# Aviation Investigation Final Report

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| **Location:** | Lamy, New Mexico | **Accident Number:** | CEN15LA253 |
| **Date & Time:** | June 3, 2015, 12:00 Local | **Registration:** | N297JS |
| **Aircraft:** | Schleicher ASW27 - 18E | **Aircraft Damage:** | Destroyed |
| **Defining Event:** | Loss of control in flight | **Injuries:** | 1 Fatal |
| **Flight Conducted Under:** | Part 91: General aviation - Personal | | |

## Analysis

The glider pilot was conducting a cross-country flight with a group of other gliders. One of the pilots in the group reported seeing the accident glider in an unusual attitude during the flight. When the accident pilot did not return from the flight, a search began. The composite glider was found the following day, and it was severely fragmented, which prevented a comprehensive examination; however, no evidence of a preimpact failure was noted.

Although the pilot was at increased risk for an acute cardiac or neurologic event based on his history of cardiovascular disease and stroke, insufficient operational and medical evidence was found to determine whether or not such an event occurred or whether impairment or incapacitation caused or contributed to the accident. Based on the available evidence, the reason for the apparent loss of glider control could not be determined.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:

A loss of glider control for reasons that could not be determined based on the available evidence and the glider's severe fragmentation.

## Findings

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| **Not determined** | (general) - Unknown/Not determined |
| **Aircraft** | (general) - Not attained/maintained |
| **Personnel issues** | Predisposing condition - Not specified |

# Factual Information

## History of Flight

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| **Enroute-cruise** | Loss of control in flight (Defining event) |

HISTORY OF FLIGHT
On June 3, 2015 about 1200 mountain daylight time, a Schleicher ASW 27-18E glider, N297JS, was destroyed when it impacted terrain under unknown circumstances about 1.5 miles east of Lamy, New Mexico. The private pilot was fatally injured. The glider was registered to and operated by the pilot under the provisions of 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91 as a personal flight. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed for the flight, which was not operated on a flight plan. The flight originated from Moriarty Airport, Moriarty, New Mexico, at an unconfirmed time.

A witness reported to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Inspector on-scene that the accident glider was in a group of about 15 gliders that were conducting a cross-country flight. The witness, who was a pilot in another glider, reported that during the flight he saw the accident glider in an unusual attitude, but did not see the impact.

The wreckage of the glider was located about 1525 on June 4, 2015.

PERSONNEL INFORMATION
The pilot held a private pilot certificate with a glider rating. A review of the FAA medical certification database revealed that the pilot had never applied for aeromedical certification. Operating a glider did not require medical certification. No flight logbooks were recovered for the pilot during the investigation and his total flight experience was unknown.

AIRCRAFT INFORMATION
The glider was a single seat powered glider constructed of fiber reinforced composites. A SOLO model 2350 engine rated to produce 18 kilowatts (24 horsepower) provided in-flight power to sustain flight if needed, but was not used to "self-launch" the glider.

Maintenance records for the accident glider were not recovered during the investigation.

METEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION
The recorded weather conditions at the Santa Fe Municipal Airport, Santa Fe, New Mexico, about 16 miles northwest of the accident site, were: wind 250 degrees at 8 kts, clear sky, temperature 28 degrees Celsius, dew point -12 degrees Celsius, altimeter setting 30.08 inches of mercury.

WRECKAGE AND IMPACT INFORMATION
The glider came to rest at coordinates 35.481 degrees north latitude, 105.856 degrees west longitude. The glider was fragmented with the largest piece of wreckage measuring about 5 ft in length. The control system of the glider was also fragmented and a comprehensive examination of the control system was not possible; however, no evidence of a pre-impact failure was noted.

MEDICAL AND PATHOLOGICAL INFORMATION

The 73-year old male pilot in this accident had never applied for an aviation medical certificate. According to his personal medical records, he had severe coronary artery disease with 100% occlusion of the right coronary artery that was not amenable to angioplasty diagnosed in 2005, metastatic prostate cancer diagnosed in 2009, hypertension, high cholesterol, allergies, and a history of an abnormal glucose tolerance test. In July 2014, he suffered a stroke thought to be related to atrial fibrillation but an implanted loop recorder had not identified frequent episodes of any arrhythmia in the following 10 months. His medications at the time of the accident included bicalutamide, enalapril, lovastatin, Wal-Zyr, amlodipine, and clopidogrel. No internal autopsy or toxicology testing was performed.

## Pilot Information

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| **Certificate:** | Private | **Age:** | 73,Male |
| **Airplane Rating(s):** | None | **Seat Occupied:** | Single |
| **Other Aircraft Rating(s):** | Glider | **Restraint Used:** | Unknown |
| **Instrument Rating(s):** | None | **Second Pilot Present:** | No |
| **Instructor Rating(s):** | None | **Toxicology Performed:** | No |
| **Medical Certification:** | None | **Last FAA Medical Exam:** | |
| **Occupational Pilot:** | No | **Last Flight Review or Equivalent:** | |
| **Flight Time:** | | | |

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

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| **Aircraft Make:** | Schleicher | **Registration:** | N297JS |
| **Model/Series:** | ASW27 - 18E 18E | **Aircraft Category:** | Glider |
| **Year of Manufacture:** | | **Amateur Built:** | |
| **Airworthiness Certificate:** | Experimental (Special) | **Serial Number:** | 29690 |
| **Landing Gear Type:** | Retractable - Tandem | **Seats:** | 1 |
| **Date/Type of Last Inspection:** | Unknown | **Certified Max Gross Wt.:** | 1322 lbs |
| **Time Since Last Inspection:** | | **Engines:** | 1 Reciprocating |
| **Airframe Total Time:** | | **Engine Manufacturer:** | SOLO |
| **ELT:** | | **Engine Model/Series:** | 2350 |
| **Registered Owner:** | On file | **Rated Power:** | 24 Horsepower |
| **Operator:** | On file | **Operating Certificate(s) Held:** | None |

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

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| **Conditions at Accident Site:** | Visual (VMC) | **Condition of Light:** | Day |
| **Observation Facility, Elevation:** | SAF,6349 ft msl | **Distance from Accident Site:** | 16 Nautical Miles |
| **Observation Time:** | 18:53 Local | **Direction from Accident Site:** | 305° |
| **Lowest Cloud Condition:** | Clear | **Visibility** | 10 miles |
| **Lowest Ceiling:** | None | **Visibility (RVR):** | |
| **Wind Speed/Gusts:** | 8 knots / | **Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:** | / |
| **Wind Direction:** | 250° | **Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:** | / |
| **Altimeter Setting:** | 30.07 inches Hg | **Temperature/Dew Point:** | 28°C / -12°C |
| **Precipitation and Obscuration:** | No Obscuration; No Precipitation | | |
| **Departure Point:** | Moriarty, NM (0E0 ) | **Type of Flight Plan Filed:** | None |
| **Destination:** | Moriarty, NM (0E0 ) | **Type of Clearance:** | None |
| **Departure Time:** | | **Type of Airspace:** | Class G |

## Wreckage and Impact Information

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| **Crew Injuries:** | 1 Fatal | **Aircraft Damage:** | Destroyed |
| **Passenger Injuries:** | | **Aircraft Fire:** | None |
| **Ground Injuries:** | N/A | **Aircraft Explosion:** | None |
| **Total Injuries:** | 1 Fatal | **Latitude, Longitude:** | 35.481109,-105.856109(est) |

## Administrative Information

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| **Investigator In Charge (IIC):** | Brannen, John |
| **Additional Participating Persons:** | Geary Monckton; FAA - ABQ FSDO; Albuquerque, NM |
| **Original Publish Date:** | January 18, 2017 |
| **Last Revision Date:** | |
| **Investigation Class:** | Class |
| **Note:** | The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident. |
| **Investigation Docket:** | https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=91309 |