



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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<b>Location:</b>	PENSACOLA, FL	<b>Accident Number:</b>	MIA98LA218
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	08/01/1998, 1315 CDT	<b>Registration:</b>	N7631
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Schweizer SGS 1-34	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	1 None
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

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## Analysis

The pilot stated that the glider was about 100 feet above ground level, and attached to the tow airplane when the canopy suddenly opened. He climbed to 200 feet, released the towrope, and made a 180-degree left turn to return to the airport. As he cleared a wooded area before the runway, he noticed that his sink rate was too high. He pulled up, but his right wingtip brushed the top of a tree. The airplane stalled and crashed about 300 feet short of the runway. According to the pilot, the canopy's latching mechanism did not reveal any malfunctions during preflight or postcrash 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 a proper sink rate during an emergency landing resulting in impact with trees and subsequent stall and impact with the terrain.

## Findings

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Occurrence #1: AIRFRAME/COMPONENT/SYSTEM FAILURE/MALFUNCTION  
Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF - INITIAL CLIMB

### Findings

1. (F) WINDOW,CANOPY - OPEN  
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Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING  
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - EMERGENCY

### Findings

2. (F) DESCENT - EXCESSIVE - PILOT IN COMMAND  
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Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT  
Phase of Operation: APPROACH

### Findings

3. OBJECT - TREE(S)  
4. (C) STALL - INADVERTENT - PILOT IN COMMAND  
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Occurrence #4: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER  
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY DESCENT/LANDING

### Findings

5. TERRAIN CONDITION - GROUND

## Factual Information

On August 1, 1998, about 1315 central daylight time, a Schweizer SGS 1-34 glider, N7631, registered to Coastal Soaring Association Inc, operated as a 14 CFR Part 91 personal flight, crashed while on approach for a forced landing at Coastal Airport, Pensacola, Florida. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed, and no flight plan was filed. The aircraft was substantially damaged, and the pilot sustained no injuries. The flight originated from the same airport about 10 minutes before the accident.

The pilot stated that when he was about 100 feet off the ground, the canopy suddenly opened. He had no indication that it would become unlatched. The canopy remained attached to the glider, hanging on the left side of the fuselage. The pilot kept climbing to 200 feet, released the towing latch, and performed a 180 degree turn to the left to return to the airport for landing. When he was approaching the runway, he realized that his sink rate was very high. While pulling up on the stick to try to clear a wooded area before the runway, the right wingtip brushed the top of a tree. The airplane stalled and crash into the ground about 300 feet before the runway. According to the pilot, the canopy's latching mechanism did not reveal any malfunctions during preflight or postcrash examination.

### Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	43, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Single-engine Land	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Center
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	Glider	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	Seatbelt, Shoulder harness
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 3 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim.	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	10/04/1997
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>		<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	106 hours (Total, all aircraft), 9 hours (Total, this make and model), 36 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 6 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Schweizer	Registration:	N7631
Model/Series:	SGS 1-34 SGS 1-34	Aircraft Category:	Glider
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	11
Landing Gear Type:	Skid	Seats:	1
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	08/01/1998, Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	800 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	4 Hours	Engines:	Unknown
Airframe Total Time:	1241 Hours	Engine Manufacturer:	
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	
Registered Owner:	COASTAL SOARING ASSOCIATION	Rated Power:	
Operator:	COASTAL SOARING ASSOCIATION	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	, 0 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	0 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	0000	Direction from Accident Site:	0°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 4000 ft agl	Visibility	10 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None / 0 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	7 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	360°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:		Temperature/Dew Point:	32° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	, FL (83J)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	1315 CDT	Type of Airspace:	Class G

## Airport Information

Airport:	COASTAL AIRPORT (83J)	Runway Surface Type:	Grass/turf
Airport Elevation:	110 ft	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	18	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	2500 ft / 250 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Forced Landing

## Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	

## Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	ALAN YURMAN	Report Date:	06/21/2000
Additional Participating Persons:	CLOVIS JACKSON; BIRMINGHAM, AL		
Publish Date:			
Investigation Docket:	NTSB accident and incident dockets serve as permanent archival information for the NTSB's investigations. Dockets released prior to June 1, 2009 are publicly available from the NTSB's Record Management Division at <a href="mailto:pubinq@ntsb.gov">pubinq@ntsb.gov</a> , or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at <a href="http://dms.ntsbt.gov/pubdms/">http://dms.ntsbt.gov/pubdms/</a> .		

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The Independent Safety Board Act, as codified at 49 U.S.C. Section 1154(b), precludes the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an incident or accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report. A factual report that may be admissible under 49 U.S.C. § 1154(b) is available [here](#).