

# SAFETY is NO ACCIDENT

by Ryan Voight



## PAYING DUES IN CURRENCY

**W**hen learning to fly, there's no doubt you have to pay your dues. Let's face it, flying is not something that comes naturally to us. Some more than others, sure, but humans are clearly ill equipped to fly. Despite even the best instruction, we all learned some lessons the hard way—through the school of hard knocks.

Well, what if I told you that there is a currency for paying your dues aside from bumps, scrapes, and bruised egos? There is another way!

CURRENCY is the currency in which you can pay your dues. Aside from good judgment, being current is likely the biggest factor in how safe you are on every flight.

When was the last time you flew? How long did you fly? How many launches or landings did you do? What equipment were you on? These are all factors in how current you are. If you're current, great, go fly if conditions are good. But, what if you're not?

When was the last time you saw an intermediate- or advanced-rated pilot

go to the training hill for a couple "warm up" launches and landings? And if you have actually seen this happen, when is the last time you saw them do it on their high-performance equipment?

How many of us don't fly over the winter? In the spring, how many spend an hour or two getting the rust

**ABOVE** Sled rides are a great way to stay current on your launches and landings. Shadd Heaston demonstrates excellent launch technique as he takes a sled ride to keep current. **TOP RIGHT** You'll want to be very current before launching a paraglider into thermic conditions. **RIGHT** Bi-wingual pilot Karl Yates practices a reverse inflation from Point of the Mountain.

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off? Or how about people who get a new glider or harness? Why not spend a little time on the training hill getting acquainted, or re-acquainted?

If you think about how you might wind up paying your dues, a morning or afternoon of launch and landing practice sounds pretty dang good! And doing it on the same equipment you’ll be flying in the “real world” makes your time spent as effective as possible.


In hang gliders, challenge yourself with trying to get another step or two into your launch run—giving yourself



a little more airspeed and roll authority as you fly away from the hill. Work on dialing in your flare timing, and getting the feel of how much to flare for how much wind there is. If it’s appropriate for your training location, practice going prone and smoothly transitioning back upright. Maybe even practice some spot landing if you can.


In paragliders, practice forward and reverse inflations. It seems most people get really comfortable with one or the other, and few do both well. Each inflation technique has its own strengths and weaknesses so it’s best to have your options open. If you often fly a windy site, maybe you could practice some asymmetric “cobra” inflations, too. If you have some wind, practice kiting both reverse and facing forward. Practice NOT looking at your wing, but rather feeling what it’s telling you. Do you have even pressure, is it centered overhead? Canopy control is definitely something that requires currency to be effective!

Whatever you fly, how current you are needs to influence your decision



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**ABOVE** You'll want to be very current before launching in light wind at high altitude, as Scott Dallan does here at Willard, UT. **RIGHT** Even pilots like SKY-GOD "Dangerous" Dave Gibson will jump on a single-surface to get the winter rust off at the local hill.

making. Whether you get the rust off or not, if you're just coming back from a gap in flights, you need to weigh that when deciding to fly. Don't think about what you USED to launch, fly, or land in, think about what you [should] be launching, flying, or landing in—given your current state of currency.

For those of us who fly multiple forms of aircraft—hang gliders AND paragliders, hang/paragliders and sailplanes, hang/paragliders and airplanes, and so on—currency in

one DOES NOT EQUATE to the other. If anything, currency in one DETRACTS from your currency in the other! If I fly my hang glider a few days in a row, I find myself coming up short on my paraglider approaches. When I fly my paraglider a bunch, I find myself overshooting on my hang glider.

More importantly—CONDITIONS. If I fly my hang glider a lot, and then decide I want to fly my paraglider I might walk up to launch and say, "It's not *that* windy," or "I don't think it's *too* turbulent." Is that for a hang glider, or for a paraglider? Different aircraft, different limitations and different level of proficiency on each.

As the winter freeze begins to thaw, and spring fever has you thinking flying, please remember that you're likely going to have to pay your dues one way or another. Let currency be your currency, and pay those dues the easy way with a quick brush-up on the training hill. Your body, wallet, and loved ones will appreciate it! Remember: Safety is no accident! 🇺🇸

*Ryan is a second-generation hang gliding instructor and flight school owner. He has been flying since he was still wet behind the ears, and he's the youngest person to ever earn the Hang 5/Master rating. He currently resides near Point of the Mountain in Utah, and flies as much as he can (hang gliders and paragliders).*



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