

Check your lines!

More than one recent BHPA Formal Investigation report has revealed pilots flying paragliders in otherwise good condition but with lines which were out of spec. and often out of symmetry, and sometimes with shortened control lines. Lines may even be within the manufacturer's published tolerances yet still put a wing out of trim to a small degree.

Control (brake) lines can often shrink by significant amounts over time. As the process is gradual the pilot is often unaware of any change. The shortening, often by several cm, may have little or no impact on the performance of the glider. However it can become an issue when a pilot needs to make sudden and direct control inputs, for example when needing to recover from an asymmetric collapse.

Gliders with higher level certification require precise pilot input when attempting to recover from dynamic and unstable situations. When control lines are shorter than specification it can be easier for the pilot to inadvertently induce a stall by excessive use of the controls.

It is less common these days for pilots to shorten control lines for their own perceived convenience. The FSC believes there is no reason for pilots to ever move brake handle positions and recommends that the correct manufacturer's certified position should be maintained.

Pilots are advised to have their gliders regularly checked at a recognised facility to ensure that their line and control line lengths are as the manufacturer intended. Pilots purchasing second-hand gliders should always check that the brakes are set as per the manufacturer's specification.
