

# Safety Meeting Flight Operations

## Van Sant Airport

### 8/13/2022

Meeting began with intros from Dave Cooke, and Bill VanArtsdalen of the Allentown FSDO FFAST Team. Bar's work on safely integrating glider and power operations at Van Sant over the years was acknowledged. Bar pointed out that broad cooperation was needed to keep things safe – attempts to impose rules did not work out well in the past. Bar's ideas are suggestions, but he is pleased that they have been adopted over time.

#### Bar reviewed the operations diagram

- (Andrew McVicar and Dave Turner were acknowledged for turning Bar's thoughts into a professional-looking, machine-readable diagram)
- Bar pointed out hot spots, especially where the runways converge
- "Eyeballs" marked on the diagram are places where aircraft and vehicles towing gliders need to stop and look for traffic
- Power pilots were told that gliders being towed on the ground towards runway R07 will hold at the corner of the office, and only proceed to the R07 glider-only taxiway when it is safe
- Bar emphasized the need for transient aircraft to park in the area assigned for them (marked "Transient Parking" on the diagram)
  - Visiting aircraft need to stay away from the powered operations area near the office (marked "no parking" on the diagram)
  - These areas are for fueling, aircraft maintenance, and passenger rides
  - There was a request from the audience for better signage for the transient area – Bar explained that the county parks department, which now owns the airport, will not allow extra signage
  - There were also audience suggestions for posting the ops diagram at other nearby airports, on "Foreflight", etc.
- All of us based on the airport can help by spreading the word to other pilots, and speaking politely with visitors when necessary to explain our procedures

Bar emphasized the need for glider pilots and ground crew/wing runners to be vigilant in checking for knots in the tow rope before launching a glider

- There is never an excuse for towing with a knot in the rope
- Rope should be inspected before every tow

- Knots form when the glider end of the rope thrashes around, either after the glider releases in the air, or on the ground when the towplane is taxiing back to the launch point
  - When knots do form, they are likely to be nearer the glider end of the rope
- Gliders should avoid releasing when there is excessive tension on the rope
  - Release should occur from a normal tow position behind the towplane, in a stable configuration
- Do not attempt to unpick a tight knot in the towrope, if one does form
  - It must be cut out – attempts to unpick a tight knot will damage and weaken the rope
  - Ropes are nominally 200 feet long, but can be as short as 160 feet if towing a small glider (i.e., a single-seater)
- Never pile up the rope – always lay it out on the ground in a “snake” pattern

Bar has now standardized his tow ropes. They will all be 5/16” diameter rope, 1500lb breaking strain.

- There are currently 3 in use, and can be used with all gliders on the field
- The 2200lb breaking strain “heavy” rope that had been intended for use with the heavier gliders (2-32, G103, etc.) will be retired shortly
- Weak link, 750lb breaking strain, must be used with all single-seat gliders
  - [See material posted by Marty on our club web site]
  - [There is a table posted on the hangar wall, where the ropes are stored, showing appropriate rope configurations for each glider – I meant to photograph it but forgot]

### Other audience discussion

- Need to maintain “golf course” markers used in some places on the field, to ensure that they remain visible
- Tailwheel aircraft are not “S-turning” enough to see any collision hazards while taxiing

Dave led a discussion of factors which might lead to “loss of control” type glider accidents on final approach

- Weather/windshear/headwind/crosswind
- Last minute obstruction – e.g., pedestrian on runway
- Poor setup on final
- Lack of currency/proficiency
- Other distractions: bees/wasps in cockpit
- Dave reminded us of the IMSAFE checklist for determining whether the pilot is safe to fly
  - Illness, Medication, Stress, Alcohol, Fatigue, Emotion

Dave reminded us of the importance of making a stabilized approach

- On altitude (i.e., proper glide path), on airspeed, properly configured for landing

- Need to ensure we retain adequate altitude when landing on R23G, due to the upslope
  - And to allow for any turbulence in the “slot”, especially in crosswind conditions
- Plan for and follow a suitable ground track at all points in the pattern
  - Planning starts on entering the left 360 turns over the office
  - Should not be lower than 1500 msl when entering the turn, 1700 is preferable
  - Plan out wind corrections and turning points
    - Target is to turn base at 1000 msl
    - Remember that in windy/crosswind conditions, there is typically a headwind on base when approaching R23G

Dave briefly reviewed a recent incident where a transient pilot completely failed to see Dave’s glider approaching R07

- Transient pilot therefore did not wait, break off the approach, or go around
- Dave had no choice but to continue his own approach, making whatever adjustments were possible to ensure safe separation

Power pilots were reminded that most gliders on the field are non-radio, and radios are not always reliable

- Essential to maintain a good lookout

Input and requests from tow pilots

- Power traffic holding on R25 while a glider is approaching to land: make sure that the glider has enough height to make R23G before starting takeoff roll
  - If glider is getting low, it will be looking to land on R25 as “plan B”
- Need to clear the runway quickly when a glider lands
  - Ground crew should anticipate the landing and be sitting on the tractor, ready to retrieve the glider right away
- Reminder that gliders can “steer” the towplane to request a turn
  - Gently pull the towplane’s tail to one side
  - Especially do so if you see another aircraft that presents a collision hazard – the tow pilot may not have seen it
- Work to minimize towplane holding time on the ground, especially with the engine running
  - Be ready when you are next in the queue!
  - If the glider pilot needs more time, or a student needs to be briefed before launch, signal the towplane to shut the engine down
    - Signal the tow pilot by crossing your arms above your head
- Ground crew should stay outside the bow of the tow rope
  - If you stand inside, there is a risk of your legs getting tangled in the rope, followed by your being dragged across the ground

## Closing comments from Bill VanArtsdalen

- FAA now focuses more on education than enforcement
  - Though you may get that education in the form of a ride with a designated examiner!
- There is a current FAA emphasis on safety of runway operations.
  - Several relevant topics were covered during this meeting.
- Treat periodic checks (Flight Reviews, club checkouts, etc.) as opportunities to learn rather than boxes to be checked and signed off
  - Try to cover topics that you haven't reviewed for a while
    - Examples, operations at towered airports if you normally fly from a non-tower field
    - Or vice versa if you are used to having the tower controller call your pattern for you