

# INADVERTENT L13 TOW RELEASE

By Ronnie Rogers

Recently, during a tow of the L13 Blanik at Bergseth field, there was an inadvertent release of the tow rope from the L13 tow hook. This occurred at an altitude of about 2500 feet MSL, just east of the field, so fortunately there was no problem with returning to the field. There were occupants in both seats of the Blanik, with the front seat occupant in control when the inadvertent release occurred. The rear seat occupant had mounted a video camera such that it recorded a view of the forward cockpit, panel and windscreen.

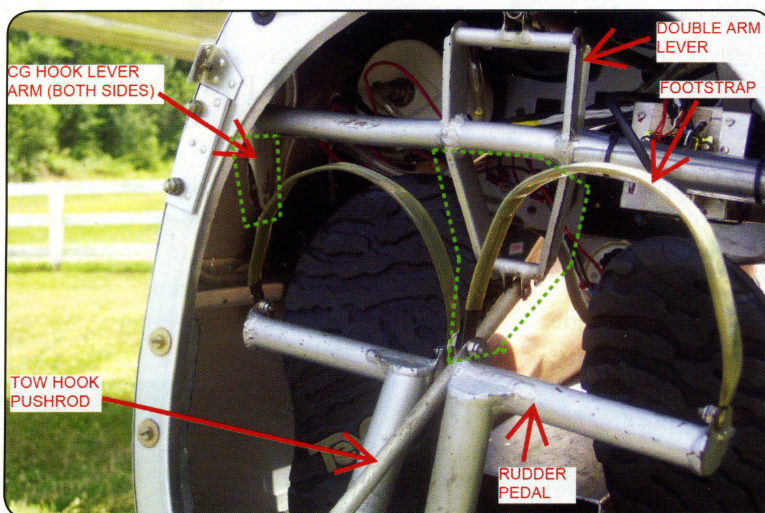
Several PSSA members investigated how this could occur and determined that it was caused by inadvertent

activation of the tow rope release mechanism by the feet of the front seat passenger as he manipulated the rudder pedals while attempting to maintain position behind the tow plane. This fact is supported by the video, which shows the tow rope release handle moving out to a release position on its own.

As can be seen in the following photograph, with feet on or near the rudder pedals, the shoes are in close proximity to the release actuating mechanism. It is possible, with the toe area of one's footwear, to inadvertently contact the CG release lever arm outboard

of either rudder pedal, or the tow hook pushrod which passes between the two rudder pedals (see areas outlined by the dashed green line). Pressing far enough on any of these **three** mechanisms has the same result as pulling the tow rope release handle on the panel: release of the tow rope.

*About the author:* Ronnie Rogers is the Safety and Operations Officer of the Puget Sound Soaring Association.



In order to avoid future inadvertent releases, it is recommended that the L13 front seat pilot use the foot straps if flying the airplane on tow. If not flying the airplane, then the feet should be positioned as to avoid possible contact with tow release.

