

## 2025 Soaring Accident Summary

By Soaring Safety Foundation Trustees

For the twelve-month period ending October 31, 2025 seventeen (17) gliders, four (4) motor-gliders, and one (1) towplane were involved in twenty-two (22) separate accidents that met the reporting requirements of NTSB, 49 CFR 830. This represents a 4.8% increase the number of accidents reported during the previous 12 month reporting period. The five-year average for the FY21 – FY25 reporting period is 21 accidents per year, representing no change in the average number of accidents from the previous five-year period.

While the average number of accidents per year has shown a steady decline since 1981 (averaging 45.6/year in the 80's, 38.6/year in the 90's, 33.5/year in the 00's, 25.5/year for the 10's, and 21.2/year for this decade) the number of accidents each year remains too high.

The good news is that the average number of fatal accidents is starting to show a small decline over the past 5 years, decreasing from 5.9/year to 5.2/year in FY25. However, that is still considered too high and more needs to be done to reduce fatal accidents. In the FY25 reporting period, three (3) accidents resulted in fatal injuries to the pilots. In addition, four (4) pilots received serious injuries while seventeen (17) pilots and passengers received minor or no injuries in these nineteen (19) non-fatal accidents.

While the number of accidents reported to the NTSB is easy to track (Figure 1), and that number has been declining for both Gliders, and General Aviation as a whole, it is important that this number must be combined with flight hours or launches to determine the accident rate. Several years ago the SSF Trustees began asking all soaring organizations (clubs, chapters, commercial operators) to submit their flight times/launches in a confidential manner. This is done by mailing postcards to the organizations' representative listed in the SSA's database. For the past eight (8) years approximately 30% of the organizations have returned these postcards.

In January 2026, another mailing occurred, readers of this article are encouraged ask their organization to respond. Getting better data via soaring organizations confidentially reporting this data will help clarify this situation. In addition, the SSF began a real-time collection process capturing the number of participating gliders, the number of launches and flight time data using the Open Glider Network (OGN) system. A table showing year-to-date, and weekly data has been added to the our web site <http://www.soaringsafety.org>. Due to the lack of information regarding the number of gliders that report data into the OGN system and uncertain coverage areas, survey data is still needed to calibrate this OGN data.

A quick review of the fatal accidents show that the pilot of an ASH-24 glider was fatally injured after it stalled and spun in while attempting to land. The tow-pilot in a Pawnee was fatally injured after impacting terrain due to the glider kiting on take-off. The pilot of an ASW 27-18 (ASG-29) was fatally injured after the glider impacted the side of a mountain for unknown reasons. These fatal accidents are still under investigation by the NTSB.



As with previous years, the NTSB aviation accident database is missing data on four (4) of these twenty-two (22) accidents. Details will be included in future reports and in FIRC presentations as that data is made available.

In FY25 eleven (11) landing accidents represented 50% of all accidents. Seven (7) out of eleven (11) or (64%) of the landing accidents occurred while the pilot was attempting to land at an airport, while the other four (4) or (36%) occurred while attempting an off-airport landings. Details of these accidents are given in the full report.

There were four (4) launch accidents in FY25, one (1) of them fatal, one (1) serious, and two (2) with no injuries. There were two (2) cruise flight accidents in FY25. Details on these accidents will be given in the full report.

There were four (4) motor-gliders involved in accidents during the FY25 reporting period. See the full report for more details.

While the number of accidents has remained constant, it remains to be seen if how number of hours flown or launches made has changed. Please respond to the SSF and/or FAA survey for 2025 to get us the data we need to understand this change.

The Soaring Safety Foundation also encourages each and every individual to be constantly aware of and manage their own personal risk factors as they fly gliders and towplanes. This includes setting your own personal minimums for weather, thermalling decision height, and other factors that impact your safety. Using the IMSAFE checklist and maintaining our flying proficiency not just your flying currency are other factors that impact your personal safety. We highly encourage the use of the FAA WINGS program when complying with the FAR 61.56 Flight Review requirement.

We must collectively continue to monitor the safety culture that exists in the club or commercial operation we fly at, remembering that WE are the safety culture. Please adopt the mantra "If you SEE something, SAY something" to your clubs BOD, Safety Officer or Owner. Having a Safety Culture that works means that every individual needs to participate. Lets strive for fewer accidents and zero fatalities in 2026!

The Soaring Safety Foundation continues to provide tools for your location to enhance safety. We offer a confidential Site Survey that gives your operation an objective look at how you are doing. We also offer Safety Seminars at your location as a part of our ongoing commitment to safety. Our Flight Instructor Refresher Courses (FIRC) allow ANY certified Flight Instructor to reset the Recency of Experience end data on their certificate in a highly interactive in-person format. In addition, CFI's can now use the FIRC to reinstate their certificate, provided their instructor privileges have expired within the preceding 3 calendar months. More information on these and our growing collection of on-line safety and training programs can be found on our website ([www.soaringsafety.org](http://www.soaringsafety.org)).

The full report is available at (<http://www.soaringsafety.org/accidentprev/ssfreports.html>).



