



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Springfield, Vermont	Accident Number:	GAA18CA263
Date & Time:	May 5, 2018, 14:30 Local	Registration:	N17909
Aircraft:	Schweizer SGS 1 26	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Collision during takeoff/land	Injuries:	1 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

According to the glider pilot, the glider remained airborne for about 90 minutes before encountering downdrafts while he was pursuing a cumulous cloud system. He immediately attempted to return to the airport but had to select an off-airport landing site instead. During approach, the glider had "insufficient altitude" to clear trees on the west side of the field and collided with branches before impacting the ground.

The glider sustained substantial damage to the fuselage and left-wing spar.

The pilot reported that there were no mechanical malfunctions or failures with the glider that would have precluded normal operation.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

The pilot's inability to maintain sufficient altitude after the glider encountered downdrafts during the approach, which resulted in the glider striking trees.

Findings

Aircraft	Altitude - Attain/maintain not possible
Environmental issues	Thermal lifting - Effect on operation
Environmental issues	Tree(s) - Effect on operation

Factual Information

History of Flight

Approach-VFR pattern final	Loss of lift
Approach-VFR pattern final	Collision during takeoff/land (Defining event)
Approach-VFR pattern final	Off-field or emergency landing

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Private	Age:	78, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Single
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Glider	Restraint Used:	4-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	January 26, 2018
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	March 9, 2018
Flight Time:	(Estimated) 4870 hours (Total, all aircraft), 40 hours (Total, this make and model), 4688 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Schweizer	Registration:	N17909
Model/Series:	SGS 1 26 E	Aircraft Category:	Glider
Year of Manufacture:	1972	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	529
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel; Ski/wheel; Skid	Seats:	1
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	May 3, 2018 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	700 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	0
Airframe Total Time:	1442.1 Hrs as of last inspection	Engine Manufacturer:	
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	
Registered Owner:	NEW ENGLAND SOARING ASSOCIATION INC	Rated Power:	
Operator:	NEW ENGLAND SOARING ASSOCIATION INC	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KVSF, 578 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	0 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	18:54 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	305°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/ 15 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/ None
Wind Direction:		Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/ N/A
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	21°C / 2°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Springfield, VT (VSF)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Springfield, VT (VSF)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	13:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	HARTNESS STATE (SPRINGFIELD) VSF	Runway Surface Type:	Grass/turf
Airport Elevation:	568 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry;Vegetation
Runway Used:		IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	Forced landing

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Minor	Latitude, Longitude:	43.343612,-72.517219(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Hicks, Michael
Additional Participating Persons:	Fred King; FAA; Portland, ME
Original Publish Date:	October 24, 2018
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=97206

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