



# Aviation Investigation Final Report

<b>Location:</b>	MORGAN, Utah	<b>Accident Number:</b>	SEA95LA217
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	September 14, 1995, 16:10 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N2478W
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Schweizer SGS 1-26B	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	1 Fatal
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

## Analysis

The tow plane pilot reported that the glider released at an estimated altitude of 100-150 feet AGL, approximately midfield, during the takeoff/initial climb. Several witnesses observed the glider yawing/swerving back and forth and then release. The glider pilot executed a left turn back toward the runway. Witnesses reported that during the turn, the glider entered a stall/spin and impacted the ground. No mechanical malfunctions with either the glider's controls or the tow release hook mechanism were found. The tow rope was found to be intact following the accident.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: Failure of the pilot to maintain adequate airspeed, while maneuvering to land after a low altitude tow release, which resulted in a stall/spin and collision with terrain.

## Findings

Occurrence #1: MISCELLANEOUS/OTHER  
Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF - INITIAL CLIMB

Findings  
1. GLIDER/TOW RELEASE  
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Occurrence #2: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT

Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

Findings

2. (C) AIRSPEED - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (C) STALL/SPIN - INADVERTENT - PILOT IN COMMAND

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Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER  
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

## Factual Information

### HISTORY OF FLIGHT

On September 14, 1995, approximately 1610, mountain daylight time, a Schweizer SGS 1-26B glider, N2478W, registered to and being flown by a 74 year old private pilot, was destroyed during collision with terrain during an uncontrolled descent following a loss of control in flight while maneuvering. The glider had just departed the Morgan County Airport, Morgan, Utah. The pilot, who initially survived the impact, expired several hours later. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and no flight plan had been filed. The flight, which was personal, was to have been operated under 14CFR91.

The pilot of the tow aircraft reported taking off on runway 21 (3,800 feet in length) at 1605. He reported the winds at 240 degrees and 10 to 12 miles per hour. Shortly after takeoff (approximately 800 feet down the runway) he noticed a slight jerk on the tow rope and looked in the rear-view mirror at the glider noting that it was "back in position, possibly slightly low, but no slack in the rope." Thereafter, the tow pilot noted a dramatic increase in rate of climb and looked back at the glider observing it "in an approximate 30 degree bank to the left." The pilot returned to the Morgan County airport during which he observed the accident site.

Subsequent to landing, the towplane pilot ascertained that the glider's tow hook was open (in the release position) and examined the tow rope finding it intact and in normal condition. Additionally, he estimated that the glider pilot "cut loose from the towplane before reaching the mid-point of the runway and at an altitude less than 150 feet and greater than 100 feet" (refer to attached statement).

One witness who reported observing the glider during the accident sequence stated that he "saw the glider on tow. It began to yaw left to right, while way off to the right (from the glider's perspective). The glider released off tow. At first the glider went straight (about 100 yards) then it started a very slow bank to the left. At that point the glider stalled and "spun in" to the ground (turning to the left continuously)."

A second witness reported that "After the glider was airborne a little, he began to swerve back & forth quite a bit veering to the west side of the runway. About that time, the tow rope came off & the glider straightened up then turned back towards the north end of the runway. While in the turn the glider appeared to stall & spin about two complete turns & struck the ground facing north." (Both witnesses submitted statements included in Morgan County Sheriff's Department Report Case Number 95-0961).

### AIRCRAFT INFORMATION



of the Medical Examiner, 48 North Medical Drive, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84113, on September 15, 1995. The pilot received medical treatment during the short time period following the accident and prior to his expiration. Toxicological evaluation of samples from the pilot was conducted by both the State of Utah and the FAA's Toxicology and Accident Research Laboratory. All tests were negative (refer to attached reports).

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The following items were sent to the NTSB by FAA personnel from the Salt Lake FSDO:

Sailplane Log Book + one yellow tag      Pilot Logbook #2      FAA Form 1362  
 (Airworthiness Certificate)      Form 8050-1 (pink copy - acft registration application)  
 Two pieces of the tow release hook from N2478W      Schweizer Sailplane Flight manual

These items were sent via certified mail to the pilot's address on March 8, 1995.

**Pilot Information**

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	74, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Center
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	Glider	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	Yes
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Unknown None	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	No	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	121 hours (Total, all aircraft), 1 hours (Total, this make and model), 46 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 11 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 2 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Schweizer	<b>Registration:</b>	N2478W
<b>Model/Series:</b>	SGS 1-26B SGS 1-26B	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Glider
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Aerobatic	<b>Serial Number:</b>	375
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Tailwheel	<b>Seats:</b>	1
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	August 23, 1995 Annual	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	600 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>	1 Hrs	<b>Engines:</b>	Unknown
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>	1756 Hrs	<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	
<b>ELT:</b>	Not installed	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	RIDDERHOFF, CORNELL, C.	<b>Rated Power:</b>	
<b>Operator:</b>		<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None
<b>Operator Does Business As:</b>		<b>Operator Designator Code:</b>	

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Visual (VMC)	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Day
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>	HIF ,4789 ft msl	<b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>	9 Nautical Miles
<b>Observation Time:</b>	15:55 Local	<b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>	243°
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>	Scattered / 6000 ft AGL	<b>Visibility</b>	50 miles
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	None	<b>Visibility (RVR):</b>	
<b>Wind Speed/Gusts:</b>	4 knots /	<b>Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Wind Direction:</b>	220°	<b>Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Altimeter Setting:</b>	30 inches Hg	<b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>	28°C / 3°C
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
<b>Departure Point:</b>		<b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>	None
<b>Destination:</b>		<b>Type of Clearance:</b>	None
<b>Departure Time:</b>	16:05 Local	<b>Type of Airspace:</b>	Class G

## Airport Information

<b>Airport:</b>		<b>Runway Surface Type:</b>	
<b>Airport Elevation:</b>		<b>Runway Surface Condition:</b>	
<b>Runway Used:</b>	0	<b>IFR Approach:</b>	None
<b>Runway Length/Width:</b>		<b>VFR Approach/Landing:</b>	

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	1 Fatal	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>		<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	None
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Total Injuries:</b>	1 Fatal	<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	41.010925,-111.66925(est)

## Administrative Information

<b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>	Mccreary, Steven
<b>Additional Participating Persons:</b>	LEW OLSON; SALT LAKE CITY , UT
<b>Original Publish Date:</b>	May 9, 1996
<b>Last Revision Date:</b>	
<b>Investigation Class:</b>	<a href="#">Class</a>
<b>Note:</b>	
<b>Investigation Docket:</b>	<a href="https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=42248">https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=42248</a>

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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](#).