer's visibility can be reduced by the bill. In any case the button on top should be removed prior to flight (especially on a tall pilot) as it is a well-known hazard in turbulence. In this case the combination of mild turbulence coupled with the front-seat pilot easing the stick forward to keep the towplane in sight was sufficient to cause the head of the instructor to strike the canopy with moderate force, leaving a circular crack in the perspex.

*Outlanding in mature crop:* A formal incident report has not yet been tabled. The initial report describes how the pilot continued to fly at low level for several kilometres in weak ridge lift before finally being forced to land. The flight trace shows that a number of suitable landing areas were overflowed at well below the normal height to start a circuit. If one of these landing options had been prudently selected the aircraft could have been landed and retrieved without damage.

*Fatal crash onto ridge:* The single seat glider had been launched by aerotow on a day with no wind and quite weak thermals at low level. A short time afterwards the aircraft was observed circling just above a ridge. It impacted the ground vertically downwards and the crash was unsurvivable. The CAA is investigating. No flight trace was able to be recovered. A medical event has not been ruled out. However, indications are consistent with a stall/spin event.

*Pilot failed to visually confirm rope release:* At the top of the aerotow launch the pilot pulled the release, "felt the rope release" and turned away. But the rope had not released. The turn pulled the towplane well out of position until its nose was pointing nearly vertically downwards, at which point the rope broke. Fortunately there was sufficient height for the towplane to recover. There are two tow upset incidents being reported this period. These are serious events which have ended in fatal crashes of towplanes in the past. It is absolutely up to every glider pilot to prevent them.

The approved procedure is to firmly pull the release twice - then visually confirm that the rope has released from the glider before promptly initiating a turn to the right. The *Eventualities* checklist for aerotow includes a reminder that if you get out of position and cannot recover promptly - or you lose sight of the tug - release immediately. Don't put the tow pilot's life in danger!

### **3. Memorandum of Understanding with Air Training Corps**

A draft Advisory Circular (AC 2-12) has been submitted to ATC for review and acceptance. This AC arose because of two incidents at an ATC flying day almost one year ago, where inadequate supervision by adults (both ATC and Gliding) was found to be a significant factor. It was noted that at this stage there is no written basis for collaboration between Gliding NZ and ATC. A pre-release copy of the AC can be made available to clubs expecting to run ATC or other youth flying days in the near future.

### **4. Suspension of Pilot-in-Command (PiC) Privileges**

A draft paper has been submitted to the Executive on the above subject. The document aims to provide guidance to CFI's and senior instructors who may be called upon to assess a pilot who is causing concern though repeated lapses of airmanship or situational awareness.

Many instructors will have worked with trainee pilots who - despite best efforts and intentions - seem unable to learn at the normal rate, show periodic lapses of competency and seem unable to conduct themselves safely in the gliding environment. While almost all pilots are willing to recognise and accept their own limitations - especially when lapses are brought to their attention - there are a very small number who brush such advice aside and try to carry on regardless.

It is the view of the Ops Team that Gliding NZ has a *duty of care* to prevent these pilots flying as pilot in command due to the high likelihood they will kill or seriously injure themselves or others.

The paper outlines a just and fair-minded approach to working with such pilots.

The view was expressed that one of the strengths of the gliding movement in NZ is "how hard we try to keep people flying." In some cases we might try too hard, and it can end badly. If PiC privileges were suspended these pilots would still be able to enjoy our sport as second pilot in a two-seat glider.

Martyn Cook  
National Operations Officer  
6 March 2022