



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Marlette, Michigan	Accident Number:	CHI01LA277
Date & Time:	August 4, 2001, 15:00 Local	Registration:	N9297Z
Aircraft:	Blanik L-13	Aircraft Damage:	Minor
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Serious, 1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Instructional		

Analysis

The CFI reported that during the takeoff the left hook of the winch harness released, uncommanded, from the center of gravity attachment. The glider yawed to the left toward a ditch on the west side of the runway. The CFI applied right aileron and full right rudder in an attempt to avoid the ditch however the glider continued into the ditch. The glider came to rest bridging the ditch on a heading of east. He reported that the ditch was full of broken and cut down brush and saplings. During the impact, a broken branch penetrated the left side of the cockpit and impaled itself in the CFI's right calf. The CFI remained hospitalized for five days following the accident. Members of the glider club reported that they had hooked both the left and right side cables prior to the takeoff. Inspection of the tow winch failed to reveal any mechanical failure/malfunction.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: Ground crew personnel improperly connected the tow winch cable prior to takeoff which resulted in one side of the winch cable coming disconnected. Factors associated with the accident were the ditch and the tree branch which the airplane contacted.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - ON GROUND/WATER
Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF - ROLL/RUN

Findings

1. (C) GLIDER LAUNCH/TOW EQUIPMENT - DISCONNECTED
 2. (C) GLIDER/TOW/LAUNCH EQUIPMENT - IMPROPER - OTHER PERSON
 3. REMEDIAL ACTION - ATTEMPTED - PILOT IN COMMAND(CFI)
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Occurrence #2: ON GROUND/WATER ENCOUNTER WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF - ROLL/RUN

Findings

4. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - DITCH
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Occurrence #3: ON GROUND/WATER COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF - ROLL/RUN

Findings

5. (F) OBJECT - TREE(S)

Factual Information

On August 4, 2001, at 1500 eastern daylight time, a Blanik L-13 glider, N9297Z, collided with a tree during an initial takeoff run at the Marlette Township Airport, Marlette, Michigan. The certified flight instructor (CFI) received a serious injury and the student pilot was not injured. The glider received minor damage. The 14 CFR Part 91 instructional flight was operating in visual meteorological conditions without a flight plan. The local flight was originating when the accident occurred.

The CFI reported, "The slack out - go - signal was given from the operations trailer and take-off power was applied to the winch, whereupon the left hook of the winch harness released, uncommanded, from the center of gravity attachment. The uneven force caused the glider to yaw to the left and head for the ditch on the west side of the runway. I applied right aileron and full right rudder, but was unable to keep the glider from floating into the ditch." The CFI reported the glider ended up bridging the ditch on a heading of east. He reported that the ditch was full of broken and cut down brush and saplings. During the impact, a broken branch penetrated the left side of the cockpit and impaled itself in the CFI's right calf. The CFI remained hospitalized for five days following the accident.

Members of the glider club reported that they had hooked both the left and right side cables prior to the takeoff. Inspection of the tow winch by an inspector from the Federal Aviation Administration Detroit Flight Standards District Office failed to reveal any mechanical failure/malfunction.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Flight instructor	Age:	79, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Rear
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Glider	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	Glider	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	None	Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	800 hours (Total, all aircraft), 800 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 16 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 2 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Student pilot Information

Certificate:		Age:	
Airplane Rating(s):		Seat Occupied:	
Other Aircraft Rating(s):		Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):		Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):		Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:		Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:		Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:			

Student pilot Information

Certificate:	Student	Age:	14, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Front
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	None	Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:			

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Blanik	Registration:	N9297Z
Model/Series:	L-13	Aircraft Category:	Glider
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	026505
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	May 13, 2001 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1102 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	17 Hrs	Engines:	
Airframe Total Time:	1314 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	
Registered Owner:	Vultures Soaring Club	Rated Power:	
Operator:	Peter Sisoy	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	FNT,782 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	40 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	14:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	240°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	7 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	40°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.04 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	31°C / 13°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Marlette, MI (77G)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Marlette, MI	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	15:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	Marlette Township 77G	Runway Surface Type:	Grass/turf
Airport Elevation:	895 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	01	IFR Approach:	Unknown
Runway Length/Width:	3500 ft / 75 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Unknown

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Serious, 1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Minor
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Serious, 1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	43.319549,-83.080833(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Sullivan, Pamela
Additional Participating Persons:	Alan J Wilkinson; FAA; Belleville, MI Charles L Roberts; FAA; Belleville, MI
Original Publish Date:	November 28, 2001
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	The NTSB traveled to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=53015

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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](#).