

Appendix 14 Safety & Training Report – CIVL Plenary, February 2007

Mr. President
Dear Delegates

what I am going to say now is not a report of the safety and training meeting. There was no meeting. Because nobody came to the meeting. And there is no such thing as a safety and training committee working during the year due to lack of participation. But that does not mean that CIVL is not working on safety issues. At present the CIVL hang gliding committee deals with hang gliding safety issues and the CIVL paragliding committee deals with paragliding safety issues. This makes sense. Therefore I have asked the president and the bureau to reconsider the working structure of CIVL.

He seems to be in favour to maintain a safety chairman who coordinates all safety and training issues. Maybe we will have a new structure where the safety and training chairman would work together with the chairmen of all the CIVL sub committees. This will be discussed and decided by the CIVL bureau.

Certainly one of the tasks of the safety and training chairman is to collect the accident and incident data of the FAI competitions and analyse them.

There is a CIVL accident and incident report form. It should be sent to the bureau and to the Safety Chairman shortly after each FAI category 1 event. It is necessary that Stewards and Jury members take care that all accidents and incidents are investigated as careful as possible. We should be in a position to tell all pilots what has happened and what we can learn from it.

For example: We had a FAI category 2 event in Australia recently. There an Austrian hang gliding pilot died. We had no CIVL officials there and therefore it is not easy for us to get proper information. What we know meanwhile: there has been a high speed tuck, the pitch setting of the glider has been far too low, and the parachute rescue did not work because the harness failed. It was a certified harness but has been modified. Pilots worldwide can learn a lot from this accident. (We will have a report on the CIVL safety web site as soon we have got the official accident report.) Therefore we should make it a rule that also from FAI category 2 events the incidents and accidents have to be reported in due time to CIVL.

But at least in FAI category 1 events our officials should take care that a proper investigation takes place after all relevant incidents and that a report goes to the CIVL safety chairman. For example we should have heard from the worlds in Florida that two gliders had tumbled and in one case the rescue parachute was not open before the pilot fell into a tree. He was lucky and did not get hurt.

I would like to add a more basic remark.

When I see all the CIVL experts discussing the factors and curves of scoring formulas, trying to improve them every year, I am wondering: Is there also a formula for safety?

I need the help of mathematicians here. There are a lot of factors influencing the level of safety in our competitions but 3 of them seem to be most important:

T (Turbulences) P (Pilotqualification) E (Equipment)

If competition takes place in strong turbulences = number of accidents goes up.

If pilot qualification is very low = number of accidents goes up.

If equipment is not well tested = number of accidents goes up.

It seems to be easy: If we rule out turbulences, have only pilots in our competitions with very high qualification (skills), using only well tested equipment = number of accidents would go down. We would achieve a very high safety level.

Why is it not that easy?

Let us look at factor T. Competition directors are always under pressure to get enough tasks flown. They often are tempted to try a task even in turbulent conditions. Therefore we have made the safety director mandatory. But it is important that the safety director is in fact very safety minded and that he stays in close contact with the pilots. The bureau should try very hard to make sure that the safety directors are suitable.

Let us look at factor P. Because of the FAI philosophy that pilots from all nations should be allowed to participate in FAI category 1 events, we have made a compromise here. Not only the best qualified pilots come to our events also pilots with lesser skills participate. But at least we have toughened the qualification rule today.

Let us look at factor E. We have seen some efforts for having only well tested equipment in FAI competitions in the past. Serial Class was one idea in paragliding but it failed to get the majority vote in CIVL.

Knowing that we are weak on factor E we should at least be all the more careful with factor T and P.

Concerning training: There seems to be no wish to change safe pro and para pro at the moment but to add towing and aerobatics. Agust is trying to get a specialist from the Nordic countries working out a draft for the next CIVL meeting.