

2015 HANG GLIDING & PARAGLIDING FATALITIES

PARAGLIDING FATALITIES

January 16, 2015 – Clayton Butler

Clayton Butler (29), who was not a USHPA member, suffered fatal injuries during a flight at Oahu, HI. The pilot was ridge soaring a mini wing when he suffered a stall resulting in a spin. The spin endured until ground contact was made, resulting in fatal injuries.

January 25, 2015 – William “Billy” Baker

William “Billy” Baker (35), an Advanced (P4) pilot, Advanced (M2) mini-wing pilot and USHPA member since 2010, suffered fatal injuries during a mini-wing flight at Jackson Hole, WY. The pilot, flying a 16M wing, attempted to clear a tension knot. The wing collapsed as a result and it re-inflated throwing the pilot into a cliff.

March 1, 2015 – Ronald Faoro

Ronald Faoro (60), an Advanced (P4) pilot / Tandem Instructor and USHPA member since 1998, suffered fatal injuries during a flight at Santa Barbara, CA. The pilot, while launching with a tandem passenger, neglected to fasten his leg loops. Shortly after takeoff he fell out of his harness, resulting in a fatal fall. The student glided safely to the ground.

May 1, 2015 – Siegfried (Ziggy) Muhlhauser

Siegfried “Ziggy” Muhlhauser (60), an Intermediate (P3) pilot and USHPA member since 2008, suffered fatal injuries during a flight near Salt Lake City, UT. During an SIV course, the pilot accidentally entered a full stall and went “hands up”. A surging wing resulted in a cravat and subsequent spin. The pilot impacted the water and high speed. The reserve was not thrown.

May 17, 2015 – Junichi Nakamura

Junichi Nakamura (51), a Novice (P2) pilot and USHPA member since 2014, suffered fatal injuries during a flight at Mussel Rock Park in Daly City, CA. The pilot was flying alone and the cause of the crash was unwitnessed. Rescue personnel determined the pilot suffered fatal injuries after his paraglider collided with a cliff, resulting in a collapsed wing and subsequent fall.

June 14, 2015 – Richard Moren

Richard Moren (40), an Advanced (P4) pilot and USHPA member since 2012, suffered fatal injuries during a flight at Cliffside, WA. The pilot, flying an Ozone Zero, launched in turbulent conditions. Shortly after takeoff the pilot experienced a major deflation which resulted in a high energy impact with the ground. Fatal injuries resulted.

July 14, 2015 – Gregory Knudson

Gregory Knudson (55), an Advanced (P4) pilot and USHPA member since 2000 suffered fatal injuries while flying near Markstein, France. The circumstances surrounding the accident are still under investigation.

July 17, 2015 – Dale Brockett

Dale Brockett (55) was under instruction, working toward becoming a P2 pilot. The pilot suffered fatal injuries during a flight near San Luis Obispo, CA. The pilot pulled “big ears” at 200AGL, suffered a collapse and collided with the ground resulting in fatal injuries.

September 9, 2015 – Thomas Breen IV

Thomas Breen (39), an USHPA member since 1999, was rated as a Novice (P2) in 1999 but has been unrated since 2009 due to inactivity. The pilot was flying near Wolcott, CO at a ridge soaring site and was seen flying low in an area known to be a compression zone. The incident was unwitnessed. Fatal injuries resulted from blunt force trauma.

November 1, 2015 – David Platt

David Platt (57), an Advanced (P4) pilot and USHPA member since 2008. The pilot, flying near Golden, Colorado, sustained a collapse while low to the ground, sending him into a spin, resulting in high-speed collision with the ground. The incident was fatal.

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March 27, 2015 – Kelly Harrison

Kelly Harrison (56), a Master (H5) pilot, tandem and advanced instructor and USHPA member since 1990, suffered fatal injuries during a tandem platform truck circuit tow at Jean Dry Lakebed near Las Vegas Nevada. His 11 year old student also perished in the accident.

May 9, 2015 - Markus Schaedler

Markus Schaedler (59), an Advanced (H4) pilot and USHPA member since 2001, suffered fatal injuries during a flight from Kagel Mountain in Sylmar, CA. The pilot was thermalling around 3 PM at 100-200 feet AGL over a peak when thermal turbulence quickly rolled the glider sufficiently to cause the pilot to fall onto the sail, breaking an outboard leading edge. Approximately 6 seconds after roll initiation the pilot impacted the ground suffering fatal injuries.

May 17, 2015 – Scott Trueblood

Scott Trueblood (44), a Novice (H2) pilot and USHPA member since 2014, suffered fatal injuries during a flight in Ellenville, NY. The pilot launched just after 6 PM in "student friendly" air and had a five minute flight. After making several successful 180 degree shallow turns (20 degree) working the ridge at a safe distance, the pilot made a steeper turn (60 degree) and went past 180 degrees leveling out pointing directly at the ridge and flew into it causing fatal injuries.

June 20, 2015 - Bertrand Delacroix

Bertrand Delacroix (49), an Advanced (H4) pilot and USHPA member since 2004, suffered fatal injuries during a flight from Highland Aerosports flight park in Ridgely, MD. The pilot aerotowed to 5000 feet AGL just before noon on a light wind overcast day. The pilot was observed to be mostly "boating around" and doing some typical steep bank wingovers between 2-3K feet AGL. Slowly descending to approximately 400 feet AGL the pilot then initiated some maneuver that was not witnessed but was followed by several full revolutions that a pilot witness on the ground saw and that appeared to be a fully developed spin until impact with the ground, causing fatal injuries.

June 26, 2015 – Edgar (Trey) Higgins

Edgar (Trey) Higgins (48), an Advanced (H4) pilot and USHPA member since 2001, suffered fatal injuries during a flight from Slide Mountain near Lake Tahoe CA. The pilot launched in light southeast winds and was observed scratching over a spine before going out of view around the corner. A pilot launching after observed the victim's glider to be downed on the mountain and radioed for 911 to be called. Emergency responders found that the pilot had suffered fatal injuries in the crash.

August 23, 2015 - Rafael Lavin

Rafael Lavin (69), an Advanced (H4) pilot and USHPA member since 1993, suffered fatal injuries during a flight at Fort Funston in San Francisco, CA. What is believed to have been the original right side wire on the 2001 glider failed completely at the nico upon the first right control input following launch in 15 MPH soarable conditions. Due to the broken right side wire, the glider did not respond to any right-turn input, slowly banked left, turned down wind, and impacted the cliff nose first resulting in fatal injuries to the pilot.

August 24, 2015 – Craig Pirazzi

Craig Pirazzi (56), an Advanced (H4) pilot and USHPA member since 1986, suffered fatal injuries during a flight at Indian Creek near Moab, UT. The launch, which the pilot had flown several times in the past, was a sheer vertical cliff launch from on top of a generally flat mesa. Several pilots had launched the site on this light wind, blue day for sled runs, both in the morning and the early evening, avoiding the mid day convection peak. During his early evening launch, just as the pilot started a several step launch run, the left wing dipped causing the wing tip to contact the ground just before leaving the cliff face. This resulted in a severe left yaw rotation of the glider as it left the cliff face as much as 90 degree left of a straight out flight path. The glider never achieved sustained flight before impacting the bottom of the cliff approximately 300 feet below launch causing fatal injuries to the pilot.

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(continued)

October 11, 2015 - Jesse Fulkersin

Jesse Fulkersin (62), an Advanced Hang Glider (H4) pilot and USHPA member since 1991, suffered fatal injuries landing his hang glider at Hyner View PA. After a short non-soaring flight around 2:45 PM, the pilot was performing a typical approach into the long tree lined landing area he knew well in mild conditions. After getting lined up for a final approach, the pilot hit some turbulence that raised his left wing. He aggressively corrected, resulting in a flight path that was heading to the left side of the tree lined field. The pilot again corrected and was in the middle of a 35 to 45 degree right banked turn when the left wing tip hit a tree at 30 feet above the ground. The glider stopped flying and rotated nose down into the ground causing fatal injuries on impact.

November 8, 2015 – Karen Carra

Karen Carra (54), an Intermediate Hang Glider (H3), Novice Paraglider (P2) pilot and USHPA member since 1994, suffered fatal injuries after launching her hang glider at High Rock, MD. The pilot was performing a cliff launch in lightly cycling 5 MPH winds with a full three person wire crew. Just after launching the glider stalled, pitched nose down and rapidly lost altitude resulting insufficient clearance and impact with the trees below launch. Fatal injuries resulted from the gliders fall from tree height.