

DEALING WITH THE MEDIA FOLLOWING A FATALITY (OR SERIOUS INJURY)

The BHPA does not have a full time Press Officer. These notes do not constitute formal policy but may serve as a useful guide if your club is approached by the media following an accident.

CLUB FORUM (Nip it in the bud)

We have heard reports that there was a fatality on [Site] today. We have no details as yet, but if anyone was present on the hill and has ANY information, please fill in an Incident Report Form (IRF), available on the BHPA website, or contact one of the Technical Officers at the BHPA. Please provide information as soon as possible to assist with the investigation. Our condolences go out to family and friends at this sad time.

Members are reminded not to speculate about cause or circumstances. Anything you say in public, or write in an email or on a forum, is on the record and can be used by the press or legal teams. If you were on the site at any time today fill in an IRF. We will publish the name of the deceased here once it has been released.

PRESS STATEMENT – [BHPA/CLUB NAME]

We have been deeply shocked and saddened by the news of the death/serious injury of [Full Name] who was involved in an accident on [Date] at [Site] near [Town] in [Area].

(Adjust as appropriate)[First Name] was very well known in the [Club] for [his/her] enthusiasm and approachable nature. [He/She] was well respected on the hill and during social activities. [First Name] was an experienced and knowledgeable pilot and an active member of the club.

Little is known at present about what happened and it would be wrong to speculate about it at this stage. The British Hang gliding and Paragliding Association (BHPA) will carry out a full investigation, and any witnesses are encouraged to contact them directly. Our condolences go out to [his/her] family and friends at this very sad time: our thoughts are with them.

IF PRESSED

Q. Is hang/paragliding dangerous?

A. Hang gliding and paragliding are not inherently dangerous but, as with all types of aviation, mistakes can have very serious consequences. We make every effort to minimise the risk and our members agree that the benefits outweigh the residual risk.

Q. It has been suggested that such dangerous sports should be banned. Would you like to comment?

A. We could all wrap ourselves in a blanket and watch television all day. That would be fairly safe, but it wouldn't provide us with a great quality of life. Some of us choose more exhilarating pastimes in the full knowledge that accidents occasionally happen. Should we ban mountaineering, horse riding and driving a car as well?

Q. Is it licensed?

A. The CAA recognises the British Hang gliding and Paragliding Association (BHPA) as the governing body for the sports of Hang Gliding and Paragliding in the UK. The BHPA registers flying schools who comply with its standards of training, licences suitably qualified instructors and provides an approved Pilot training scheme which leads to recognised qualifications.

Q. Will you make any changes in light of this accident?

A. Once the accident report has been completed members will be encouraged to study its findings and use it to reduce the risk of re-occurrence.

Q. Are pilots insured?

A. Membership of the BHPA includes 3rd party liability up to a sum of £5m.

Q. Are all members of your club also members of the BHPA?

A. Only members of the BHPA are allowed to join our club.