



Accident to the PIPER PA18
registered **F-BAYP** with a paraglider
on Tuesday 21 January 2025
at Les Allues

Time	Around 17:00 ¹
Operator	Aeroplane: private Paraglider: A.Parapente
Type of flight	Aeroplane: local flight Paraglider: commercial flight
Persons on board	Aeroplane: pilot and one passenger Paraglider: pilot and one passenger
Consequences and damage	Aeroplane: pilot and passenger fatally injured, aeroplane destroyed Paraglider: pilot and passenger uninjured
This is a courtesy translation by the BEA of the Final Report on the Safety Investigation. As accurate as the translation may be, the original text in French is the work of reference.	

**Collision with a paraglider during approach to mountain
airfield, loss of control, collision with a house**

1 HISTORY OF THE FLIGHT

Note: the following information is principally based on statements and the video downloaded from the paraglider pilot's webcam.

The pilot of the aeroplane, accompanied by a passenger, was carrying out a local flight from Méribel Robert Merloz mountain airfield. On flying back, he flew over the village of Méribel and continued his route to pass overhead the mountain airfield which has to be flown over at 6,500 ft². The pilot of the paraglider took off from the top of Saulire (Alt. 8,800 ft) for a tandem flight. He indicated that he then flew away from the terrain, flew over the ski front of Méribel ski station and then headed towards the village of Les Allues (Alt. 3,600 ft) in the north to land on the officially designated landing site³ for free flight. The paraglider was at a distance of around one kilometre from the mountain airfield when the pilot and his passenger indicated that they perceived the aeroplane heading towards them in the front left sector, at a distance that they estimated as being around fifty metres, and at the same altitude. The paraglider pilot immediately started an evasive manoeuvre during which the wing collided with the aeroplane. Witnesses saw the aeroplane fall to the ground in a steep nose-down attitude. The aeroplane collided with an unoccupied chalet. The paraglider pilot opened his emergency parachute and landed in a tree.

¹ Except where otherwise indicated, times in this report are given in local time.

² The glossary of abbreviations and acronyms frequently used by the BEA can be found on its [web site](#).

³ Landing area designated by Allues municipal decree 374/2022 regulating free flight activity on the territory of the municipality.

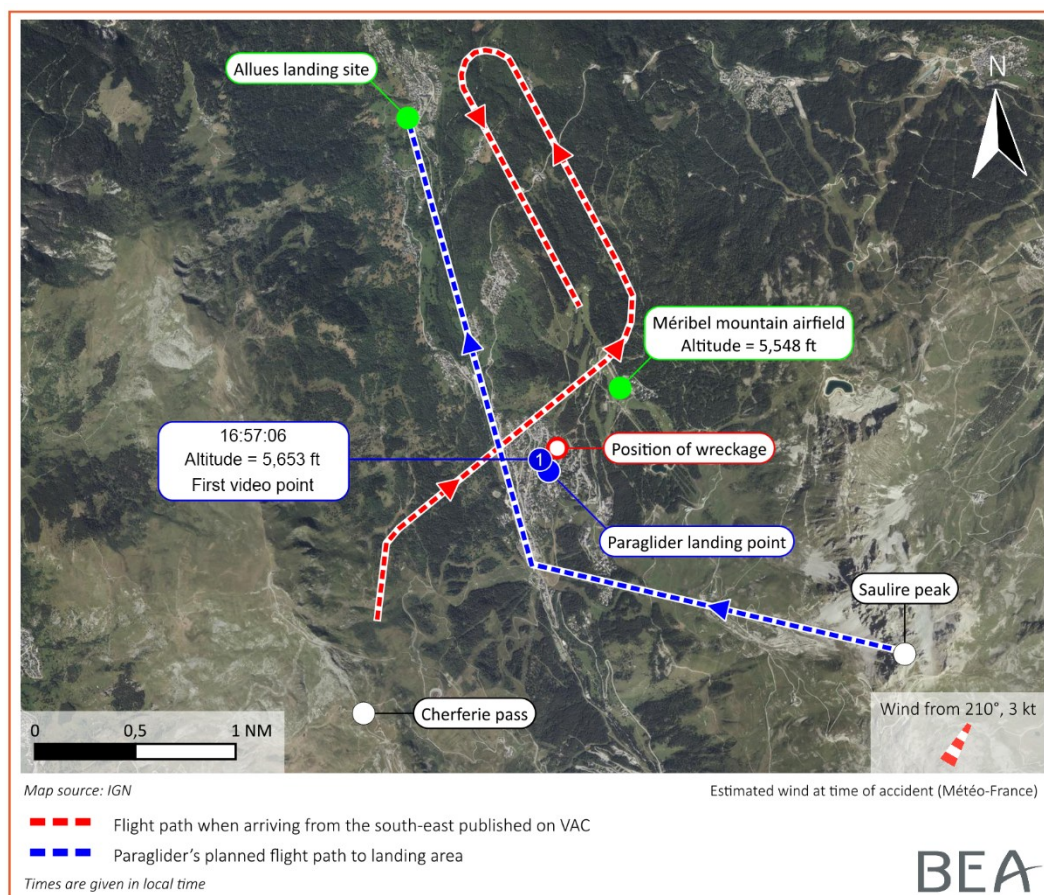


Figure 1: estimated flight paths of paraglider and F-BAYP

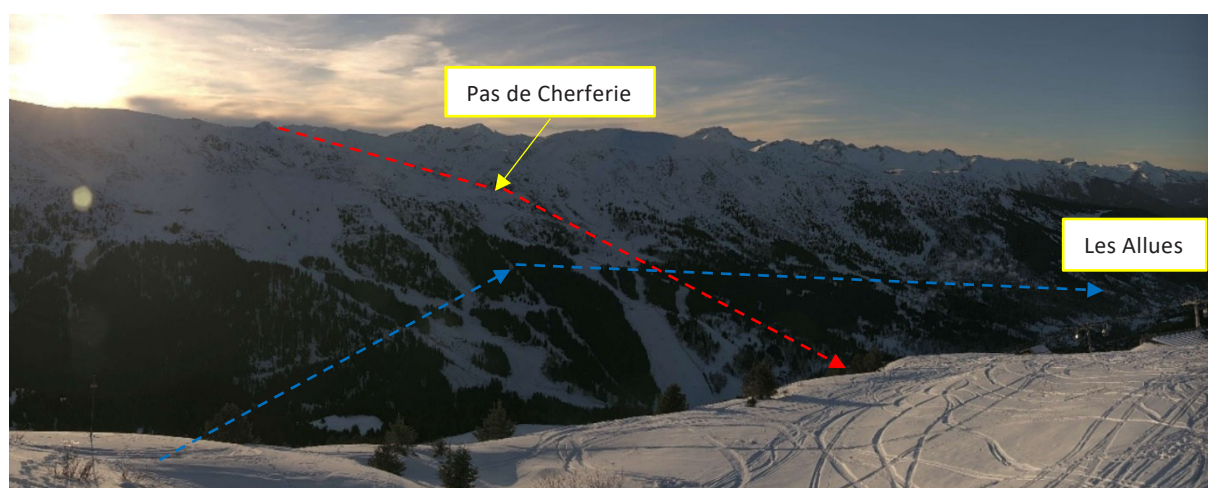


Figure 2: image dated 21 January at 16:45 taken from the webcam situated on Saulire slope.

2 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

2.1 Information regarding persons on board F- BAYP

2.1.1 Pilot

The 59-year-old pilot held a private pilot licence (PPL(A)) obtained in 1995 along with an instructor rating since 1999. He had been an airline pilot for around thirty years. He had logged more than 15,000 flight hours. He had obtained his mountain flight rating in 2011. He was one of the co-owners of the aeroplane purchased in 2010. He was also a member of the Méribel flying club since 2015.

He was sat in the rear seat in the aeroplane during the accident flight.

His logbook was not found.

According to statements from one of the co-owners of the aeroplane and the president of the Méribel flying club, along with the aeroplane's journey logbook and the records of flights carried out at the Méribel flying club, the pilot had:

- resumed mountain flights in January 2024 on F-BAYP and on a Jodel D140 belonging to Méribel flying club after a four-year break;
- flown nine hours on the Jodel D140 between January 2024 and September 2024, including one hour solo;
- obtained the renewal of his "ski" mountain flight rating in January 2024 and the "wheels" rating in September 2024 from a mountain flight instructor from the flying club;
- flown approximately ten hours on F-BAYP between January 2024 and September 2024 and then carried out seven flights in the week preceding the accident, including two in an instruction situation.

2.1.2 Passenger

The 26-year-old passenger held a commercial pilot licence (CPL(A)) obtained in February 2023 in France and transferred to Belgium in July 2023, along with MEP and IR ME ratings. He was an airline pilot. According to statements, he had no experience in mountain flying and no experience in flying a PA18. He was sat in the front seat during the flight.

His flying experience was such that he should have been familiar with the "see and avoid" principle when flying.

2.2 Paraglider pilot and passenger information

2.2.1 Pilot

The paraglider pilot had been carrying out free flight since 2017 and had logged more than 1,000 flight hours. His initial pilot training had been with an FFVL-affiliated school and he then obtained his State instructor diploma in 2023. The accident occurred during his second winter season at Méribel where he had also carried out three summer seasons.

He indicated that, before taking off and as he did for each flight, he checked that there was no aircraft in the flight sector. He specified that the air conditions were calm during the flight. He did not feel particularly tired. It was his eighth and last flight of the day. He took off in first position in a group of five paragliders who always took the same route from the top of Saulire to Les Allues landing site. For logistical reasons, this route was the one commonly taken for the last flight of the day. He estimated that there was a distance of roughly 500 m between each paraglider.

He indicated that during the flight, before the accident, he was continuously looking around him. He estimated that he was at a height of around 300-400 m at the time of the collision which corresponds to an altitude of around 6,200 ft. After the collision, he stabilized his wing and then activated the emergency parachute. He had not had the impression that the aeroplane pilot tried to carry out an evasive manoeuvre.

He indicated that the aeroplanes that he usually perceived when he flew were generally at a higher altitude. He specified that he knew of the presence of the mountain airfield, mentioned in the briefings at the beginning of the season, identified as a danger for paragliders and an airspace not to be flown in. He was aware of the mountain airfield VAC chart. He added that he had received information about the rules of the air and airspaces during his pilot and instructor training.

He was not equipped with an electronic conspicuity system (not mandatory under the regulations) and did not use radio equipment (see paragraph 2.7.4).

The paraglider was equipped with a wing which was dark green on top and white underneath.

2.2.2 Passenger

The passenger was a Weapons System Officer (WSO) in the French Air and Space Force. This flight was carried out by a private service provider in the context of a military training course. He indicated that he heard the engine, raised his head and saw the aeroplane closing in from his north-west side. He called out that there was traffic at 10 o'clock, on a converging path and at what seemed to him to be the same altitude. The instructor had already started an evasive manoeuvre to the left side. The impact occurred in the following seconds.

2.3 Aircraft information

The PA18 is a tandem-seat, high-wing monoplane. F-BAYP was not equipped with an electronic conspicuity system.



Figure 3: photo illustrating forward visibility from rear seat of a PA18 (source: BEA)

The aeroplane had belonged to several co-owners since 2010, including the pilot of the accident flight. Reconditioned in 2022, it had been equipped with skis in 2023. Its home base was Albertville-Tournon aerodrome, in a hangar belonging to one of the co-owners. Before the accident flight, the aeroplane had been parked for two days on Méribel mountain airfield after being brought there by one of the co-owners. The ARC was renewed on 16 January 2025.

2.4 Méribel Robert Merloz mountain airfield information

Méribel Robert Merloz mountain airfield is a restricted use aerodrome situated at an altitude of 5,600 ft. It is operated using a dedicated A/A frequency. The operator is the Méribel flying club.

The VAC chart special instructions and procedures indicate that it is compulsory to transmit all position messages on the mountain airfield A/A frequency. The entry (optional indicated by a white triangle) points mentioned are the following:

- Col de la Lune pass when coming from the north and north-west;
- Pas de Cherferie when coming from the south-west.

When coming from the north-east, pilots are asked to indicate their presence overhead the aerodrome. When coming from any other direction, pilots are asked to report in sight of the airfield.

Usual practice when landing on a mountain airfield where there is no air traffic unit is to fly overhead the airfield before joining the circuit. The Méribel VAC chart recommends doing this at 6,500 ft.

The mountain airfield is not mentioned in the Allues municipal order of 2022 which regulates the free flight activity within the area of the municipality. The mountain airfield operator stated that it was not consulted before the publication of this order.

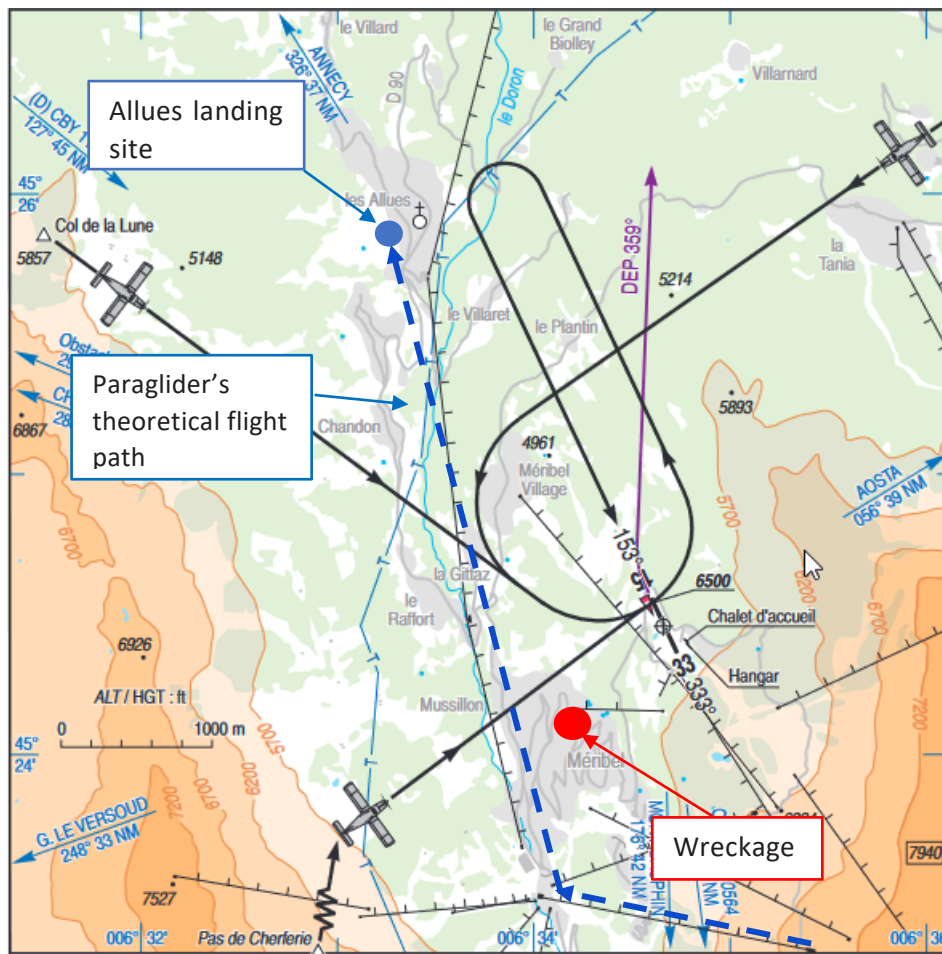


Figure 4: excerpt from Méribel mountain airfield VAC chart (source: SIA, annotations BEA)

2.5 Meteorological information

The data provided by the Courchevel weather station situated at an altitude of 2,000 m in a neighbouring valley to the Méribel valley indicated a mean wind from 210° of 3 kt and an outside air temperature of -4 °C.

On the day of the accident, the sun set at 17:25. At 16:45, as shown by the station's webcams (see **Figure 2**), the sun was about to pass behind the terrain, the Pas de Cherferie slopes and Méribel valley were in shadows with little luminosity.

2.6 Statements from members of Méribel flying club

Several pilots belonging to the Méribel flying club were present at the club at the time of the accident. The radio frequency can be listened to on a loud speaker in the flying club room. According to them, there was no other traffic near the mountain airfield at the time of the accident. One of them remembered having heard the pilot of F-BAYP reporting that he was overhead Pas de Cherferie and having seen the aeroplane on an inbound flight path that he considered standard and the paraglider on a path perpendicular to the aeroplane's path. He indicated that there were numerous paragliders in the sector, particularly in the valley and at the La Loze pass, which was on the same slope as the mountain airfield.

The president of the flying club explained that no coordination meeting had been held in the past between the users operating in the Méribel valley. He did not have knowledge of the Allues landing site.

2.7 Regulatory aspects concerning aircraft in the vicinity of an aerodrome

2.7.1 Definitions

Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 923/2012 of 26 September 2012 laying down the common rules of the air and operational provisions regarding services and procedures in air navigation (known as SERA)⁴ defines:

- the **aerodrome traffic circuit** as “the specified path to be flown by aircraft operating in the vicinity of an aerodrome”;
- **aerodrome traffic** as “all traffic on the manoeuvring area of an aerodrome and all aircraft flying in the vicinity of an aerodrome. An aircraft operating in the vicinity of an aerodrome includes but is not limited to aircraft entering or leaving an aerodrome traffic circuit.”

In France, the order of 12 July 2019 relating to general air traffic procedures for the use of aerodromes by aircraft, sets out the rules relating to aircraft⁵ joining and operating in the aerodrome traffic circuit. The order describes, as follows (see Figure 5), the characteristic positions of a traffic pattern for a typical surface and a typical aerodrome traffic pattern for a mountain airfield.

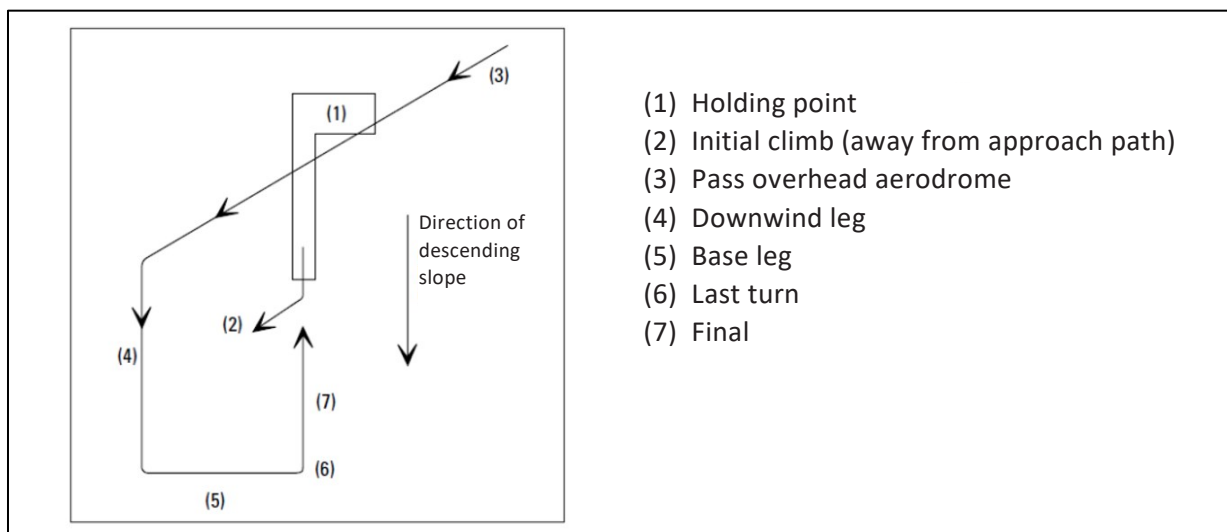


Figure 5: excerpt from French order of 12 July 2019 relating to general air traffic procedures for the use of aerodromes by aircraft

As described in the order, the "traffic pattern" does not include incoming flight paths as they may be referenced on a VAC chart.

⁴ [Version in force on the day of the accident.](#)

⁵ [Version in force on the day of the accident.](#)

2.7.2 Operating in the vicinity of an aerodrome

Article SERA.3225 with respect to operation on and in the vicinity of an aerodrome indicates that an aircraft pilot operating in the vicinity of an aerodrome shall “*observe other aerodrome traffic for the purpose of avoiding collision*” and “*conform with or avoid the pattern of traffic formed by other aircraft in operation.*” The SERA does not specify the distance by which the pattern should be avoided.

2.7.3 Right-of-way

According to article SERA.3210 regarding right-of-way between aircraft, “*When two aircraft are converging at approximately the same level, the aircraft that has the other on its right shall give way, except as follows: (i) power-driven heavier-than-air aircraft shall give way to airships, sailplanes and balloons*” (and thus to paragliders, see paragraph 2.8.1).

2.7.4 Use of radio equipment

According to the order of 12 July 2019, the use of a mountain airfield (in other words from which the pilot intends to take off or land) is subject to the obligation to have on-board radio equipment. This obligation does not apply to flight in the vicinity of an aerodrome with no intention to use it.

2.8 Free flight information

In France, paragliding is one of the FFVL’s activities. It has around 33,000 members. Free flight can also be carried out without being affiliated to the FFVL.

2.8.1 Regulatory aspects

From a regulatory standpoint, a paraglider is an “unpowered ultralight aircraft”⁶ belonging to the “ultralight glider”⁷ class. The latter must comply with the SERA regulatory requirements and the order of 12 July 2019

2.8.2 Use of airspace

In France, paraglider pilots are only authorized to use certain radio frequencies dedicated to free flight use⁸. As they do not use any aviation frequency, they are not authorized to fly in airspaces where radio contact is compulsory (class C and D airspaces, RMZ and TMZ) or to use aerodromes where radio contact is compulsory.

2.8.3 Aeronautic information

On certain VAC charts, such as the one for Bagnères-de-Luchon, paraglider flight areas are shown by the indication “*secteur PUL*” or “*zone d’évolution parapente*”.

⁶ Order of 3 May 2017: Unpowered single-seat or two-seat aircraft which meet one or more of the criteria of Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 2018/1139 ([Version in force on the day of the accident](#)).

⁷ Order of 3 May 2017: Aircraft capable of taking off or landing easily using the pilot's muscular energy and potential energy.

⁸ A licence is required to use the other frequencies. This requirement is waived for aeroplane pilots.

The FFVL has developed a flight preparation application ("Spot Air") on which the user can display the airspace whatever the map source. Protection areas, identical to no-flight areas on ICAO VFR charts, are shown around certain aerodromes without CTR and certain mountain airfields. Several map sources are available, including the ICAO VFR 1/500,000. At the date of the accident, a protection area was not shown around Méribel mountain airfield in this application.

Information may also be available on the FFA's ICARUS sheets, such as the one for Megève, which lists the two take-off areas near the arrival path and the aerodrome circuit, and the one for Peyresourde-Balestas, which specifically mentions the high level of free flight activity near the mountain airfield and the potential interference with aeroplane arrival paths. At the time of the accident, there was no ICARUS sheet for Méribel aerodrome.

Information regarding a free flight activity near an aerodrome is sometimes also disseminated via NOTAMs.

2.8.4 Documentation provided by FFVL

On the FFVL website, there is a page dedicated to aviation regulations (<https://federation.ffvl.fr/actus/reglementation-aerienne-et-documents>) with a link to the SERA regulations and various educational documents. The 2022 document about regulations applicable to free flight ([La réglementation applicable au vol libre](#)) aims to be a guide to understanding aviation regulations in areas concerning free flight in France. It presents the regulatory framework, concepts related to airspace, applicable requirements (visual flight rules, overflight rules, prevention of collisions) and their impact on the activity, aeronautical information, etc. The chapter on flying near aerodromes sets out best practices before considering a paragliding flight near an aerodrome without a CTR. It also specifies the rules and best practices for respecting the runway circuit and aerodrome traffic during flight. Since the perimeter of these flight paths is not always clearly indicated, the FFVL recommends that free flight pilots maintain a minimum distance of 1.5 to 2.5 km (0.8 to 1.3 NM) abeam the runway and a significantly greater distance in the direction of the extended runway centrelines. The FFVL has also published an emergency quick reference card outlining proscriptions and obligations. The proscriptions include landing at controlled aerodromes or flying in their traffic patterns. Uncontrolled aerodromes are not mentioned, despite the obligation to stay clear of aerodrome traffic when they are not used.

2.8.5 Free flight activities at Méribel

At Méribel, several commercial companies offer introductory paragliding flights on a daily basis during the winter season. According to statements, the flights are carried out from the summit of La Saulire to the "Plan Lançon" landing site, located approximately two kilometres south of the accident site. These flights do not seem to interfere with the inbound paths of aircraft heading to the mountain airfield. The Allues landing site is regularly used for the last flight of the day, during which the pilot has to fly in the valley, abeam the runway, at a distance of less than 1 Nm from it.

2.9 Measures taken

2.9.1 Measures taken by the federations

Several recent cases of dangerous loss of separation near or even in the runway circuit of a mountain airfield, near or in the CTR of an aerodrome or in TMAs, have been reported to the BEA.

In a context of strong and continuous growth in the paragliding activity in France, relations between the FFVL, aeronautical federations and the DSAC have been strengthened on various topics aimed at improving the coordination of different activities in the airspace and reducing the risk of a dangerous loss of separation (protocols between users, airspaces, aeronautical information, use of electronic conspicuity systems, etc.).

Aware of the need to improve the knowledge of paraglider pilots and instructors of regulations and airspaces, and of the importance of raising awareness of the risks of mid-air collisions, the FFVL has implemented or is planning a number of actions. In particular, it has appointed "airspace information contacts" within the federation and in clubs, strengthened pilot training on aviation regulations and airspaces, and updated and developed new educational material for pilots and instructors. It is also developing its communication tools, focusing on the use of airspaces and safety. Finally, it is continuing its implementation of tools dedicated to flight preparation and actively promotes the use of the "SafeSky"⁹ application among its members.

In September 2025, the CNFAS published a concurrent activity sheet ([fiche coactivité](#)) on paragliding. It gives general information about the activity, the different locations where the activity is carried out, paragliding in the mountains and points of vigilance.

2.9.2 Measures taken by the Méribel flying club, the mountain airfield operator

The president of the Méribel flying club, the mountain airfield operator, advised of:

- the organization of a coordination meeting in autumn 2025 between the various stakeholders regularly flying in the Méribel valley (air operators, flying clubs, paragliding clubs and commercial companies) with the participation of the authorities (BGTA, DSAC-CE) in order to prepare the 2025-2026 winter season;
- the forthcoming publication of an ICARUS sheet for the Méribel mountain airfield, which will indicate the free flight take-off and landing areas;
- the impending elimination of the rarely used arrival path to the mountain airfield via Pas de Cherferie;
- the installation of an anti-collision system on board its aircraft, integrating Mode-S, ADS-B, Flarm, Neurone and ADS-L receivers and transmitters¹⁰.

2.9.3 Examples of measures taken at other aerodromes

Measures have been taken locally at certain aerodromes, in consultation with flying clubs, operators and paragliding clubs so that the various activities can co-exist while reducing the risk of accidents. At the Peyresourde-Balestas mountain airfield, for example, where regular briefings are held between the flying club and local free flight clubs, "no-fly zones" have been defined by the flying club and proposed to the free flight clubs to avoid the presence of paragliders in certain aeroplane flight areas.

2.9.4 Measure taken by the authorities

Les Allues town hall decided to update the municipal order defining the free flight take-off and landing areas in the Méribel valley to include the presence of the mountain airfield and the inbound and outbound flight paths.

⁹ A mobile traffic awareness application based on the exchange of positions between users.

¹⁰ <https://www.easa.europa.eu/en/the-agency/faqs/automatic-dependent-surveillance-light-ads-l>

In December 2025, the DSAC sent a letter to the FFVL reminding them of the rules of the air and best practices aimed at minimizing the risk of mid-air collisions in the vicinity of aerodromes. In particular, this letter reminds pilots to stay clear of the aerodrome circuit when they do not intend to use it or when they are not equipped with a radio (especially in the case of a mountain airfield). The letter recommends maintaining a minimum distance of 2 Nm (3.7 km) from the aerodrome to avoid interfering with aircraft flying in the circuit.

3 CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are solely based on the information which came to the knowledge of the BEA during the investigation.

Scenario

Returning from a local flight at the end of a winter's day, the aeroplane was on approach to the Méribel mountain airfield following an arrival path perpendicular to the valley. The paraglider pilot, as was his habit for the last flight of the day, was following Méribel valley to reach the designated landing area. The flight path that he followed brought him 1 km abeam the runway of the mountain airfield and at an altitude close to the published altitude at which aircraft are to pass overhead the mountain airfield and join the circuit. The two aircraft collided with each other, leading to the loss of control of the aeroplane and its collision with the ground.

Contributing factors

The following factors may have contributed to the collision between the aeroplane and the paraglider:

- the possible difficulty for the pilots to mutually detect the other aircraft in low-contrast and low-light conditions at the end of the day;
- the paraglider pilot following, for logistical reasons, a flight path that, although not prohibited by air regulations, increased the risk of a collision with outbound and inbound aircraft to the mountain airfield.

The investigation found that there was little to no communication between the paraglider companies operating daily in the valley and the airfield operator. This resulted in limited awareness of each other's activities. This situation was not conducive to the identification and effective management of risks associated with this type of concurrent activity.

Safety lessons

Sharing of airspace between aircraft

The inherent risks in concurrent activities at aerodromes have been discussed for several years within the aviation community and highlighted in several accidents investigated by the BEA. The Méribel accident broadens the issue by highlighting the risks associated with concurrent activities in an area in the vicinity of an aerodrome. While it is not possible to know all those who use the area, it is possible to identify certain key stakeholders (commercial companies, air operators, clubs, flying clubs) who regularly operate in the sector concerned. Exchanges between these stakeholders must lead to a better understanding of the practices and constraints specific to each activity. This knowledge forms the foundation for a reliable identification and assessment of the risks caused by concurrent activities in the defined area, enabling the implementation of appropriate preventative measures and thus improving the effectiveness of the "see and avoid" principle.

Electronic conspicuity equipment

Although not imposed by regulations, some flying clubs, operators or pilots take the initiative to use a system which detects and warns of other aircraft close by, also known as an electronic conspicuity system (e-conspicuity). This system means that the aircraft is detectable by and can detect other similarly equipped aircraft. It thus improves the pilot's situational awareness and facilitates the visual acquisition of surrounding traffic in airspace where the "see and avoid" principle can be difficult to apply. Various equipment models are currently available on the market and, depending on the equipment used, detect Mode S, FLARM, ADS-B and ADS-L signals via the mobile internet network or ground antennas as well as providing visibility on the OGN network. Aviation authorities and federations, including the FFVL, promote the use of this type of equipment, the current and future challenge being the interoperability of the different existing systems and devices.

The BEA investigations are conducted with the sole objective of improving aviation safety and are not intended to apportion blame or liabilities.