



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Cherry Valley, Arkansas	Accident Number:	FTW04LA103
Date & Time:	April 4, 2004, 14:00 Local	Registration:	N18SZ
Aircraft:	PDPS PZL-Bielsko SZD-50-3	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

During an attempted landing to a field, the glider stalled and impacted the terrain. While on downwind to the gliderport, the pilot noticed another glider and tow airplane on the runway. The pilot elected to extend the downwind leg to allow the tow airplane and glider to depart the gliderport. After turning to final approach to the runway, the glider encountered an unexpected headwind. During the final approach, the pilot noticed a row of trees in front of the glider that he thought he would not be able to clear. The pilot turned the glider to the right and initiated a landing to an adjacent field. During the attempted landing, "[The pilot] allowed the airspeed to get too slow. At an altitude of about 30 feet agl, the glider stalled, spun to the right, and crashed into the field..."

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 airspeed during the landing which resulted in an inadvertent stall.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: APPROACH - VFR PATTERN - FINAL APPROACH

Findings

1. (C) AIRSPEED - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. STALL - INADVERTENT - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings

3. TERRAIN CONDITION - GROUND

Factual Information

On April 4, 2004, approximately 1400 central daylight time, a PDPS PZL-Bielsko SZD-50-3 glider, N18SZ, was substantially damaged upon impact with terrain following a loss of control during a forced landing near the Lawrence Field Gliderport (4AR5), near Cherry Valley, Arkansas. The private pilot, who was the sole occupant, sustained serious injuries. The glider was registered to and operated by the Memphis Soaring Society, Inc., of Memphis, Tennessee. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed, and a flight plan was not filed for the 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91 personal flight. The local soaring flight departed the Lawrence Field Gliderport approximately 1330.

According to the Pilot/Operator Aircraft Accident Report (NTSB Form 6120.1/2), the pilot was towed by an airplane to approximately 3,000 feet above ground level (agl) and released. After attempting to soar and unable to find lift, the pilot returned to the gliderport. While on downwind to the gliderport, the pilot noticed another glider and tow airplane on the runway. The pilot elected to extend the downwind leg to allow the tow airplane and glider to depart the gliderport. After turning to final approach to runway 7, the glider encountered an unexpected headwind. During the final approach, the pilot noticed a row of trees in front of the glider that he thought he would not be able to clear. The pilot turned the glider to the right and initiated a landing to an adjacent field. During the attempted landing, "[The pilot] allowed the airspeed to get too slow. At an altitude of about 30 feet agl, the glider stalled, spun to the right, and crashed into the field..."

Examination of glider by a Federal Aviation Administration inspector revealed the nose structure was destroyed, the left wing spar was fractured, and the empennage was buckled.

At 1353, the Jonesboro Municipal Airport, Jonesboro, Arkansas, automated surface observing system, located approximately 25 miles north of the accident site, report the wind from 010 degrees at 5 knots, gusting to 17 knots, 10 statute miles visibility, temperature 61 degrees Fahrenheit, dew point 31 degrees Fahrenheit, and an altimeter setting of 30.16 inches of Mercury.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	60, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Front
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 12, 2003
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	March 8, 2004
Flight Time:	265 hours (Total, all aircraft), 10 hours (Total, this make and model), 141 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 7 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 2 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	PDPS PZL-Bielsko	Registration:	N18SZ
Model/Series:	SZD-50-3	Aircraft Category:	Glider
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:		Serial Number:	B-2116
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	April 3, 2004 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	
Time Since Last Inspection:	1 Hrs	Engines:	0
Airframe Total Time:	908 Hrs at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	
Registered Owner:	Memphis 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:	JBR,262 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	25 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:	5 knots / 17 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	10°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.15 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	16°C / -1°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Cherry Valley , AR (4AR5)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	(4AR5)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	13:30 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

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:	35.370834,-90.750556

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Sauer, Aaron
Additional Participating Persons:	Jamie Black; Federal Aviation Administration; Little Rock, AR
Original Publish Date:	July 29, 2004
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=58996

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](#).