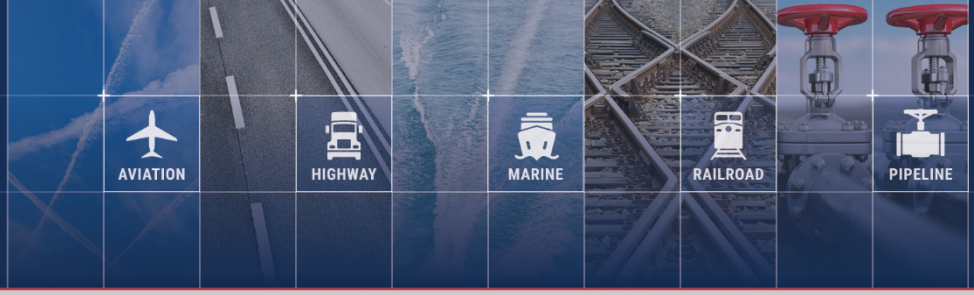

Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Loch Lomand, California	**Accident Number:**	LAX02LA208
Date & Time:	June 23, 2002, 14:15 Local	**Registration:**	N115TM
Aircraft:	WSK PZL Swidnik PW-5	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Defining Event:		**Injuries:**	1 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot failed to maintain obstacle clearance while on a visual approach to an airstrip and impacted trees and terrain short of the runway. According to the pilot, he encountered a "severe sink" while soaring and "struggled for +/- 30 minutes to gain altitude." He elected to land the glider at another airport instead of flying to his departure airport. The pilot could not recall much of the landing except for the wind sheer and turbulence. He did indicate a way to avoid such an accident in the future would be to land "when at 1,000 feet, attempting a thermal recovery from 300 feet is dangerous." The closest weather observation facility, 24 miles from the accident site, reported wind speeds between 7 and 11 knots.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: the pilot's inadequate compensation for wind conditions, and his failure to maintain clearance with trees during final approach. A contributing factor was the windshear and turbulence encountered during the approach.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: APPROACH - VFR PATTERN - FINAL APPROACH

Findings
1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - WINDSHEAR
2. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - TURBULENCE
3. OBJECT - TREE(S)
4. (C) COMPENSATION FOR WIND CONDITIONS - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
5. (C) CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

On June 23, 2002, about 1415 Pacific daylight time, a WSK PZL Swidnik PW-5 glider, N155TM, impacted trees short of the Paul Hoberg Airstrip (Q79) near Loch Lomond, California. The glider, owned and operated by the private pilot under the provisions of 14 CFR Part 91, was substantially damaged. The pilot, the sole occupant, received serious injuries. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed for the local area flight that departed a private dirt strip (Crazy Creek Soaring) in Middletown, California, at 1303.

According to a tow pilot flying in the area, the glider pilot radioed that he was landing at Q79 because he did not have enough altitude to get back to Crazy Creek, and requested that someone from Crazy Creek Soaring pick him up. The tow pilot tried to reach Crazy Creek Soaring to relay the accident pilot's request for a pickup. When he couldn't, he attempted to contact the accident pilot, but received no response. The tow pilot reported that the accident pilot did not make any distress transmissions and sounded confident he would land at Q79.

In a written statement submitted by the pilot, he stated that about 1345, in the vicinity of the Hoberg Airstrip, he encountered a "severe sink" and "struggled for +/- 30 minutes to gain altitude." According to the pilot, the altitude upon arrival was 3,750 feet (the airport elevation was approximately 2,700 feet). The last thing the pilot could recall was being on approach to the runway and experiencing "severe wind sheer/turbulence."

A responding sergeant from the Lower Lake County Sheriff's Department stated that the glider came to rest between trees about 300 yards short of the runway on a southwesterly heading.

At 1353, the automated surface observation system (ASOS) at the Santa Rosa Airport (STS), located approximately 24 miles southwest of the accident site, reported that the wind was from 140 degrees at 7 knots. At 1453, the same weather observation facility reported that the wind was from 140 degrees at 11 knots.

The pilot reported in the Pilot/Operator Aircraft Accident Report (NTSB Form 6120.1/2) that he had accumulated a total of 540 hours of glider flight time, of which 200 hours were flown in the same make and model as the accident glider. In the accident report, under the section titled "How Could This Accident Have Been Prevented," the pilot indicated that he "should have landed when at 1,000 feet, attempting a thermal recovery from 300 feet is dangerous."

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	**Age:**	38,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	**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 3 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim	**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	November 1, 2001
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	
Flight Time:	850 hours (Total, all aircraft), 200 hours (Total, this make and model)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	WSK PZL Swidnik	**Registration:**	N115TM
Model/Series:	PW-5	**Aircraft Category:**	Glider
Year of Manufacture:		**Amateur Built:**	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Experimental (Special)	**Serial Number:**	17.05.022
Landing Gear Type:	Tricycle	**Seats:**	
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	June 1, 2001 Annual	**Certified Max Gross Wt.:**	660 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	130 Hrs	**Engines:**	0
Airframe Total Time:	600 Hrs at time of accident	**Engine Manufacturer:**	
ELT:	Not installed	**Engine Model/Series:**	
Registered Owner:	CHAAN W. BEARD	**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:	STS,125 ft msl	**Distance from Accident Site:**	23 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	13:53 Local	**Direction from Accident Site:**	180°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	**Visibility**	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	**Visibility (RVR):**	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	7 knots /	**Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:**	/
Wind Direction:	140°	**Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:**	/
Altimeter Setting:	29.95 inches Hg	**Temperature/Dew Point:**	29°C / 14°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	MIDDLETOWN, CA	**Type of Flight Plan Filed:**	None
Destination:	LOCH LOMAND, CA (Q79)	**Type of Clearance:**	None
Departure Time:	13:03 Local	**Type of Airspace:**	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	Paul Hoberg Airport Q73	**Runway Surface Type:**	Dirt
Airport Elevation:	2080 ft msl	**Runway Surface Condition:**	Dry;Vegetation
Runway Used:		**IFR Approach:**	None
Runway Length/Width:		**VFR Approach/Landing:**	Straight-in

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Serious	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		**Aircraft Fire:**	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Explosion:**	None
Total Injuries:	1 Serious	**Latitude, Longitude:**	39.884166,-122.648887

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Sauer, Aaron
Additional Participating Persons:	Richard Conte; Federal Aviation Administration; Sacramento, CA
Original Publish Date:	September 29, 2004
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=55071