



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Location: | GILLESPIE, PA | Accident Number: | NYC00LA108 |
| Date & Time: | 04/01/2000, 1500 EST | Registration: | N55GS |
| Aircraft: | Sportavia Putzer RF-5B | Aircraft Damage: | Substantial |
| Defining Event: | | Injuries: | 1 None |
| Flight Conducted Under: | Part 91: General Aviation - Personal | | |

Analysis

While at an altitude of 2,500 feet, the pilot opted to change the propeller pitch from climb to cruise. While doing so, the pilot noticed a sudden power loss, and the engine shut off. The pilot attempted to restart the engine with no success and performed a forced landing to a farm field. During the landing an outrigger rod broke. The pilot also observed the engine ignition switch in the off position, 'indicating the possibility that I had inadvertently touched it while operating the mechanical lever for the [propeller] pitch change.' The pilot replaced the outrigger rod and attempted a takeoff from the field. After liftoff, the pilot noticed that the motorglider began to drift to the right, and struck a small tree located on the edge of the field. The motorglider veered further to the right, touched down on the ground, struck two embankments lined with fence posts, and came to rest in an adjacent farm field. Examination of the accident site revealed that the airplane departed the field on a heading of about 080 degrees. The winds reported by an airport 20 miles to the northwest were from 210 degrees at 10 knots.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's improper weather evaluation, resulting in a tailwind departure.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF - INITIAL CLIMB

Findings

1. OBJECT - TREE(S)
2. (C) WEATHER EVALUATION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. WEATHER CONDITION - TAILWIND

Occurrence #2: ON GROUND/WATER COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: LANDING - ROLL

Findings

4. TERRAIN CONDITION - DIRT BANK/RISING EMBANKMENT

Factual Information

On April 1, 2000, about 1500 Eastern Standard Time, a homebuilt RF-5B, a motorglider, N55GS, was substantially damaged during takeoff from a grass field near Gillespie, Pennsylvania. The certificated commercial glider pilot was not injured. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and no flight plan was filed for the personal flight destined for the Garrett County Airport, Oakland, Maryland. The flight was conducted under 14 CFR Part 91.

According to the pilot, while at an altitude of 2,500 feet above mean sea level, he opted to change the propeller pitch from climb to cruise. While doing so, the pilot noticed a sudden power loss, and the engine shut off. The pilot attempted to restart the engine with no success and performed a forced landing to a farm field. During the landing an outrigger rod broke. The pilot also found the engine ignition switch in the off position, "indicating the possibility that I had inadvertently touched it while operating the mechanical lever for the pitch change."

After the outrigger rod was replaced and it was confirmed that there were no problems with the engine, the pilot decided the motorglider was airworthy. The pilot determined that the wind was coming from his right, and positioned the motorglider for a takeoff. After liftoff, the pilot noticed that the motorglider began to drift to the right, and struck a small tree located on the edge of the field. The motorglider veered further to the right, touched down on the ground, struck two embankments lined with fence posts, and came to rest in an adjacent farm field.

Examination of the accident site by a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspector revealed that the airplane departed the field on a heading of about 080 degrees.

The winds reported at 1453, at an airport 20 miles to the northwest were from 210 degrees at 10 knots.

The FAA inspector did not find any abnormalities with the engine, nor did the pilot report any.

Pilot Information

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|----------------------------------|---|--|----------------------------|
| Certificate: | Commercial | Age: | 66, Male |
| Airplane Rating(s): | None | Seat Occupied: | Front |
| Other Aircraft Rating(s): | Glider | Restraint Used: | Seatbelt, Shoulder harness |
| Instrument Rating(s): | None | Second Pilot Present: | No |
| Instructor Rating(s): | None | Toxicology Performed: | No |
| Medical Certification: | None None | Last FAA Medical Exam: | |
| Occupational Pilot: | | Last Flight Review or Equivalent: | |
| Flight Time: | 595 hours (Total, all aircraft), 450 hours (Total, this make and model), 14 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 3 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft) | | |

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

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|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Aircraft Make: | Sportavia Putzer | Registration: | N55GS |
| Model/Series: | RF-5B RF-5B | Aircraft Category: | Glider |
| Year of Manufacture: | | Amateur Built: | No |
| Airworthiness Certificate: | Experimental | Serial Number: | 51031 |
| Landing Gear Type: | Hull | Seats: | 2 |
| Date/Type of Last Inspection: | 04/12/1999, Annual | Certified Max Gross Wt.: | 1510 lbs |
| Time Since Last Inspection: | 21 Hours | Engines: | 1 Reciprocating |
| Airframe Total Time: | 1000 Hours | Engine Manufacturer: | Limbach |
| ELT: | Installed, not activated | Engine Model/Series: | SL 1700E |
| Registered Owner: | RUDOLF E. VOGELSBERGER | Rated Power: | 67 hp |
| Operator: | RUDOLF E. VOGELSBERGER | Operating Certificate(s) Held: | None |

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

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|----------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Conditions at Accident Site: | Visual Conditions | Condition of Light: | Day |
| Observation Facility, Elevation: | AGC, 1252 ft msl | Distance from Accident Site: | 20 Nautical Miles |
| Observation Time: | 1453 EST | Direction from Accident Site: | 340° |
| Lowest Cloud Condition: | Unknown / 0 ft agl | Visibility | 10 Miles |
| Lowest Ceiling: | Broken / 25000 ft agl | Visibility (RVR): | 0 ft |
| Wind Speed/Gusts: | 10 knots / | Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Wind Direction: | 210° | Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Altimeter Setting: | 30 inches Hg | Temperature/Dew Point: | 18° C / 1° C |
| Precipitation and Obscuration: | | | |
| Departure Point: | MONONGAHELA, PA (P53) | Type of Flight Plan Filed: | None |
| Destination: | OAKLAND, MD (2G4) | Type of Clearance: | None |
| Departure Time: | 1015 EST | Type of Airspace: | Class G |

Wreckage and Impact Information

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|---------------------|--------|----------------------|-------------|
| 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): STEPHEN M DEMKO **Report Date:** 04/19/2001

Additional Participating Persons: WILLIAM J KOSHAR; ALLEGHENY, PA

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 pubinq@ntsb.gov, or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at <http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/>.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), established in 1967, is an independent federal agency mandated by Congress through the Independent Safety Board Act of 1974 to investigate transportation accidents, determine the probable causes of the accidents, issue safety recommendations, study transportation safety issues, and evaluate the safety effectiveness of government agencies involved in transportation. The NTSB makes public its actions and decisions through accident reports, safety studies, special investigation reports, safety recommendations, and statistical reviews.

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](#).