



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Robert Gretz
Senior Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation

Date: December 12, 2017
Person Contacted: David Brown, Warrenton, VA
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18FA006

Narrative:

Mr. Brown was interviewed via telephone. Two members of the Skyline Soaring Club also participated in the telephone call, TR Proven and Shane Neitzey. The purpose of the interview was to obtain background information on a “kiting” accident, where a glider in tow lifted the empennage of the towplane. Mr. Brown stated that he was involved in such an accident in 1989 (NTSB ID No. BFO89LA035). Mr. Brown stated that during initial climb, about 70 mph, in the same make and model towplane as in the Front Royal, VA accident, about 200 feet above ground level, the towplane very suddenly pitched significantly nose down (only ground was visible in the windscreen) and decelerated. Mr. Brown estimated that 1 to 2 seconds elapsed between the pitch-down, before the towrope separated near the glider end. Mr. Brown added that he did not think to cut the towrope as the upset happened too fast and he was concentrating on recovering from the unusual attitude.

At that point, the engine was at full power and the towplane was pointed nose down; however, insufficient altitude remained to gain enough airspeed and recover from the dive. Mr. Brown applied aft elevator pressure and the towplane contacted the ground in a downward, but also forward direction. The landing gear separated at impact and the towplane came to rest about 50 feet from the initial impact point. Mr. Brown estimated that he might have been able to recover from the dive if he was 50 feet or higher at the beginning of the kiting. During the impact, both shoulder harnesses separated near his shoulders (the shoulder harness material separated).



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Date: December 13, 2017
Person Contacted: JP Steward, Roanoke, VA
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18FA006

Narrative:

Mr. Stewart was interviewed via telephone. Two members of the Skyline Soaring Club also participated in the telephone call, TR Proven and Shane Neitzey. The purpose of the interview was to obtain background information on a “kiting” flight test, where a glider was intentionally towed above a same make and model towplane as the accident towplane. I asked Mr. Stewart about the elevator trim and elevator position. Mr. Stewart stated that when trimmed during initial climb while towing a glider, the elevator was in an up position. Mr. Stewart thought that the Pawnee elevator position in the accident video may have been more up, but he could not be certain as the video was grainy.

Mr. Stewart stated that the flight test was extremely conservative and the kiting was done in increments and not one sudden movement. The towplane towed the glider to a high altitude, and then the glider began to purposely fly above the towplane while to the side of it and inline of it. Mr. Stewart added that divergent flight paths were not tested and the towrope did not break during the test. The towplane pilot was able to control the towplane without difficulty when the glider towed extremely above the towplane, applying a lifting force on the towplane’s empennage.