



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Minden, Nevada	Accident Number:	SEA07CA162
Date & Time:	June 16, 2007, 14:30 Local	Registration:	N374AM
Aircraft:	Schempp-Hirth Nimbus-3DM	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot of the motor glider reported that he had been airborne on a local soaring flight for about 30 minutes when the flight encountered "severe downdrafts." Due to the downdrafts, he was unable to return to the airport and had to land in an alfalfa field. During the landing roll, the glider collided with a ditch and a fence that were not visible during the landing approach.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The flight's encounter with severe downdrafts during cruise flight. Contributing factors were the pilot's inadvertent selection of unsuitable terrain with hidden obstructions.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT ENCOUNTER WITH WEATHER
Phase of Operation: CRUISE

Findings

1. (C) WEATHER CONDITION - DOWNDRAFT

Occurrence #2: ON GROUND/WATER ENCOUNTER WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: LANDING - ROLL

Findings

2. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - HIDDEN OBSTRUCTION(S)
3. (F) UNSUITABLE TERRAIN OR TAKEOFF/LANDING/TAXI AREA - INADVERTENT - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

The pilot of the motor glider reported that he had been airborne on a local soaring flight for about 30 minutes when the flight encountered "severe downdrafts." Due to the downdrafts, he was unable to return to the airport and had to land in an alfalfa field. During the landing roll, the glider collided with a ditch and a fence that were not visible during the landing approach.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Airline transport; Flight engineer; Flight instructor	Age:	49, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Glider	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane multi-engine; Airplane single-engine; Instrument airplane	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 1	Last FAA Medical Exam:	December 1, 2006
Occupational Pilot:		Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	20200 hours (Total, all aircraft), 108 hours (Total, this make and model), 225 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 95 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Schempp-Hirth	Registration:	N374AM
Model/Series:	Nimbus-3DM	Aircraft Category:	Glider
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Experimental (Special)	Serial Number:	9
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tailwheel	Seats:	
Date/Type of Last Inspection:		Certified Max Gross Wt.:	
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Rotax
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	535C
Registered Owner:	On file	Rated Power:	
Operator:	On file	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:	12 knots / 15 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	200°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:		Temperature/Dew Point:	27°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Minden, NV (MEV)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	(MEV)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:		Type of Airspace:	

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	
Total Injuries:	1 Minor	Latitude, Longitude:	39.000831,-119.754997

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Struhsaker, Georgia

Additional Participating Persons:

Original Publish Date: August 30, 2007

Last Revision Date:

Investigation Class: [Class](#)

Note: This accident report documents the factual circumstances of this accident as described to the NTSB.

Investigation Docket: <https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=65994>

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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](#).