

Mifflin County Airport Glider Contest Briefing

OPERATIONS

General

Mifflin County Airport (KRVL) is located in central Pennsylvania near the town of Reedsville, about 3 miles west of Lewistown. The airfield is at 819' MSL and has a single paved runway 5000' long, oriented 06-24.

A grass runway lies parallel to and just northwest of the paved runway for its full length. During tow operations, this is used by towplanes; but it is acceptable for glider landings.

A paved taxiway lies parallel to the runway for its full length; this connects with a ramp and fueling area, and additional taxiways lead to several hangars and grass areas used during contests for parking glider trailers. The ends of the parallel taxiway are acceptable for landings during the contest. In each case, a "dead line" is enforced, just short of the cross-taxiways: no glider may fly or roll across a dead line (violation of this rule will lead to a significant penalty).

A landing on either end of the taxiway should be done such that the glider can be rolled near to but stopped just short of the dead line; this will leave the remaining taxiway available for another glider. Pilots should take note of runway lights along the taxiway: they are 60' apart; some care may be needed to avoid these.

Administrative functions (registration, scoring, retrieves, etc.) take place in the Contest Office, located in the Mifflin Soaring Association clubhouse (the northeast-most building).

The contest radio frequency will be 123.3 Mhz. Pilot-crew communications use 123.5 Mhz. For contest purposes, sunset will be considered to be 8:00 pm.

Meetings

Pilot meetings take place in the maintenance hangar: the tall building furthest from the runway.

If announced, another brief pilot meeting will be held near the front of the launch grid at grid time. Typically, gliders will be moved onto the runway prior to this meeting.

Staging and gridding

At each side of the paved runway numbers are marked, noting where a glider should be placed in preparation for launching. Each glider is assigned a grid position each day; positions change after every valid contest day.

No vehicle or glider may be on the runway prior to 10:30 am. After 10:30, gliders should be staged on the grass near their assigned grid number, leaving the pavement clear for free movement of other gliders. Staging should be complete five minutes prior to grid time.

For gridding, gliders should be pushed onto the pavement with the main wheel near the runway centerline. Typically, gliders will be gridded at the northeast end of the runway for a launch to the southwest. Grid positions are closely spaced: cooperation in staging and gridding are essential.

Vehicles are allowed on and near the grid area as needed during glider staging. They must then be moved southeast of the runway, well clear of the pavement on the grass near the sloping bank. All vehicles must stay well clear of the launch area after gliders are placed on their grid positions. Please conform to the instructions of the CD and the launch crew.

Weighing

Scales may be set up on the ramp near the cross-taxiway that leads to the runway. Pilots selected for weighing (those whose overall or previous day's score places them among the leaders) will maneuver their gliders onto the scales on the way to the grid. Past the scales, ballast can be dumped but not added.

Safety checks

A critical assembly check (CAC) is a verification done after normal assembly to insure that items the pilot considers critical to flight safety are correct prior to takeoff. Completion of the CAC is indicated by initials or a mark on the left wing root tape near the leading edge. A CAC is required at this contest: a glider without a mark on the wing root tape may be denied a takeoff.

Launching

The launch will begin at a time designated by the CD. Once underway, it is essential that no one other than launch personnel be in front of the sailplane next due to be launched, and that all vehicles are well clear. Please follow launch crew instructions.

Towplanes will taxi in front of the next glider to be launched and line crew will hook up the rope. The five pilots at the front of the grid are expected to be ready in all respects to launch prior to this. If you are not, you will be pulled from the launch and repositioned at end of your class.

The launch crew will look to see that spoilers are in a safe position: either closed and locked or open with the pilot's hand on the spoiler control. Pilots who wish to use spoilers during the initial takeoff roll should have their spoilers noticeably open; movement – "bouncing" the spoilers – confirms that the pilot has control of them.

Tows will be to 2000' AGL (except on ridge days, when a lower release altitude may be announced), and to a place designated by the CD; glider pilots are expected to release promptly upon reaching tow release altitude. It is not normally necessary or desirable for a glider pilot to talk to a towpilot; should this be necessary, it is important that the radio call include the towplane's ID, so it is not misunderstood to apply to other towplanes that may be in the air.

Relaunching

When the regular launch is in progress, pilots who need to relaunch should land on the taxiway and roll as close to the dead line as circumstances safely allow. When ready, inform the CD of your desire to re-launch.

Relaunches happen after the last regular launch of the class whose launch was in progress when the re-launch was requested. Normal procedure is to stage gliders on the cross-taxiway and to push them onto the runway just prior to launch. Once the main runway is clear, pilots needing to re-launch may land on the main runway and launch from the cross-taxiway intersection.

Start

Starts will be from one of five different start cylinders, as assigned by the CD and noted as part of each task. All start cylinders will have a radius of five miles. The Maximum Start Height (MSH) will be based on conditions and specified on the task sheet.

Pilots are requested to report their start times on the contest radio frequency. Starts should be reported within 20 minutes, and reported times should be accurate within 2 minutes. False reporting can be penalized as unsportsmanlike conduct.

Cylinder finish

The finish cylinder is 1 mile in radius, centered on the published finish point. Pilots should cross the cylinder perimeter at or above the minimum altitude (1400' MSL), then return to the field for a normal pattern and landing. A pilot who enters the cylinder below the minimum altitude receives a penalty proportional to the amount by which the finish was low (but note that more than 200' low makes the pilot ineligible for a finish).

Rules specify a radio call on 123.3 MHz when 4 miles from the center of the cylinder, and again when entering the finish cylinder. Other radio calls are appropriate when they will improve safety. Otherwise, keep radio chatter to a minimum so as not to block the calls of others.

Landing after finishing

Normal post-task landings take place both on the main runway and on either end of the parallel taxiway. Pilots should take care to leave landing areas clear for other arriving pilots. On the taxiway, roll safely to the area just short of the cross-taxiway (the “dead line”). On the runway, it is preferred to roll to the cross-taxiway where ground crew can quickly push you out of the way onto the cross-taxiway. Another option is to roll onto the grass (preferably, to the southeast side of the pavement).

It may happen that a pilot arrives without sufficient energy for a normal pattern. Such a pilot should announce a straight-in or “direct” landing and choose the landing area that is safest, paying attention to the need either to roll clear of an area that may soon be needed by other gliders, or promptly pushing the glider clear once it has stopped rolling.

Note that the length of the paved runway means that touching down “on the numbers” may make it difficult to roll to the desired spot (usually, the cross-taxiway that leads to the ramp area). This is obviously true when landing to the northeast, since the distance is nearly 3500’ – but even a landing to the southwest (for which the distance is around 1500’) may offer some problems promptly clearing the runway, especially when there is a meaningful headwind. Most gliders will do well if the pilot plans to touch down at normal speed around 800 to 1000’ short of the intended stopping point.

Also note that a gully at the northeast end of the runway means it is a bad idea to plan a low and slow arrival to the threshold of Runway 24 on a windy day.

Outlanding

The contest task area includes a significant number of airfields; a separate document contains notes on some of these: not all are listed on Sectional charts, and not all those on a chart are fully acceptable for glider operations. The task area also includes many good landable areas that are not airfields.

If you land in a farm field, it’s important that you treat the landowner properly. Much of the land in this area is owned by Mennonites or the Amish. They dress more simply than the “English”. Some folks tend to look down on them as unsophisticated, but this is a mistake – they are in fact hardworking and very sharp (two qualities required for success as a farmer). They tend to be friendly, but will not tolerate a condescending or inconsiderate attitude especially well. They are devout, and will not appreciate profanity. Try to come across as a reasonable person politely asking a favor, rather than as an arrogant stranger.

Note that you may fly in this area only a couple of weeks a year, but many others pilots do too, some regularly. If you treat a landowner badly, you can expect serious repercussions, as this can threaten the future of soaring in this area. If you do have a problem, notify the CD or CM.

Retrieves

If you land somewhere other than Mifflin County Airport, rules require that you fill out an Outlanding Card and telephone the Retrieve Office at one of the phone numbers listed on your task sheet. If you call without having filled out your card, the Retrieve Office will ask you to do so and call back later. Only if it is truly impractical to use a telephone should you attempt to relay landing information via radio. Airborne pilots should not relay information when a relay isn’t necessary.

You must either have a designated crew or make arrangements (e.g. another crewless pilot) to deal with the possibility of a landout. The Retrieve Office will relay information, not seek out crew.

When the Retrieve Office hears from a pilot who has landed out, they will summon the crew by means of a radio call on 123.5 or a phone call to a number that the crew has left at the Retrieve Office. If the crew does not respond, it becomes the crew's responsibility to check with the Retrieve Office: retrieve cards for outlanded pilots will be posted in a window.

If you contact your crew directly by phone, give them your Outlanding Card information and make arrangements for the retrieve. But take care that the Retrieve Office receives this information before the retrieve begins. Expect a penalty if your crew sets out before this is done.

The Retrieve Office will close when all pilots are accounted for and crews are dispatched to retrieve those who landed out – or 7:00 pm, whichever is later. If 7:00 is approaching and crew and pilot are not in contact, one or the other should call to request that the Retrieve Office stay open. Having done this, you must then call when together, so the Retrieve Office can be closed.

Aero retrieves will be available from contest towplanes at an announced per-mile charge (which you'll pay directly to your tow pilot). You must be at an airfield deemed acceptable for aerotowing and there must be ample time to complete the retrieve before sunset. You must arrange your aero retrieve through the contest Retrieve Office. If you fail to supply the Retrieve Office with complete and correct information (e.g. you give the name of an airfield different from the one where you actually landed), expect to pay for any and all flying that becomes necessary.

Airfields

Per the SSA Rules, a contest landing at an airfield depicted on a current Sectional chart is eligible for an Airfield Landing Bonus. The Airfield Notes document lists exceptional fields that may be on some charts but not acceptable for glider operations, or are uncharted but acceptable.

Airspace

Within the area occupied by contest turnpoints, the only closed airspace is R5802A near Harrisburg, and areas R5801 and R5803 near Chambersburg. As this airspace lies on the extreme southeast edge of the task area, it rarely has a significant influence on tasks.

The University Park airfield (KUNV) north of the town of State College has seen significant increase in traffic in recent years – it is now a towered airport. Pilots flying anywhere in its vicinity should be vigilant and contact the tower, especially at altitudes of 3500' and below, or when aligned with runways.

Scoring

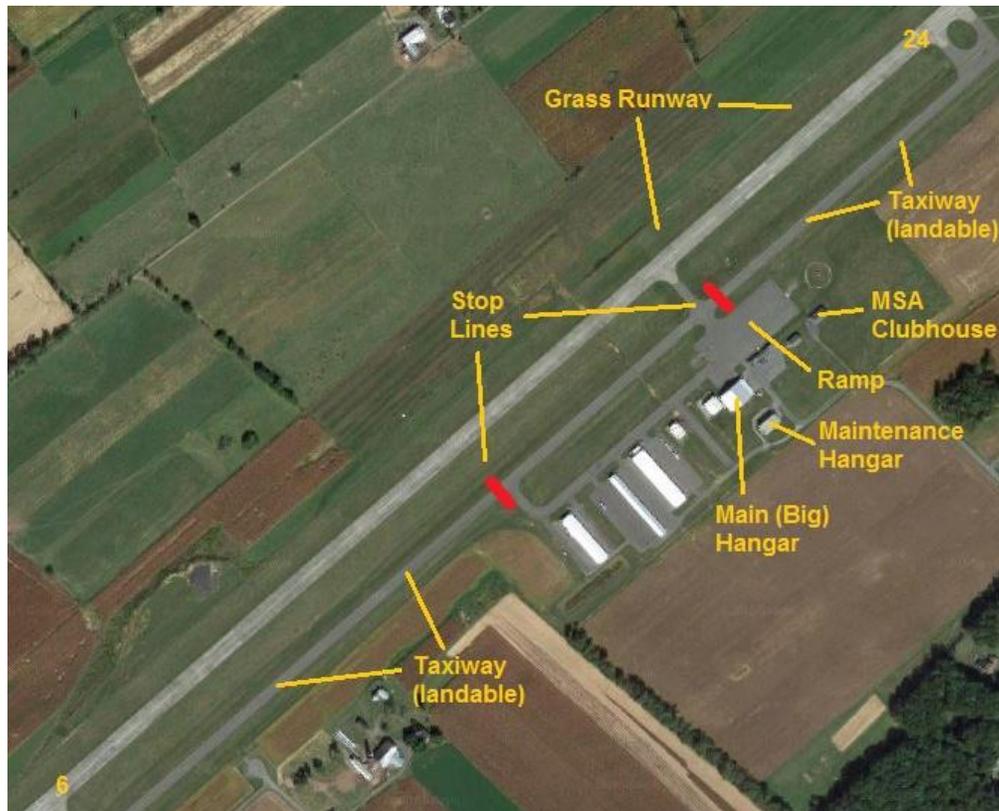
Scoring is done in the Contest Office. Please insure that all storage media (memory cards, thumb drives, etc) are labeled with the correct contest ID and pilot name. Should you need to submit a Task Claim card, these are available from the Scorer.

Rules require that flight documentation be submitted promptly upon a landing at Mifflin (the Flight Documentation Interval will normally be 1 hour). This applies both to finishers and to pilots who land without a finish (such as those returning from an aero retrieve). Pilots who land elsewhere and return by trailer should submit flight documentation when they return to Mifflin (as soon as practical, provided the Scoring Office is still open, but in no case later than 9:00 the next morning).

A Task Claim Card must be routinely submitted to the scorer only for a Modified Assigned Task – Assigned Tasks and Turn-Area Tasks require only a flight log. But all pilots should carry an Outlanding Card on every flight, since one is required to manage a retrieve.

A valid Flight Log covering all flight time is required from every pilot who makes a launch. Note that a valid Flight Log must include the pilot's name and contest ID; files in IGC format are preferred unless different arrangements with the Scorer have been made. Also note that the Scorer has the right to request that a pilot re-transfer a flight log in the Scorer's presence as late as the morning after a flight.

MIFFLIN AIRFIELD DIAGRAM



MISCELLANEOUS

Contest registration

Registration (in the Contest Office) is required of all entrants prior to any flying during the contest or the practice period. Please do not grid your glider or take a tow until you are registered.

Glider Trailer parking

Please consult the published parking diagram provided prior the beginning of the contest.

A few parking slots are reserved for those who help with contest organization; others are first come, first served. A designated move-in day will be provided.

Please park trailers well away from taxiways, so that when a glider is at its trailer, the taxiway is clear for aircraft movement. Parked gliders and trailers should be tied down.

The airport authority charges a daily fee for trailer parking.

Vehicles / RVs / Camping

Vehicles are expected to be operated safely and in a way that does not interfere with others.

Several parking slots with electrical service are available – first come, first served. The airport authority charges a daily fee for on-airport camping and for electrical service.

Ablutions

Two bathrooms are located in the MSA clubhouse and one shower in the maintenance building – first come, first served. Please keep things tidy.

Ballast water

At Regional contests, no-ballast rules are usually in effect. At National contests water ballast will be available from a water truck parked on the ramp near the terminal building.

Battery Charging

Outlets are available in the maintenance hangar and in the main room of the MSA clubhouse. Please do not charge batteries in the Contest Office or in bathrooms.

Smoking

Smoking is not permitted at any contest function (indoors or outdoors), inside or near any building or near any aircraft.

Children and pets

Children on the ramp must be supervised by an adult. Pets are permitted on the field, but must be on a leash at all times (an airport rule). Pets are not permitted at pilot meetings or at any event at which food is served. Owners are expected to clean up after their animals.

Field cleanup

Please take care to clean up your trash, and the occasional item that isn't yours. Trash cans are located at various points on the airfield. A dumpster is located near the parking lot behind the Terminal building.

Safety comments

These are welcome at any time from any contest participant – pilots, crews and others. Anonymous written comments can be placed in the Safety Box, located in the Contest Office.

Other airfield users

Mifflin County Airport has hosted many soaring events, but of course has other users. We have maintained good relationships with others, and we expect all pilots and crews to help this continue.

By NOTAM, the airfield is closed to all but glider operation between 10:30am - 2:00pm each day. Outside this time, non-soaring operations will be accommodated. During the NOTAM period, we will try to work with others as circumstances permit. Pilots should make a particular effort to park gliders so that taxiways are not blocked, and to keep the area near the fuel pumps clear.

Please do your best to make non-soaring operations as welcome as is possible during this soaring contest. If you have any questions about or problem with other airport operation, please bring them promptly to the attention on contest management.

Weather information

Mifflin AWOS (automated weather observation system): 123.85. University Park AWOS: 127.65.

The Amish

You can't drive for long in the Big Valley or its environs without encountering horse-drawn Amish buggies. Crossing a double-yellow line to pass these is allowed, but safety requires that this be done with great care.

As most people know, the Amish do not like to be photographed. Please respect this.