



# UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

## MARINE SAFETY ALERT

Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety, Security and Stewardship

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Alert 05-11

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### Parasailing Operations

#### Know your ROPES

A series of parasail incidents resulting in fatalities and injuries have occurred over the last few years. Several marine casualty investigations are ongoing and some are near completion. Common causal factors are being identified in addition to causal factors that are unique to a specific event. The Coast Guard believes that communication of known issues is essential in minimizing potential future casualties and **strongly reminds** parasail operators and those associated with the business of the following:

**Remember** that most parasail fatalities and injuries are related to the failure of the towline. Failures occur significantly below the rated towline strengths due to a variety of reasons that may include cyclic loading, long term exposure to environmental elements, the presence of knots, and overloading.

**Observe and monitor** weather conditions continuously. Most frequently increases in wind speed impact the relative speed against the chute and cause the overloading. As the wind speed doubles the load on the towline may quadruple. Monitor your VHF radio weather channel and learn to interpret the effect of wind speed on the water surface. Note the formation of squalls, thunderstorms, or when larger weather fronts are expected to pass through your operational area. Cease operations well before such weather features impact your operation.

**Prepare for emergencies** by having well documented procedures applicable to a variety of circumstances, normal operations and emergencies such as towline breaks, winch failures, propulsion failures, and other concerns that can impact your own or your passenger's safety. Regularly perform drills to ensure expert proficiencies in accomplishing all emergency or routine procedures.

**Ensure** that all of your equipment is properly maintained on a continuing basis. This includes the winch, and drive motor, hydraulic brakes, hoses and piping, spooling systems, and other tackle. Also check your chute, harness, and related components for stitching failures, degradation, and the need for general repairs. Immediately repair and correct identified problems.

**Safety is up to you** the Operator. **The Coast Guard does not regulate or inspect parasail equipment or regulate parasail operations.**

The Coast Guard recognizes that there are *many other* issues associated with this sport and encourages owners and operators to work with each other and related industry associations to share best practices and develop safe operational standards to minimize potential injuries and deaths. Coast Guard Licensed Operators are expected to provide an adequate level of care during vessel operations. Administrative action may be taken against the operator if his or her unsafe actions or decisions lead to a casualty.

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