

An efficient Retrieve Office is an important – occasionally vital – part of an efficient contest organization. On a day with few landouts, efficiency hardly matters – spending 20 minutes on the phone with a pilot who has no landing card and wants to chat about his flight is no problem when he's the only one who needs a retrieve. But when the weather turns difficult and gliders start dropping into fields everywhere, pilots, crews and contest officials are glad for an efficient Retrieve Office – or they pay the price if this isn't so.

Telephone procedure

All Retrieve Office volunteers should have read this document (and perhaps have been “walked through” the procedures it outlines by someone with experience) before having to answer the phone. The basic approach is to use a fixed routine for every phone call.

When the phone rings, bear in mind that it's important for the Retrieve Office – not the pilot – to direct and control the conversation. Answer the phone by saying “**Mifflin Country Retrieve Office.**”

If the pilot does not respond with his contest ID, ask for it. Then say “**Yankee Xray, are you and your glider okay?**”

If the answer is no – if there is any sort of genuine emergency – this should be given to the person in charge, to be dealt with as it seems best. If not, say “**Wait just a moment while I find your card.**”

Grab the correct Retrieve Office card and write down the current time under *Time of Calling In*. Then ask “**Do you have your landing card filled out and in front of you?**”

If the pilot says no, the best response is usually: “**To keep things running smoothly the rules require this. Could you please fill out your card and then call back?**” This may sound harsh, but the alternative is usually to take far longer than necessary (often while other pilots are trying to get through).

When the pilot has his landing card, ask him to supply the info on the Retrieve Office card in order:

- Name of the landing place
- Is this an airfield (if it is, no further landing location info is needed)
- If not, latitude and longitude
- Contact telephone number
- Retrieve instructions

If the pilot is at an airfield, would he like an aerotow retrieve?

If not, what are the driving directions?

It will help if the Retrieve Office can be kept uncrowded and reasonably quiet. All present should understand that when the phone rings, conversation must instantly die down.

Tracking all pilots

Part of the job of the Retrieve Office is to keep track of all pilots, ensuring that no pilot is left stranded or unaccounted for. This starts with a list of the contest IDs of all entrants. Some few of these may not take a launch (or may have withdrawn from the contest); the CD should be asked to supply a list of these. The Retrieve Office should then make a record of all the remaining pilots, either on a single sheet of paper or by writing the contest ID of each pilot on a separate Retrieve Office card.

All pilots that launch are required to report their results to the Scorer. Some may decide to land back at the home field without attempting the task. It's a common mistake for such pilots to fail to meet their reporting obligations. It's principally the Scorer's job to keep track of what pilots accomplish, but the Retrieve Office may be able to help by noticing that a certain glider is being disassembled or tied down. (A radio tuned to the contest frequency can help with this.)

Pilots should be checked off as their results become known. When a pilot lands at the home field, either his Retrieve Office card is placed in an "accounted for" stack, or his entry in the contest ID list is checked off. A pilot that reports having landed out earns a Retrieve Office card noting this; the card will include retrieve instructions that can be copied for the crew, and becomes a way of monitoring the retrieve status. As the day nears completion, it should thus be easy to tell which pilots are not yet accounted for.

Should a pilot request an aerotow retrieve, this must be tracked. There will be a contest official (usually the person in charge of tow operations) that assigns tow planes for retrieve missions. Cooperation between this person and the Retrieve Office is important in this job is to run smoothly. The Retrieve Office's fundamental duty is to be able to say who is and is not accounted for; notes on the Retrieve Office card are usually the best way to accomplish this.

The rule for trailer retrieves is that once a crew is dispatched, the Retrieve Office is entitled to assume that their job is done unless they hear otherwise – they do not expect to hear from each pilot/crew team. There should be an announced cutoff time at which the Retrieve Office normally closes. If a crew and pilot are not together by this time and feel they need help, it is their duty to telephone to ask that the Retrieve Office stay open (should this happen, it is a very good idea to obtain a mobile phone contact number). Having done so, it is then their duty to report when they get together, so the Retrieve Office can then close.

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