

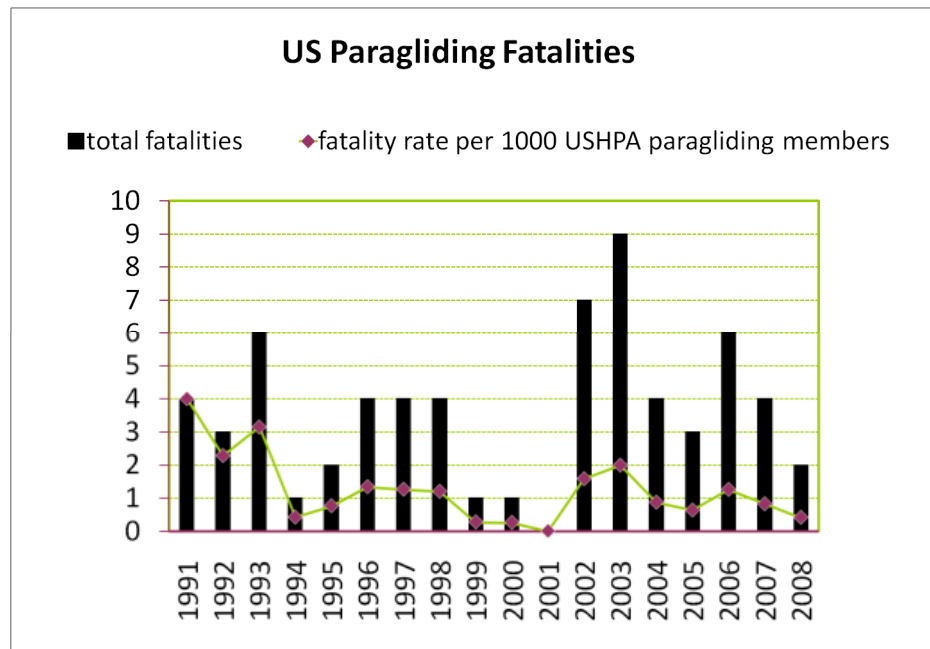
2008 Paragliding Accident Summary

Mike Steed

Paragliding is a sport with tremendous rewards, but also potentially huge consequences for mistakes. It pays to learn all we can about the mistakes of others in order to avoid some of those mistakes ourselves. With that in mind, here is the annual summary of 2006 accidents as reported by members and non-members alike. Details and analysis of specific incidents have been and will continue to be published about quarterly.

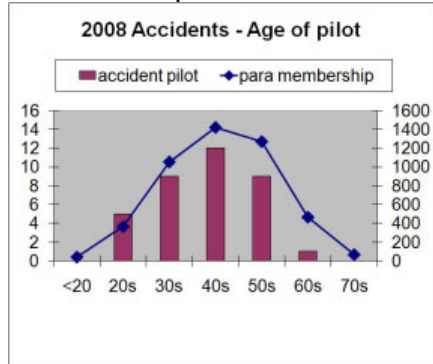
Paragliding fatalities were down from 2007 to 2008, and the number of reported accidents was down slightly. There were nine reports with no injury. The remainder of this article considers only those 42 accidents with injuries.

In the US in 2008 there were reports of 2 paragliding fatalities, 8 injured tandem passengers, and 35 injured pilots. We are confident about the fatality count, even though one of them was not reported on the USHPA system. Both of the fatalities this year were relatively inexperienced pilots. We don't count fatalities where the probable cause is a mid-air heart attack or suicide, both of which happened this past year. We do count ground handling incidents and those who landed safely in a tree but were injured getting down.

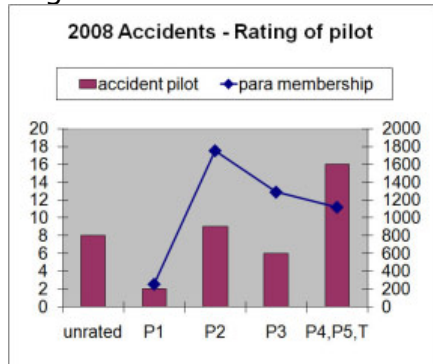


Many injuries go unreported and therefore are not included in this summary, though we found enough information about a few unreported accidents to include them as well. Over half (23) of the reported injuries were serious enough to merit at least one night in a hospital. But minor injuries almost certainly outnumber serious injuries – so clearly, our reports are incomplete.

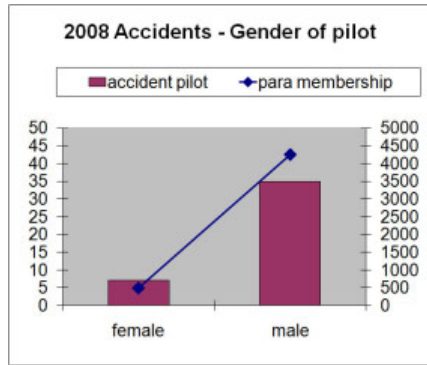
The age of pilots in reported accidents spans most of the membership spectrum, but was a bit younger than the membership as a whole.



The ratings of accident pilots were more like 2006 – heavier for the top-rated pilots and the beginners.

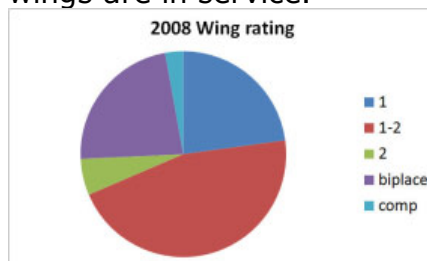


There are relatively few female pilots, so their share of accidents fluctuates widely. In 2006 female accidents were below the norm; this year female pilot injuries were disproportionately high, plus 5 of 7 injured tandem passengers were female.

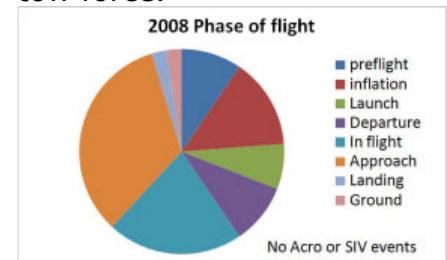


Tandem accident reports were way up this year, though most of the injuries were minor. Apparently some of the tandem operators have decided it is OK to report incidents, and maybe even a good idea. With the additional reports we see that tandem passengers are four times more likely than the pilot to be injured. So tandem pilots, you may want to scale back your risk threshold by at least a factor of four.

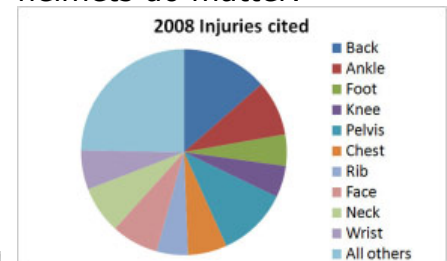
The wings flown by injured pilots include most ratings, though we don't have good numbers about how many of which wings are in service.



Only one accident was attributed to landing, since most pilots made mistakes before the landing proper. None of the accidents occurred at SIV clinics, and none were attributed to acro maneuvers. There was one towing incident that was variously described as an out-of-trim glider with a non-assist bridle, or as possible excessive tow force.



Back injuries continue to be reported most often, and pelvis jumped ahead of ankle. Face and neck were tied for fourth, so helmets do matter.



That is the quick report – hey, I was in a hurry! We on the USHPA accident review committee thank you for reporting accidents, so all the readers can learn from your report!