



## **Emergency Response Plan Suggestions for Soaring Sites**

by Burt Compton - Soaring Safety Foundation

How would you respond to a wingrunner falling and seriously scrapping their hands and knees? A bee sting? A glider that has landed just off the airport and has run through a fence, trapping the pilot and the passenger in the cockpit? A towplane that flips over after a bad landing, and now has fuel dripping onto a hot engine?

If the accident appears to be serious, call 911 and get help on the way. Don't hesitate, as you may cancel a 911 call. Designate one person as the "Emergency Response Coordinator" to manage the situation.

Accomplish the following items simultaneously.

**Care for the Injured.** In the case of scrapped knees, a substantial First Aid kit with large bandages and tape is necessary. The kit should be maintained with up-to-date supplies and all supplies used must be immediately replaced. Consider stocking an antihistamine for bee stings.

Knowing how to deal with shock and heat stroke is important. Is anyone at your soaring site a doctor, nurse, or paramedic?

Serious injuries require expert attention. Do not move the injured if neck and back injuries are suspected, unless a fire is imminent.

Designate one person to maintain the First Aid Kit and clearly mark its location at your soaring site. Make everyone aware of the location of the First Aid Kit.

**Fight the Fire.** Do you have enough Fire Extinguishers with a current recharge? Before the fire begins, try to save the pilot. Hangar fires are also a concern, as well as fires near the fuel pumps. Fuel-related fires can be terrible and almost impossible to extinguish once they start. Review your fuel handling procedures and make everyone aware of the location and use of the fire extinguishers.

**Rescue the Pilot and Passenger.** That Leatherman tool or Swiss Army knife in your pocket won't do much to extract a person from a damaged aircraft. If no fire hazard, wait for the Emergency Medical Team, to avoid further injury to the pilot or passenger. If power wires are down, stay clear and wait for expert help.

**Specific tools** must be acquired and designated for crash use only: Axes, Crowbars (2), Wire Cutters capable of cutting control cables, Hacksaws, Metal Shears, Rope (to pull a flipped aircraft upright), Gloves. Make everyone aware of the purpose and location of the crash tools. Store in a red box that is clearly marked "Crash Tools Only".

**Call for Emergency Help (911).** This should be done immediately. Time is critical in getting expert help.

**DOES 911 KNOW YOUR ADDRESS?** Does your soaring site have a specific address listed with the 911 Operator, or are you located far out in the country, down an unmarked road? Have you maintained good directional signs to your airport, or are your signs faded or hidden behind weeds? **CAN EMERGENCY SERVICES FIND YOU WHEN TIME IS RUNNING OUT?**

Invite your local emergency medical teams and the fire department to visit your airport every year. They welcome training opportunities, and if they have visited your site recently, the drivers will know exactly where to go. Make this a regular invitation, and share your emergency response plan with them.

**Secure the Aircraft and Accident Scene.** Refer to FAR 830 regarding NTSB requirements for accident reporting. String up a towrope to keep onlookers far away. Ask the media to leave. If the accident meets the specifications of FAR 830, contact the NTSB, through your local FAA FSDO office. The police and media might also call the FAA, before you do.

**The Media.** Expect to be interviewed by the press. Designate one person to speak to the media. "No comment" is highly recommended. Your recorded speculations or opinions may be used against you in an investigation or lawsuits. The media will try to interview "witnesses" about what happened, so ask everyone to decline interviews, no matter how flattering it might seem. Respond only to the government authorities and only state the facts. Discretion may save you trouble if potential lawsuits or FAA actions follow.

**Contact Next of Kin.** Maintain a list of all glider pilots, towpilots, line crew and "regulars" at your site. Obtain their cellphone numbers and ask them to update their emergency contacts and telephone numbers often.

**Review and Update Your Emergency Response Plan.** Every 90 days, have your Emergency Response Coordinator update and review the existing plan with all club members. Check the currency of the Emergency Services contacts, next of kin contacts, First Aid Kit, Fire Extinguishers and Crash Tools. Let everyone know that an Emergency Response Plan exists.

The Soaring Safety Foundation (SSF) offers free “Site Surveys” of your soaring site by your invitation. To schedule a survey to receive confidential observations of your training and safety procedures, visit the SSF website at [www.soaringsafety.org](http://www.soaringsafety.org)

