



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	FORT WAINWRIGHT, Alaska	Accident Number:	ANC97TA074
Date & Time:	May 17, 1997, 15:00 Local	Registration:	N2952H
Aircraft:	Schweizer SGS 1-26E	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation		

Analysis

The pilot was departing in a glider on a local proficiency flight. During the takeoff roll, the glider's canopy suddenly opened. The pilot released the glider from the tow airplane, and landed in unsuitable terrain off the airport environment. The glider received damage to the right side of the nose, the right wingtip, and the fuselage.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: the pilot's inadequate preflight and improper planning/decision. Factors relating to the accident were: an unlatched canopy, and unsuitable terrain for landing.

Findings

Occurrence #1: AIRFRAME/COMPONENT/SYSTEM FAILURE/MALFUNCTION
Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF

Findings

1. (F) WINDOW,CANOPY - UNLATCHED
 2. (C) AIRCRAFT PREFLIGHT - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
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Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY LANDING AFTER TAKEOFF

Findings

3. (C) PLANNING/DECISION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. GLIDER/TOW RELEASE - PERFORMED - PILOT IN COMMAND
5. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - ROUGH/UNEVEN

Factual Information

On May 17, 1997, about 1500 Alaska daylight time, a Schweizer SGS 1-26E glider, N2952H, crashed during a precautionary landing at Fort Wainwright, Alaska. The glider was being operated as a visual flight rules (VFR) local area proficiency flight when the accident occurred. The glider, registered to and operated by the Civil Air Patrol, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, sustained substantial damage. The certificated private pilot, the sole occupant, was not injured. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed.

On May 19, 1997, at 1225, a Civil Air Patrol officer reported in a telephone conversation with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigator-in-charge (IIC), the glider was being towed aloft behind a tow airplane. During the initial takeoff roll from runway 24, the glider canopy opened. The pilot released the tow line from the tow plane, and landed off the airport environment. During the landing, the glider received damage to the right side of the nose, the right wingtip, and the fuselage.

The weather conditions were reported as: Wind, 220 degrees at 15 knots with gust to 20 knots; visibility, 7 statute miles; clouds, 5,000 feet broken; temperature, 53 degrees F.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	54, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea	Seat Occupied:	Center
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Glider	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim	Last FAA Medical Exam:	September 1, 1995
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	159 hours (Total, all aircraft), 4 hours (Total, this make and model)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Schweizer	Registration:	N2952H
Model/Series:	SGS 1-26E SGS 1-26E	Aircraft Category:	Glider
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	682
Landing Gear Type:		Seats:	1
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	May 3, 1997 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	700 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	18 Hrs	Engines:	Unknown
Airframe Total Time:	1947 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	
Registered Owner:	CIVIL AIR PATROL	Rated Power:	
Operator:		Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Does Business As:		Operator Designator Code:	

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

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:	Unknown	Visibility	7 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 5000 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	15 knots / 20 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	220°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:		Temperature/Dew Point:	12°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	(FBK)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	Company VFR
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	VFR
Departure Time:	15:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class D

Airport Information

Airport:	WAINWRIGHT ARMY AIR FIELD PAFB	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	449 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	24	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	8552 ft / 150 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Precautionary landing

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	64.829658,-147.619094(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Erickson, Scott
Additional Participating Persons:	DON NELSON; FAIRBANKS , AK
Original Publish Date:	May 29, 1998
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=3080

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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](#).