

## THE VALUE OF CLUB MANAGEMENT

By: Pat Costello and Burt Compton  
For The Soaring Safety Foundation

Whether they are properly or poorly managed, clubs are going to have accidents. Insurance companies believe poorly managed clubs will have more losses than their counterparts. In addition, they feel the poorly managed clubs will have larger losses.

So how do insurance companies identify poorly managed clubs? Initially, the club is asked a series of questions about their equipment, location, loss history, key pilots, flight instructors, and their management. If insured, they are typically asked to complete a renewal application and furnish information on their key pilots every three years. Should a loss occur the company reviews this underwriting information, the details of the initial loss report, and data from the loss investigation for indicators of management issues. The initial loss report can be very telling. Compare these two reports and see.

### **ABC flying club calls their broker to report a loss with a Grob 103. The claims department receives something like this from the broker:**

Date of loss?	3-1-14
Pilot?	Joe Blow
Club member?	Yes.
Age?	Don't know.
Grade of Pilot Certificate?	Club officer thinks Private but not sure.
Total glider pilot time?	Don't know.
Total time in Grob 103?	Don't know, but he thinks it's "a lot".
Type of flight?	Don't know.
Passenger on board?	Don't know.
Injuries?	Don't know.
What happened?	Off airport landing.
Where is the glider now?	Don't know.

### **XYZ Flying Club's Grob 103 Initial Claim Report:**

Date of loss?	3-1-14
Pilot?	Joe Blow
Club member?	Yes.
Age?	56
Grade of Pilot Certificate?	Commercial Glider
Total glider pilot time?	357 hours.
Total time in Grob 103?	59 hours.
Type of flight?	Sightseeing flight for hire.
Passenger on board?	Yes.
Injuries?	All appear fine but sent to hospital for checkup.
Passenger's name?	Mary Paxx.
What happened?	Off airport landing, hit hidden rocks on rollout.
Where is the glider now?	It was trailered back to airport.

Which loss report gives the impression of a poorly managed club? If you were an insurance underwriter receiving this report from your claims department, wouldn't you assume ABC Flying Club is poorly managed thus representing an increased potential for more losses?

A club's image is important to its membership, guests, airport management, and the club's insurance company. The benefit of being a well-managed club is a good reputation, fewer losses, reduced down time for the fleet from accidents, continued insurability, and if insured through the Soaring Society of America Group plan---claims free rate credits, and most importantly, the safety of pilots and passengers.

What constitutes good club management? Here are some observations which may be of value. They were derived from 61 Soaring Safety Foundation site surveys of clubs across the USA.

**Confirm that every pilot has a FAA Pilot Certificate.** Look at it. "Paper" certificates (except students) are no longer valid and must be replaced online at [www.faa.gov](http://www.faa.gov) with the new "plastic" certificates. Make an enlarged photocopy of the front and back. Don't assume that every glider pilot has a Student, Private or Commercial certificate. A "transition pilot" may have received a "lifetime" logbook endorsement per FAR 61.31(d) to solo a glider in the course of training for a Private or Commercial but never took the Practical Test to "add on" the glider category to their pilot certificate. Foreign licensed pilots must hold a FAA pilot certificate to fly "N" registered aircraft as pilot in command. Towpilots should provide club management a copy of their pilot certificate and most recent FAA medical certificate.

**Flight Reviews.** Insurance companies can exclude coverage if the pilot operating the aircraft at the time of a loss did not have a valid flight review, required per FAR 61.56. It is considered good management to have the flight reviews done in the club's aircraft whenever possible.

**Do you really want a "hands off" management approach?** Representatives from the Soaring Safety Foundation have heard some club personnel say pilot certification and flight reviews are "between the FAA and the pilot". In short, they are abdicating their management responsibilities to the FAA. Insurance carriers seldom offer coverage to clubs without some form of self-policing.

**Currency vs. Proficiency.** For carrying passengers, a minimum of three landings is required in the glider category within the preceding 90 days per FAR 61.57. Well-managed clubs may insist on more recent currency for all pilots in the club gliders along with periodic re-checks to maintain proficiency. A re-check syllabus may include a review of aircraft performance, emergency signals, local airport operations, area airspace and weather phenomena.

**Standardization.** Develop a "Checkout Syllabus" that is custom made for your club environment with checkout standards that may exceed the FAA minimums. Are high-time or racing pilots held to the same safety standards? Are your CFG's teaching in a consistent manner from a club-specific syllabus?

**Towpilot Currency.** Read FAR 61.69 carefully. All towpilots must meet the 24 month tow currency requirements.

**Record Keeping.** Assign a club manager to continuously update the Pilot Information Logs. Include new cell phone numbers and emergency contacts. As club management changes each year, do not let the record-keeping lapse. Stale information is useless.

The Soaring Safety Foundation “Safety Officer’s Training Guide” offers a template for Pilot Information Logs, an index of glider FAR’s, and suggestions for good club management. It can be downloaded from the SSF’s website: [www.soaringsafety.org](http://www.soaringsafety.org)

Good club management can translate into a safe operation, which will protect club equipment, maintain insurability, enhance the club’s public image, and protect club members and their guests. Good club management equals a safe and fun time for all!