



Implications of temporary suspension of Competition Class Paragliders for NACs and competition organisers

Lausanne, Switzerland, July 18, 2011 – **The FAI Hang Gliding and Paragliding Bureau's decision on 8 July 2011, to suspend the approval of Competition Class Paragliders for FAI Category 1 events, effectively bringing to a premature close the 12th FAI World Paragliding Championships in Piedrahita, is raising a number of questions and issues.**

Following discussions involving the FAI Executive Board, and a review of the statutory obligations of the FAI, the FAI Hang Gliding and Paragliding Commission (CIVL) and the Organisers, we would like to clarify some of these points.

The decision for the suspension was to take no additional risk with the safety of the pilots flying in Piedrahita pending a full assessment. Our decision is of precautionary nature and so far remains a temporary suspension. At this stage, we indeed cannot identify precisely the cause(s) of the occurrences in Piedrahita. We need time and experts to examine the cause, or more likely, the combination of causes, which resulted in the accidents.

FAI Category 2 Events

The General Section of the Sporting Code: Chapter 3.5.2 defines Second Category Events, as 'Other international sporting events organised by or under the authorisation of NACs'. Although NACs are not bound to apply all of the FAI Sporting Code Rules for 1st Category events, the Chapter 3.9.2 specifies: 'General rules and competition rules for Second Category Events shall be based, as far as appropriate, on those for FAI 1st Category Events and must not conflict with them in principle'.

NACs are responsible for managing the sport in their own territories and they have the local knowledge to do so. They know the law in their country. NACs are best placed to make judgements on local rules and which rules in the FAI Sporting Code are appropriate for their events. Category 2 competition organisers should make their own decisions within this framework with of course the highest consideration being given to safety.

However, we want to draw the attention of organisers of FAI Category 2 events to the possible safety issues linked with Competition Class paragliders being flown in competitions with racing tasks. Race conditions and factors affecting them may differ widely in these Category 2 events. They do not all follow the same format, and assumptions about the safety risks may have to be made on a different basis. We urge the organisers to review the situation of their particular competitions and decide accordingly.

What next?

Clearly, there is more work to be done before the safety issues involved with flying Competition Class paragliders in competitive events can be fully appreciated. We are seeking appropriate experts to form a Task Force to analyse this complex situation, make some recommendations (short term and longer term) and report back as soon as possible. We will expand on this plan of action in a further statement to be issued shortly.

The FAI would like to thank all those NACs, Federations, independent industry groups, as well as individual pilots, who have expressed support for our position.

John Aldridge
President
FAI Hang Gliding and Paragliding Commission