



# Aviation Investigation Final Report

---

<b>Location:</b>	Saratoga Springs, New York	<b>Accident Number:</b>	ERA15LA367
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	September 19, 2015, 14:09 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N27XX
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Schleicher ASW 19B	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Defining Event:</b>	Loss of control in flight	<b>Injuries:</b>	1 Serious
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

---

## Analysis

The private pilot was attempting to land the glider. A witness described the glider's initial approach to the runway as "high and fast" and noted that the landing gear and spoilers were retracted. He added that the glider flew about halfway down the runway, climbed, turned right, and banked steeply before making a left "teardrop" turn. The glider then flew down the runway in the opposite direction. The landing gear extended and retracted at least once during the turn. The glider made a second low pass over the runway at an "excessive" speed but did not land. The glider then entered another climb and made a very steep descending left turn, and the left wing struck the ground followed by the nose. Data extracted from a GPS found in the wreckage were consistent with the witness's observations. The pilot was seriously injured and could not remember the accident sequence of events.

Postaccident examination of the wreckage revealed no evidence of any preimpact mechanical deficiencies that would have precluded normal operation of the glider.

## 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 glider control while attempting to land.

## Findings

---

<b>Personnel issues</b>	Aircraft control - Pilot
<b>Aircraft</b>	(general) - Not attained/maintained

## Factual Information

### History of Flight

<b>Landing</b>	Loss of control in flight (Defining event)
<b>Uncontrolled descent</b>	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

On September 19, 2015, about 1409 eastern daylight time, a Schleicher ASW 19B glider, N27XX, was destroyed when it collided with terrain while attempting to land at Saratoga County Airport (5B2), Saratoga, New York. The private pilot was seriously injured. The glider was registered to and operated by the pilot as a 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91 personal flight. Visual meteorological conditions were reported and no flight plan was filed for the local flight. The flight originated at 5B2 about 1338.

A designated pilot examiner for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) was at the airport and witnessed the accident. He stated that he first observed the glider when it was on final approach for runway 32. The glider was "high and fast," and the landing gear and spoilers were retracted. He said the glider flew about halfway down the runway, climbed, turned right. It then banked steeply, made a left "teardrop" turn, and flew down the runway in the opposite direction. The witness never saw the spoilers extend, but the landing gear did extend and retract at least once during the turn. The glider made a second low pass (below 100 ft) over the runway at an "excessive" speed, but did not land. The witness said the glider entered another climb, made a very steep left turn, and nearly missed colliding with a building. The glider descended while in the turn and the left wing struck the ground followed by the nose. The witness said, "To summarize, the glider basically flew from a starting altitude of less than 50 ft, made nearly two complete teardrop course reversals. The left wing struck the ground before completing the second. During this time, possibly as much as two minutes, the gear was extended and retracted at least once but I did not see the spoilers extend."

The pilot stated that he did not remember the accident flight.

Data contained in a FlyWithCE GPS found in the wreckage was consistent with the witness's statement. The data, which included latitude/longitude, altitude, and groundspeed, began recording at 1338:32 when the glider departed runway 32 and ended at 1409:10. After departure, the glider performed several turning maneuvers away from the airport before returning to land. When the airplane arrived back at the airport, it flew downwind for runway 32 before turning onto final approach. At 1407:53, at a groundspeed of 154 knots, the glider flew about halfway down runway 32, before making a right turn followed by a steep left turn back down the runway, but in the opposite direction. At 1408:53, at a groundspeed of 80 knots, the glider entered a descending left turn before the data ended at 1409:10.

Postaccident examination of the wreckage by an FAA inspector revealed that glider cart-wheeled and came to rest on the right side of the final approach path of runway 32, resulting in extensive impact damage to the glider's wings and fuselage. The landing gear and spoilers were retracted. No mechanical deficiencies were noted that would have precluded normal operation of the glider prior to the accident.

The pilot held a private pilot certificate with ratings for airplane single-engine land, airplane single-engine sea, and glider. The pilot reported a total of 310 hours of flight experience; of which 145 hours were in gliders, and 56 hours was in the same make/model as the accident glider. The pilot was not required to have an FAA-issued medical certificate to operate a glider.

Weather reported at Albany International Airport (ALB), Albany, New York, at 1351, located about 18 miles south of 5B2, included wind from 170 degrees at 11 knots gusting to 17 knots, visibility 10 miles, few clouds at 11,000 ft, scattered clouds at 23,000 and 28,000 ft, temperature 27 degrees C, dewpoint 14 degrees C, and a barometric altimeter setting of 29.87 inches of mercury.

### Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private; Sport Pilot	<b>Age:</b>	66, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Center
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	Glider	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	Unknown
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	No
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	None None	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	No	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	April 25, 2015
<b>Flight Time:</b>	310 hours (Total, all aircraft), 56 hours (Total, this make and model), 240 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 7 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 3 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Schleicher	<b>Registration:</b>	N27XX
<b>Model/Series:</b>	ASW 19B B	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Glider
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>	1981	<b>Amateur Built:</b>	
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Normal	<b>Serial Number:</b>	19356
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Tailwheel	<b>Seats:</b>	2
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	Unknown	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	899 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>		<b>Engines:</b>	0
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>		<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	
<b>ELT:</b>	Not installed	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	On file	<b>Rated Power:</b>	
<b>Operator:</b>	On file	<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Visual (VMC)	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Day
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>	ALB,285 ft msl	<b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>	18 Nautical Miles
<b>Observation Time:</b>	13:51 Local	<b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>	180°
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>	Few / 5000 ft AGL	<b>Visibility</b>	10 miles
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>		<b>Visibility (RVR):</b>	
<b>Wind Speed/Gusts:</b>	11 knots / 17 knots	<b>Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:</b>	/ None
<b>Wind Direction:</b>	170°	<b>Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Altimeter Setting:</b>	29.87 inches Hg	<b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>	27°C / 17°C
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
<b>Departure Point:</b>	Saratoga Springs, NY (5B2 )	<b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>	None
<b>Destination:</b>	Saratoga Springs, NY (5B2 )	<b>Type of Clearance:</b>	None
<b>Departure Time:</b>	13:38 Local	<b>Type of Airspace:</b>	Class E

## Airport Information

<b>Airport:</b>	SARATOGA COUNTY 5B2	<b>Runway Surface Type:</b>	Asphalt;Concrete
<b>Airport Elevation:</b>	433 ft msl	<b>Runway Surface Condition:</b>	Dry
<b>Runway Used:</b>	32	<b>IFR Approach:</b>	None
<b>Runway Length/Width:</b>	4000 ft / 100 ft	<b>VFR Approach/Landing:</b>	Unknown

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	1 Serious	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>		<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	None
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Total Injuries:</b>	1 Serious	<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	43.050834,-73.861663(est)

## Administrative Information

<b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>	Read, Leah
<b>Additional Participating Persons:</b>	Benjamin Gorey; FAA-FSDO; Syracuse, NY
<b>Original Publish Date:</b>	July 26, 2017
<b>Last Revision Date:</b>	
<b>Investigation Class:</b>	<a href="#">Class</a>
<b>Note:</b>	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.
<b>Investigation Docket:</b>	<a href="https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=92026">https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=92026</a>

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](#).