

The importance of Advanced Glider Control training through SIV and Pilotage courses

More than one recent Formal Investigation report into a fatal accident recorded that a pilot was unable to extricate themselves from an asymmetric collapse. This pattern is unfortunately common from earlier years too. Paraglider pilots are reminded that the best way to learn how to control and recover from departures from normal flight is to undertake training focused on Advanced Glider Control (commonly called an 'SIV' or 'Pilotage' course), where they can learn and practice the correct actions under professional guidance over water.

Advanced Glider Control training has undergone a transformation in the last few years and is now far more responsive to a pilot's own individual abilities and experience, or lack thereof. It is also worth considering a repeat prescription after a period of time; recovery techniques need to be kept sharp and a pilot's confidence in their ability to execute them needs to be maintained.

Undertaking Advanced Glider Control training can inspire a pilot's confidence, ability and understanding – nothing beats being taught the theory, and then regaining control of a canopy, in a practical and controlled environment. Although the conditions encountered on an SIV or 'Pilotage' course aren't quite like the 'real thing', participants usually report that they feel they are a better pilot for the experience.

A number of Formal Investigation reports have pointed to paramotor pilots having been unable to regain control after departures from stable flight. Although the mass of the engine and frame is likely to have some detrimental effect on recovery (note that even certified paramotor wings are not actually tested in flight with a paramotor), departures from normal flight with a paramotor attached can normally be recovered using standard paraglider control responses.

There are no providers of Advanced Glider Control training that will use a paramotor during their courses, but at least one provider runs paramotor-specific training as an adjunct to normal SIV work. Such a course would address the issue of trimmer settings, as most paramotor-specific wings fitted with trimmers will only have passed any certification they may possess with the trimmers set at neutral. Pilots report that such training is very useful for the paramotor environment.

Such training would also dispel the widely-held view that reflex paramotor wings are always 'safer'. Reflex, to a degree, will make a wing more resistant to collapse, but if provoked enough by turbulence or poor handling a reflex wing will collapse. When a wing flying on full fast trim does collapse ... it will do so rapidly and quite likely violently.

Attending Advanced Glider Control training on an SIV course is recommended for all paraglider and paramotor pilots. It is the only safe and reliable way to become familiar with the correct recovery techniques in the event of a departure from normal flight.