



# Aviation Investigation Final Report

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<b>Location:</b>	Minden, Nevada	<b>Accident Number:</b>	LAX02LA085
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	February 12, 2002, 16:30 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N777WE
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Ellenberger/Werner Glasair I TD	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	2 Fatal
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

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## Analysis

The amateur-built airplane impacted the ground in a pasture at a steep flight path angle. Prior to departure the pilot told the operator that his intent was to practice stall maneuvers. When he did not return that evening, an Alert Notice (ALNOT) was issued. The owner of the property where the accident occurred saw an unidentified object in his pasture the following morning, however he had other pressing business and didn't return to identify the wreckage until the afternoon of that day. The accident site was in an open pasture, and the entire airplane was present in the immediate area of the wreckage with no appreciable wreckage distribution. There was no fire. The forward 1/2 of the engine was buried in the soil at a 30- to 45-degree angle. The composite airframe was extensively fractured; however, flight control continuity was established to the cockpit. The left and right wing leading edges exhibited crushing damage aft to the wing spar and there was an impact mark on the surface of the dirt immediately in front of the wing of size and shape consistent with the leading edge shape and span. There were no trees or electrical power transmission lines in the proximity. A toxicological analysis of the pilot reported finding the drug paroxetine. According to the internet website "mentalhealth.com", paroxetine is a prescription antidepressant. The concentration reported in the pilot's blood was 0.279 ug/mL. The FAA's 1999 Guide for Aviation Medical Examiners notes "the use of a psychotropic drug is considered disqualifying. This includes all sedatives, tranquilizers, antipsychotic drugs, antidepressant drugs (including SSRI's), analeptics, anxiolytics, and hallucinogens."

## 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 control of the airplane resulting in the airplane entering a flat spin from which the pilot did not recover.

### Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT

Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

#### Findings

1. (C) AIRCRAFT CONTROL - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (C) STALL/SPIN - NOT CORRECTED - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. USE OF INAPPROPRIATE MEDICATION/DRUG - PILOT IN COMMAND

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Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

## Factual Information

On February 12, 2002, about 1630 Pacific standard time, an experimental Ellenberger Glasair I TD, N777WE, impacted terrain in a pasture 6 miles south of Minden, Nevada. The certificated private pilot and one passenger were fatally injured and the amateur-built airplane was destroyed. The local area personal flight was operated by Mansberger Aircraft, Inc., under 14 CFR Part 91, and departed from the Minden-Tahoe airport about 1600. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and no flight plan was filed.

According to the operator, the pilot departed Minden about 1600 and told him his intent was to practice stalls. When he did not return that evening an Alert Notice (ALNOT) was issued. The owner of the property where the accident occurred saw an unidentified object in his pasture the following morning (February 13, 2002); however, he had other pressing business and didn't return to identify the wreckage until the afternoon of that day.

An inspector from the Federal Aviation Administration responded to the scene. He reported the accident site was in an open pasture, and that the entire airplane was present in the immediate area of the wreckage with no appreciable wreckage distribution. There was no fire. The forward 1/2 of the engine was buried in the soil at a 30- to 45-degree angle. The composite airframe was extensively fractured; however, flight control continuity was established to the cockpit. The left and right wing leading edges exhibited crushing damage aft to the wing spar and there was an impact mark on the surface of the dirt immediately in front of the wing of size and shape consistent with the leading edge shape and span. There were no trees in the immediate area and those in the distance showed no visible evidence of impact. There were no electrical power transmission lines in the proximity.

A toxicological analysis of the pilot was performed by the FAA's Civil Aeromedical Institute and their report shows the presence of the drug paroxetine. According to the internet website "mentalhealth.com", paroxetine is a prescription antidepressant. The concentration reported in the pilot's blood was 0.279 ug/mL. The FAA's 1999 Guide for Aviation Medical Examiners notes "the use of a psychotropic drug is considered disqualifying. This includes all sedatives, tranquilizers, antipsychotic drugs, antidepressant drugs (including SSRI's), analeptics, anxiolytics, and hallucinogens."

On the pilot's last application for an Airman Medical Certificate on June 4, 1998, he reported that he had accumulated 320 hours total pilot time, and 45 hours within the last six months.

The airplane owner, who was also the pilot's employer, told the Safety Board investigator that he recalled the pilot was in an unusually "aggressive mood" on the day of the accident. The pilot was normally a quiet person and on that day he was more aggressive with others, but not in an unacceptable way. He had recently broken up with his girlfriend. This had happened

several times before but this time he seemed "OK" with it. He even joked about it a little.

The pilot's brother told the Safety Board investigator that he was aware his brother had a prescription for paroxetine but that his brother had no serious emotional issues.

### Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	37, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Single-engine land	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Unknown
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	None	<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>	Class 3 Without waivers/limitations	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	June 4, 1998
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	No	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	320 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

### Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Ellenberger/Werner	<b>Registration:</b>	N777WE
<b>Model/Series:</b>	Glasair I TD	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Airplane
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	Yes
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Experimental (Special)	<b>Serial Number:</b>	101
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Tricycle	<b>Seats:</b>	2
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	November 6, 2001 Condition	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	1700 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>	15 Hrs	<b>Engines:</b>	1 Reciprocating
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>	231 Hrs as of last inspection	<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	Lycoming
<b>ELT:</b>		<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	O-320-E2A
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	Mansberger Aircraft Inc.	<b>Rated Power:</b>	150 Horsepower
<b>Operator:</b>		<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Visual (VMC)	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Day
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>	RNO,4412 ft msl	<b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>	36 Nautical Miles
<b>Observation Time:</b>	16:56 Local	<b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>	345°
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>		<b>Visibility</b>	10 miles
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	Broken / 25000 ft AGL	<b>Visibility (RVR):</b>	
<b>Wind Speed/Gusts:</b>	10 knots /	<b>Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Wind Direction:</b>	90°	<b>Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Altimeter Setting:</b>	30.2 inches Hg	<b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>	11°C / -12°C
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
<b>Departure Point:</b>	Minden, NV (MEV)	<b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>	None
<b>Destination:</b>		<b>Type of Clearance:</b>	None
<b>Departure Time:</b>	16:00 Local	<b>Type of Airspace:</b>	Class G

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	1 Fatal	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>	1 Fatal	<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	None
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Total Injuries:</b>	2 Fatal	<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	39.010284,-119.749412(est)

## Administrative Information

<b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>	Parker, Richard
<b>Additional Participating Persons:</b>	REID S WALBURG; FAA FSDO; Reno, NV
<b>Original Publish Date:</b>	August 26, 2003
<b>Last Revision Date:</b>	
<b>Investigation Class:</b>	<a href="#">Class</a>
<b>Note:</b>	
<b>Investigation Docket:</b>	<a href="https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=54195">https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=54195</a>

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](#).