

# SIMULATION PACK

Incident Management of a Paragliding Accident



# Introduction

We believe that running a simulation in your club is a hugely valuable exercise. It brings the club together, while revealing the challenges of accident management in your local area in a safe and controlled environment.

In this pack we suggest an example scenario, though it is by no means prescriptive. Use any scenario you feel appropriate for your location and your group of pilots. We would suggest not overcomplicating the medical details, as first aid is only one part of the exercise. Indeed, a good accident simulation should test the following:

- Approach to the scene: making it safe to avoid further injury
- Group dynamics: good leadership and followership
- Assessment and treatment of the casualty
- Planning and execution of the casualty evacuation.

Alongside the participants, the scenario we suggest requires a Narrator, an Observer, a Casualty and an Emergency Call Handler. Each has their own sheet of instructions.

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# Narrator

Your role is to brief the participants and to provide any further details and 'backstory' required to keep the participants on track and immersed in the simulation.

Prior to the simulation beginning, bring everyone together to explain the aim of the exercise and the 'ground rules'.

The aim is for the participants to immerse themselves in the simulated environment and to learn from the mistakes of the group. The ground rules are there to maintain an element of realism and to encourage the participants to act as they normally would if an accident happened during a club weekend.

Ask them to keep their usual roles in the club during the simulation, to wear their typical flying gear and to carry their standard equipment.

Explain that the participants must demonstrate their intended actions wherever possible. In other words, if they want to know if the casualty's foot is pale, then they must take off the casualty's boot. If they want to know the pulse rate, they need to feel for it in the correct place. The same applies to treatments. If they want to use a particular piece of equipment from their first aid kit, then they need to either actually use it or, if it is single use, show the equipment to you and say how they would apply it. If they wish to call for help, then make them phone someone in the club who is acting as an Emergency Call Handler.

Finally, encourage them to keep the simulation experience confidential. In other words, what happens during the simulation should not be discussed outwith the session. While this may seem a little over-the-top, the aim is to make the participants worry less about their 'performance' and to act more normally.

Once this briefing is complete, you then explain the scenario.

"It is early spring, and the club has had a successful day flying. Pilots are in the landing field in various stages of packing up. Some gliders are still mushroomed waiting to be packed. Over the last half an hour, the wind strength has markedly increased. The last paraglider coming in to land is almost static over the field as she descends facing into the wind. As she lands, she trips, the glider falls and catches the wind, dragging her across the ground until it wraps around a tree. You hear her crying for help."

The pilot is alert, but in a lot of pain. Her open-face helmet is mildly damaged where it hit the tree and she has some minor cuts to her face. She is clutching her lower leg, which appears to be floppy and at an angle. She is pale and distressed but her hands are warm. Her breathing is normal in character but rapid. Her pulse is elevated.

# Casualty

You are playing yourself, whether you are a competition pilot or a beginner. Adapt the story to make it as realistic as possible. Try to put yourself in the position of the casualty – what happened? What hurts? Are you cold? Thirsty? Scared?

The participants were given this scenario:

“It is early spring, and the club has had a successful day flying. Pilots are in the landing field in various stages of packing up. Some gliders are still mushroomed waiting to be packed.

Over the last half an hour, the wind strength has markedly increased. The last paraglider coming in to land is almost static over the field as she descends facing into the wind. As she lands, she trips, the glider falls and catches the wind, dragging her across the ground until it wraps around a tree. You hear her crying for help.”

You are alert but you are in a lot of pain. Your open-face helmet is mildly damaged where it hit the tree and you have some minor cuts to your face. You are clutching your lower leg, which appears to be floppy and at an angle. You are certain that it is broken and will need a lot of reassurance before you let anyone touch it. You are also worried that your new glider will be torn by the tree.

# Call Handler

Make the participants actually call someone in the club when asking for an ambulance or mountain rescue. It is excellent communication practice and will throw up issues like mobile phone reception, or problems identifying the accident location.

Depending on the conversation, the person playing the role of the emergency call handler should ask for the following information:

- 1 - Number of casualties, name and ages
- 2 - Nature of their injuries
- 3 - Who else is in the group and what equipment you have
- 4 - The accident time and location
- 5 - Any issues with rescuer access or hazards on site

Then the handler should give the participants some information, such as 'a helicopter will be with you in 45 minutes, please move the casualty to a sheltered area and clear a landing site'.

# Observer(s)

Your role is to watch the simulation, so as to provide constructive feedback during the debriefing that will follow. For those observing the scenario, here are some key points to look out for and comment on during the debriefing.

## APPROACH

- Identified any dangers on approach
- Pilots secured their own gear
- Promptly secured the gear of the crashed pilot

## GROUP DYNAMICS

- Clearly identified leader
- Leader stood back from the casualty to maintain situational awareness
- Leader allocated appropriate roles to appropriate people
- Followers completed any tasks given as directed
- Followers reported back to the leader when the task was complete
- Leader was kept informed but was not overloaded with information by the group
- The group had a good overall understanding of the situation and the plan

## ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT

- The pilot was assessed systematically and key injuries were identified
- The crashed pilot was protected from the elements – in particular, kept warm – and was given reassurance
- Appropriate treatment was commenced in a timely fashion
- Thought was given to treating the pilot's pain

## HELP AND EVACUATION

- A call was made to the appropriate service soon after the accident
- The person making the call had all the required information at hand; in particular, they were able to give an accurate accident location
- Any requests made by the rescue services were dealt with

# Debriefing

The aim of the debriefing is to allow all participants to analyse the events in each scenario, and the consequences of key behaviours and actions. As an effective scenario will have been a little stressful for the participants, their recall of events may vary. Therefore it is important that at least one observer be present in the debriefing to give an accurate account of the simulation.

Videoing the simulation, with the permission of all involved, may be a useful tool in removing confusion when trying to recall events. Using video playback is also an effective way of improving the situational awareness of each team member – they may have been absorbed in their own actions during the simulation, but the video allows an overview of the scenario as a whole.

The debriefing should focus on the good points of the simulation, as well as the challenges that it presented. These good points and challenges should be identified by each participant, then an agenda set for the debriefing discussion. The person who was acting as observer should lead this discussion.

The debriefing process will require at least 30-60 minutes discussion, ideally in a calm environment where each team member can be given the chance to air their own opinions and learning points. Try to steer people away from lengthy personal anecdotes, excessive self-criticism or harsh criticism of others. Try to think more about group dynamics and the 'system' as a whole, rather than the performance of specific individuals.

Once good points and challenges have been identified, the group can then choose which areas require in depth discussion.

Typical challenges include a lack of team working, impaired performance under stress, a lack of knowledge, difference in opinion during the scenario, failure to seek appropriate help or an inability to give an accurate location.

Each team member should reflect actively on what happened, the results of certain actions and behaviours, and how things could be done differently to better look after a crashed pilot in the future. This process is the most difficult part of the debriefing however it is key, as any challenges that occur during a simulated scenario will almost certainly occur in real life.

At the end of the debriefing a list of take-home messages from the simulation should be compiled. These are the points that each team member has learned from the simulation and will use in the future. They should be volunteered by each team member and be based upon learning from the debriefing process.