



Aviation Investigation Final Report

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| Location: | HEMPSTEAD, Texas | Accident Number: | FTW98LA264 |
| Date & Time: | June 14, 1998, 17:15 Local | Registration: | N73534 |
| Aircraft: | Let BLANIK L-13 | Aircraft Damage: | Substantial |
| Defining Event: | | Injuries: | 1 Minor |
| Flight Conducted Under: | Part 91: General aviation - Instructional | | |

Analysis

When the glider was adjacent to the intended touch down point, the pilot 'took out some of the spoilers to decrease sink [rate].' After initiating a left turn to base leg he realized that the 'altitude was still much too great and attempted to deploy full spoilers.' Observers on the ground noted that 'no spoilers were deployed; rather, the flaps appeared to have been extended instead.' On final approach, the pilot lowered the nose to try and touch down on the runway, and the aircraft 'porpoised' due to the 'excessive' speed. Approximately 50 feet from the departure end of the runway and less than 15 feet agl, the pilot 'lifted the plane off the ground to avoid hitting the property fence and crossing Highway 290.' He flew the glider over the highway and forced it to the ground in a dirt parking lot. The glider came to a stop after hitting a metal building. The glider also hit a neutral power line during the landing to the parking lot. In the Blanik L-13, the handle for the spoilers is located directly underneath the handle used to deploy the flaps. The pilot stated that 'in concentrating on other factors during landing, it appears that I pulled the wrong lever.' The private pilot rated student had 7 hours total glider time.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's failure to maintain the proper rate of descent. Factor were the pilot's inadvertent lowering of the flaps instead of extending the spoilers, and his lack of experience in gliders.

Findings

Occurrence #1: OVERRUN

Phase of Operation: LANDING

Findings

1. (F) LOWERING OF FLAPS - INADVERTENT - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (F) LACK OF TOTAL EXPERIENCE IN KIND OF AIRCRAFT - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (C) PROPER DESCENT RATE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT

Phase of Operation: LANDING

Findings

4. OBJECT - WIRE,STATIC

Occurrence #3: ON GROUND/WATER COLLISION WITH OBJECT

Phase of Operation: LANDING - ROLL

Findings

5. OBJECT - BUILDING(NONRESIDENTIAL)

Factual Information

On June 14, 1998, at 1715 central daylight time, a Let Blanik L-13 glider, N73534, registered to and operated by the Greater Houston Soaring Association of Richmond, Texas, was substantially damaged while landing at the Hempstead Gliderport near Hempstead, Texas. The private pilot, the sole occupant, sustained minor injuries. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed, and a flight plan was not filed for the 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 91 local solo instructional flight. The flight originated from the Hempstead Gliderport at 1641.

The pilot reported in the Pilot/Operator Aircraft Accident Report, NTSB Form 6120.1/2, and in a written statement that a "normal aero-tow was taken, and he disengaged at 3,000 feet agl." After 23 minutes, he elected to return to the gliderport. He entered left traffic for runway 17L at approximately 900 feet agl. He went through the "USTALL" checklist, lowering and locking the undercarriage, slowing to 55 knots and trimming the aircraft.

The pilot further reported that he deployed the "airbrakes [spoilers] approximately halfway and looked to the left wing to verify their deployment." About midfield on downwind, he realized that he was too high due to "substantial amount of thermal lift on the fields underneath the downwind leg," and deployed more spoilers. When the glider was adjacent to the intended touch down point, he "took out some of the spoilers to decrease sink [rate]." After initiating a left turn to base leg, he realized that the "altitude was still much too great and attempted to deploy full spoilers."

Observers on the ground noted that "no spoilers were deployed; rather, the flaps appeared to have been extended instead." In the Blanik L-13, the handle for the spoilers is located directly underneath the handle used to deploy the flaps. The pilot stated that "in concentrating on other factors during landing, it appears that I pulled the wrong lever."

The pilot also reported that the glider was not losing enough altitude, so he "lowered the nose of the plane to approach the ground. The airspeed increased substantially." On final approach, he lowered the nose to try and touch down on the runway. The aircraft "porpoised" due to the "excessive" speed of approximately 15-20 knots. Approximately 50 feet from the departure end of the runway and less than 15 feet agl, he "lifted the plane off the ground to avoid hitting the property fence and crossing Highway 290. He flew the plane over the highway and forced it to the ground in a dirt parking lot. The glider came to a stop after hitting a metal building. Although the pilot did not realize it, the glider also hit a neutral power line during the landing to the parking lot.

The pilot reported that the glider's left and right wings were sheared and that the nose cone was dented.

The pilot held a private pilot certificate with an airplane single engine land rating. On the day of the accident, the pilot received 1.1 hours dual instruction during three flights prior to solo endorsement. He had previously received 4.9 hours of dual instruction in gliders.

Pilot Information

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| Certificate: | Private | Age: | 17, Male |
| Airplane Rating(s): | Single-engine land | Seat Occupied: | Front |
| Other Aircraft Rating(s): | None | Restraint Used: | |
| Instrument Rating(s): | None | Second Pilot Present: | No |
| Instructor Rating(s): | None | Toxicology Performed: | No |
| Medical Certification: | Class 3 Valid Medical-w/ waivers/lim | Last FAA Medical Exam: | June 30, 1997 |
| Occupational Pilot: | UNK | Last Flight Review or Equivalent: | |
| Flight Time: | 81 hours (Total, all aircraft), 7 hours (Total, this make and model), 31 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 4 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 3 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft) | | |

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

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|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Aircraft Make: | Let | Registration: | N73534 |
| Model/Series: | BLANIK L-13 BLANIK L-1 | Aircraft Category: | Glider |
| Year of Manufacture: | | Amateur Built: | |
| Airworthiness Certificate: | Normal | Serial Number: | 175214 |
| Landing Gear Type: | Retractable - Tailwheel | Seats: | 2 |
| Date/Type of Last Inspection: | Unknown | Certified Max Gross Wt.: | 1102 lbs |
| Time Since Last Inspection: | | Engines: | Unknown |
| Airframe Total Time: | | Engine Manufacturer: | |
| ELT: | | Engine Model/Series: | |
| Registered Owner: | GREATER HOUSTON SOARING ASSOC. | Rated Power: | |
| Operator: | | Operating Certificate(s) Held: | None |
| Operator Does Business As: | | Operator Designator Code: | |

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

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| Conditions at Accident Site: | Visual (VMC) | Condition of Light: | Day |
| Observation Facility, Elevation: | | Distance from Accident Site: | |
| Observation Time: | | Direction from Accident Site: | |
| Lowest Cloud Condition: | Scattered / 4000 ft AGL | Visibility | 12 miles |
| Lowest Ceiling: | None | Visibility (RVR): | |
| Wind Speed/Gusts: | 5 knots / 10 knots | Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Wind Direction: | 270° | Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Altimeter Setting: | | Temperature/Dew Point: | 37°C |
| Precipitation and Obscuration: | No Obscuration; No Precipitation | | |
| Departure Point: | (35R) | Type of Flight Plan Filed: | None |
| Destination: | | Type of Clearance: | None |
| Departure Time: | 16:41 Local | Type of Airspace: | Class G |

Airport Information

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|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Airport: | HEMPSTEAD GLIDERPORT 35R | Runway Surface Type: | Grass/turf |
| Airport Elevation: | 260 ft msl | Runway Surface Condition: | Dry |
| Runway Used: | 17 | IFR Approach: | |
| Runway Length/Width: | 3055 ft / 50 ft | VFR Approach/Landing: | Full stop;Traffic pattern |

Wreckage and Impact Information

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|----------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Crew Injuries: | 1 Minor | Aircraft Damage: | Substantial |
| Passenger Injuries: | | Aircraft Fire: | None |
| Ground Injuries: | N/A | Aircraft Explosion: | None |
| Total Injuries: | 1 Minor | Latitude, Longitude: | 30.089204,-96.079696(est) |

Administrative Information

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| Investigator In Charge (IIC): | Wigington, Douglas |
| Additional Participating Persons: | TOM LATSON; HOUSTON , TX |
| Original Publish Date: | February 16, 2001 |
| Last Revision Date: | |
| Investigation Class: | Class |
| Note: | |
| Investigation Docket: | https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=20646 |

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant events in other modes of transportation—railroad, transit, highway, marine, pipeline, and commercial space. We determine the probable causes of the accidents and events we investigate, and issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future occurrences. In addition, we conduct transportation safety research studies and offer information and other assistance to family members and survivors for each accident or event we investigate. We also serve as the appellate authority for enforcement actions involving aviation and mariner certificates issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and US Coast Guard, and we adjudicate appeals of civil penalty actions taken by the FAA.

The NTSB does not assign fault or blame for an accident or incident; rather, as specified by NTSB regulation, “accident/incident investigations are fact-finding proceedings with no formal issues and no adverse parties ... and are not conducted for the purpose of determining the rights or liabilities of any person” (Title 49 *Code of Federal Regulations* section 831.4). Assignment of fault or legal liability is not relevant to the NTSB’s statutory mission to improve transportation safety by investigating accidents and incidents and issuing safety recommendations. In addition, statutory language prohibits the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report (Title 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b)). A factual report that may be admissible under 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b) is available [here](#).