



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Rock Island, Washington	Accident Number:	SEA01LA147
Date & Time:	August 7, 2001, 13:30 Local	Registration:	N5768S
Aircraft:	Schweizer SGS 1-26B	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Instructional		

Analysis

The accident flight was intended to be a solo cross-country instructional glider flight over a distance of about 29 nautical miles. The flight instructor stated that he instructed the student to climb to at least 6,000 feet above sea level (4,751 feet above the departure airport and 4,724 feet above the destination airport) prior to leaving the local area. The glider had a maximum lift-to-drag ratio of 23. The instructor reported that when the student failed to find lift, and after waiting until too low to return to the departure airport, he delayed selecting a safe landing site until only one option remained. The student's approach was high and was made with a tail wind. The glider overshot its intended landing area, a 400-foot-long open field, and landed between trees near a cherry orchard approximately 2 miles from the departure airport, sustaining substantial damage in the landing. The flight instructor reported that no mechanical malfunction or failure was involved in the accident. The student pilot's certificate was issued about 1 1/2 months before the accident, and the student pilot's flight instructor reported that the student had 30 hours total pilot time including 8 hours in the accident make and model.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The student pilot's improper inflight planning and decision (delay in establishing an approach to a suitable landing area) and his subsequent failure to attain the proper glidepath for the selected landing area, resulting in an overshoot of the selected landing area and collision with trees during landing. Factors included the pilot's lack of experience, and trees in the vicinity of the landing site.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT

Phase of Operation: LANDING

Findings

1. (C) IN-FLIGHT PLANNING/DECISION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (F) LACK OF EXPERIENCE - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - TAILWIND
4. (C) PROPER GLIDEPATH - NOT ATTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
5. PROPER TOUCHDOWN POINT - NOT ATTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
6. (F) OBJECT - TREE(S)

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: LANDING

Factual Information

On August 7, 2001, approximately 1330 Pacific daylight time, a Schweizer SGS 1-26B glider, N5768S, operated by Cascade Soaring Society Inc. of East Wenatchee, Washington, and being flown by a student pilot, was substantially damaged in an off-airport landing near Rock Island, Washington. The pilot of the single-seat glider was not injured in the accident. The 14 CFR 91 instructional flight had departed approximately 1300 from Pangborn Memorial Airport, Wenatchee, Washington, on an intended cross-country flight to Ephrata, Washington. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and no flight plan was filed for the flight.

The student pilot's certificate was issued on June 29, 2001. The student pilot's flight instructor, who towed the student to altitude on the accident flight and who completed an NTSB accident report form on behalf of the student, reported that the student had 30 hours total pilot time, including 8 hours in the accident make and model. The flight instructor stated:

...[The student] had been instructed to climb to at least 6,000 [feet] MSL prior to leaving the local area. He may have left too low. When he failed to find lift and [too] low to return to Pangborn without finding lift he delayed selecting a safe landing site until only one option remained. His approach was high and a tail wind spoiled his [judgment]. His landing was 150 feet from a cherry orchard (with 400 feet of open field behind). He aimed between trees and received no injuries.

The off-airport landing site was approximately 2 miles east of the airport. The flight instructor reported that no mechanical malfunction or failure was involved in the accident.

According to the 1997 Soaring Sailplane Directory, published by the Soaring Society of America, the SGS 1-26B has a maximum lift/drag ratio (L/D max) of 23 at 43 knots. Pangborn Memorial's elevation is 1,249 feet above sea level, and Ephrata Municipal Airport (approximately 29 nautical miles east-southeast of Pangborn Memorial) is 1,276 feet above sea level. The flight instructor reported that winds at the time were from 250 degrees at 7 to 8 knots.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Student	Age:	18, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Center
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 Without waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	June 28, 2001
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	30 hours (Total, all aircraft), 8 hours (Total, this make and model), 30 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 20 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 2 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Schweizer	Registration:	N5768S
Model/Series:	SGS 1-26B	Aircraft Category:	Glider
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Aerobatic	Serial Number:	394
Landing Gear Type:		Seats:	1
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	June 19, 2001 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	575 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	27 Hrs	Engines:	0
Airframe Total Time:	1557.9 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	
Registered Owner:	Cascade Soaring Society Inc.	Rated Power:	
Operator:		Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

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:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	7 knots / 8 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	250°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:		Temperature/Dew Point:	26°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Wenatchee, WA (EAT)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Ephrata, WA (EPH)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	13:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	Pangborn Memorial EAT	Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:	1249 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Unknown
Runway Used:		IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	Full stop

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:	47.31015,-120.080947(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Nesemeier, Gregg
Additional Participating Persons:	Will Hicks; FAA - Spokane FSDO; Spokane, WA
Original Publish Date:	June 3, 2002
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	The NTSB traveled to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=52997

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](#).