Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Heber, Utah	**Accident Number:**	LAX07LA257
Date & Time:	August 25, 2007, 16:30 Local	**Registration:**	N62305
Aircraft:	Schempp-Hirth Standard Cirrus	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Defining Event:		**Injuries:**	1 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The glider approached the destination airport and adjoined with the downwind leg of the traffic pattern to the active runway. The glider immediately started a rapid descent with the spoilers in the extended (open) position. The glider continued in that configuration until reaching about 200 feet above ground level (agl), at which point the nose pitched up. The glider entered a stall/spin, impacting the desert terrain below, short of the runway. An examination of the wreckage disclosed that the spoilers were fully open at the time of impact and the landing gear was still in the undercarriage. No evidence of mechanical malfunction or failure was found during the examination.

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 sufficient airspeed during landing, resulting in an inadvertent stall/spin, undershoot and collision with the ground.

Findings

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

Findings
1. FLT CONTROL SYST,WING SPOILER SYSTEM - ACTIVATED
2. SPOILER EXTENSION - PERFORMED - PILOT IN COMMAND

3. (C) AIRSPEED - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (C) STALL/SPIN - INADVERTENT - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: UNDERSHOOT
Phase of Operation: APPROACH

Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings
5. TERRAIN CONDITION - GROUND

Factual Information

On August 25, 2007, about 1630 mountain daylight time, a Schempp-Hirth Standard Cirrus glider, N62305, departed from controlled flight and collided with terrain while on approach to Heber City Municipal Airport (Russ McDonald Field), Heber, Utah. The pilot, who was additionally a co-owner, was operating the glider under the provisions of 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91. The pilot, the sole occupant, sustained serious injuries. The glider sustained substantial damage. The local personal flight departed from Heber about 1545. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed, and a flight plan had not been filed.

A Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspector examined the wreckage the day after the accident and interviewed several witnesses. He stated that witnesses observed the glider approaching the airport. The glider was configured with the spoilers in the extended (open) position. While on approach, the glider stalled and spun into the desert terrain below, short of the runway. He reported that an examination of the wreckage revealed no evidence of mechanical malfunction or failure with the glider.

In an interview with a National Transportation Safety Board investigator, another co-owner of the accident glider stated that the pilot departed Heber about 1545 with utilization of a tow plane. The glider was released in the vicinity of Wellsburg Valley for the personal flight. The co-owner reported having numerous conversations with glider pilots who observed the accident glider's approach and subsequent impact. The witnesses stated that the glider approached from the west and crossed over the airport about mid-field. The glider made a normal left turn to enter the downwind leg of the traffic pattern for runway 21. The glider immediately started a rapid descent with the spoilers open. It continued in that configuration until reaching about 200 feet above ground level (agl), at which point the nose pitched up. The glider entered a stall/spin, descending behind surrounding hangers and impacting a field.

The co-owner performed an examination of the wreckage under the auspice of a FAA inspector. The examination disclosed that the spoilers were fully open at the time of impact, and the landing gear was still in the undercarriage. He added that no radio transmissions where heard from the accident pilot preceding the event, and the weather at the time was normal visual meteorological conditions.

At the time of this writing, the pilot has no recollection of any events from the day of the accident.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	**Age:**	56,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:	None None	**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	
Occupational Pilot:	No	**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	
Flight Time:	60 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Schempp-Hirth	**Registration:**	N62305
Model/Series:	Standard Cirrus	**Aircraft Category:**	Glider
Year of Manufacture:		**Amateur Built:**	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	**Serial Number:**	148
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tailwheel	**Seats:**	1
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	August 1, 2007 Annual	**Certified Max Gross Wt.:**	728 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		**Engines:**	0
Airframe Total Time:	1200 Hrs as of last inspection	**Engine Manufacturer:**	
ELT:	Not installed	**Engine Model/Series:**	
Registered Owner:	Petersen Gary	**Rated Power:**	
Operator:	Rulon J. Horne	**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**	15 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	**Visibility (RVR):**	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	5 knots / None	**Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:**	/
Wind Direction:	220°	**Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:**	/
Altimeter Setting:	29.94 inches Hg	**Temperature/Dew Point:**	29°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Heber, UT (36U)	**Type of Flight Plan Filed:**	None
Destination:	(36U)	**Type of Clearance:**	None
Departure Time:	15:45 Local	**Type of Airspace:**	

Airport Information

Airport:	Heber City Municipal 36U	**Runway Surface Type:**	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	5630 ft msl	**Runway Surface Condition:**	Dry
Runway Used:	21	**IFR Approach:**	None
Runway Length/Width:	6898 ft / 75 ft	**VFR Approach/Landing:**	Traffic pattern

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:**	40.481666,-111.428611

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Keliher, Zoe
Additional Participating Persons:	Walt Alexander; Federal Aviation Administration; Salt Lake City, UT
Original Publish Date:	April 30, 2008
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=66544