



2022 Soaring Accident Summary

By Soaring Safety Foundation Trustees

For the twelve-month period ending October 31, 2022, twenty (20) gliders, three (3) motorgliders, two (2) towplanes, and two (2) Light-Sport gliders were involved in twenty-seven (27) separate accidents meeting the reporting requirements of NTSB Part 830 of the Code of Federal Regulation. This represents a 22.7% increase in the number of accidents reported during the previous 12 month reporting period. The five-year average for the FY18 – FY22 reporting period is 24.4 accidents per year, representing a 2.52% increase 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 23.7/year for this decade) the number of accidents each year remains too high.

In addition, the average number of fatalities has remained nearly constant, at just under 6 per year since the mid 1990's and is also considered too high. In the FY22 reporting period six (6) accidents resulted in fatal injuries to six (6) pilots. In addition, three (3) pilots received serious injuries while twenty-three (23) pilots and passengers received minor or no injuries in these eighteen (18) 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 organization representative listed in the SSA's database. For the past five (5) years approximately 30% of the organizations have returned these postcards. In February 2022, another mailing occurred, readers of this article are encouraged to ask their organization to respond. Getting better data via soaring organizations confidentially reporting this data will help clarify this situation.

A review of the six (6) fatal accidents showed that the pilot of a D13-15 Sun Dancer Light-Sport glider in NV was fatally injured after striking 60 ft high power lines for unknown reasons. The pilot of an ASW-19B glider in FL received fatal injuries while attempting to return to the runway following an aborted aerotow, the elevator pushrod was found disconnected from the flight control. The student pilot of a SGS 2-33 was fatally injured in NJ after striking trees and terrain while landing. The deceased pilot of a SGS 1-35 was found strapped in the undamaged cockpit in TX after failing to return from a flight. The pilot of a 304MS was fatally injured in CO after encountering a microburst downdraft while attempting to land. The pilot of a Pipistrel Sinus was fatally injured in TX, and the passenger received serious injuries while attempting to land. All fatal accidents are still under investigation by the NTSB, more details may be given in the full report available at (<http://www.soaringsafety.org/accidentprev/ssfreports.html>).



As was noted last year, the NTSB aviation accident database is not being updated as frequently as in the past. As of this report the database does not contain any description of the accident in seven (7) of the twenty-seven (27) or 10% of the accidents. This makes it impossible to place these 7 accidents in one of the 3 (take-off, cruise, landing) categories the SSF uses. The SSF will update the community as information becomes available.

In FY22 eleven (11) landing accidents represented 40.7% of all accidents. Approximately 2/3's (63.6%) of the landing accidents occurred while the pilot was attempting to land at an airport, while the other 1/3rd (36.4%) occurred while attempting an off-field landing. Details of these accidents are given in the full report.

Three (3) non-fatal and one (1) fatal aborted launch accidents, called PT3 (premature termination of the tow) events, occurred in FY22 accounted for 14.8% of the accidents. The fatal accident, described above, involved the ASW-19. See the full report for more detail.

There were three (3) motorgliders involved in accidents during the FY22 reporting period. See the full report for more details.

