

Injury Prevention and Management – Gary Droppo – January 2013

Recently, we had a serious injury at our flying field, involving a prop strike to a person while assisting someone preparing an airplane for flight. Both parties were highly experienced r/c pilots and this was a very routine undertaking which went badly, due to an instinctive reaction to correct a perceived engine problem.

The end result was a trip to the hospital and 8 stitches to close a nasty, bone-deep wound on one finger, plus more minor lacerations to a couple more fingers. The individual has no lasting damage, apart from suffering a few days or weeks of a very sore finger or two. He is lucky!

There are some important yet simple learnings here, which can lead to improving one's ability to prevent or deal with risks.

- Avoid flying by yourself in remote locations such as most r/c fields, back lakes, etc. Always know where emergency help may be available.
- Let someone else know that you are out flying, including the time you left and an anticipated return time, as well as your cellphone number.
- Keep a fully charged cell phone in your pocket - not at home or in the car!. This is particularly important if you **must** fly by yourself.
- If you go out into the woods to search for an aircraft, let someone know where you are going and the maximum time you expect to be gone. If there is no one else around, leave a note on your car window with this information. When you return, let the person know that you have returned. This is much like a Flight Plan that the “real” pilots file.
- When preparing a glow or gas plane, tie it down or otherwise secure it. If someone is helping you, make sure that both parties know what they are doing and do not make any sudden, instinctive moves to correct a perceived engine problem!
- When preparing, carrying or retrieving an electric aircraft, employ a positive “throttle lockout” and/or disconnect the power source in the aircraft. Treat electric-powered aircraft as you would a loaded firearm!

- A full bottle or thermos of fresh water should be part of your field kit at any time. This can prevent dehydration at any time or to cleanse a cut, if necessary.
- Have access to a simple First Aid kit. Keep a kit or basic materials in your car or flight box. Take a few minutes periodically to confirm that it is where you think it

is and that it contains some basic materials that you might want.

- Our most likely injury is a laceration due to a prop strike. If you have only one item available in your kit, it should be a roll of gauze bandage. You have to stop any bleeding! Everything else can wait.
- You may have to support the injury. Wrap an injured finger and then wrap it to an adjacent one. For a hand or arm injury, wrap it and then support it in a sling or sleeve.
- If the injury is serious enough to require immediate professional attention, do not bother applying any antiseptic; they will have to wash the injury anyway.
- Remember to replenish any items you used from the First Aid kit.
- Watch for shock! Even a minor cut may induce some degree of shock, whereby you suddenly feel weak, dizzy and/or you may fall. For most injuries, sitting or lying down and keeping warm and calm will overcome the feeling. Make your helper aware of your symptoms.
- **If you are seriously injured, do not try to drive yourself.** Call for, and wait for, help. *There is at least one documented case whereby a modeler sustained a significant hand injury, started to drive to the hospital, then passed out from shock while driving and hit a tree. He died!* This is where flying alone, especially in a remote location, magnifies the potential post-injury hazard.
- Make sure someone else knows what has happened. If there is only the injured person and other, use a cell phone or neighbour's phone and contact someone else. Ask them to come out and remain with your gear and the injured person's vehicle. Update them periodically after you reach medical assistance and proceed to get treatment.
- When did you have your last tetanus shot? This is a deadly disease. Its cause can be precisely the kind of conditions that you may have been encountered at this time. Tetanus shots should be renewed every (10?) years – ask your doctor what is recommended. If this injury requires professional treatment, you should be asked about your tetanus shots and you may be given one right now.
- In the event of a major injury, you should call 911, rather than trying to transport the person. The 4-digit field address is prominently posted on the bulletin board.

KRCM is quite close to Napanee Hospital. Not only is it closer than Kingston, there is free parking right at the front door! Everyone should take a minute and learn its location.