



Aviation Investigation Final Report

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

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

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Factual Information

History of Flight

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.

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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

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

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

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Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

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

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)

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Administrative Information

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:	<u>Class</u>
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=91309

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.

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