



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Data Summary

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|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------|------------|
| Location: | Sterling, MA | Accident Number: | NYC02LA046 |
| Date & Time: | 01/01/2002, 1458 EDT | Registration: | N117BB |
| Aircraft: | LET L-23 | Injuries: | 1 None |
| Flight Conducted Under: | Part 91: General Aviation - Instructional | | |

Analysis

As the glider neared the airport, the student pilot entered the downwind leg further out from the runway than she normally would. As the glider was turned on to the base leg, the student realized that she would not make the runway and elected to perform a forced landing to a two-lane highway. The glider touched down on the southbound lane of the elevated roadway, impacted a metal guardrail, and came to rest upright. The student had accumulated about 13 hours of dual instruction in gliders, with 7 or 8 different flight instructors, and about 1.4 hours of solo time. The student added that previous to the accident flight, she had no plans to fly solo due to the wind conditions. After her flight instructor reassured her that the pervious dual flight had been good, and student climbed into the glider alone. The recorded weather at a nearby airport, about the time of the accident, included winds from 250 degrees at 13 knots, gusts to 22 knots.

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The student pilots inadequate compensation for wind conditions which resulted in an off-field landing, and the CFI's improper decision to allow the student to fly solo. Factors related to the accident were the gusting wind conditions, and the students lack of total experience in gliders.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY DESCENT/LANDING

Findings

1. OBJECT - FENCE
2. (C) COMPENSATION FOR WIND CONDITIONS - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (F) LACK OF TOTAL EXPERIENCE IN KIND OF AIRCRAFT - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - GUSTS
5. (C) PLANNING/DECISION - IMPROPER - FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR(ON GROUND)

Student Pilot Information

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|------------------------------|------|
| Certificate: | Student | Age: | 36 |
| Airplane Rating(s): | None | Instrument Rating(s): | None |
| Other Aircraft Rating(s): | None | Instructor Rating(s): | None |
| Flight Time: | 17 hours (Total, all aircraft), 17 hours (Total, this make and model), 2 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 10 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 4 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft) | | |

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|--------|
| Aircraft Make: | LET | Registration: | N117BB |
| Model/Series: | L-23 | Engines: | 0 |
| Operator: | M.I.T. Soaring Association | Engine Manufacturer: | |
| Operating Certificate(s) Held: | None | Engine Model/Series: | |
| Flight Conducted Under: | Part 91: General Aviation - Instructional | | |

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

| | | | |
|---|--------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Conditions at Accident Site: | Visual Conditions | Condition of Light: | Day |
| Observation Facility, Elevation: | FIT, 348 ft msl | Weather Information Source: | Weather Observation Facility |
| Lowest Ceiling: | None | Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction: | 18 knots / 22 knots, 250° |
| Temperature: | -1 °C | Visibility | 10 Miles |
| Precipitation and Obscuration: | | | |
| Departure Point: | Sterling, MA (3B3) | Destination: | |

Airport Information

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|
| Airport: | Sterling Airport (3B3) | Runway Surface Type: | Asphalt |
| Runway Used: | 34 | Runway Surface Condition: | Dry |
| Runway Length/Width: | 3010 ft / 40 ft | | |

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 |
| Latitude, Longitude: | 42.454722, -71.733333 | | |

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Stephen M Demko

Adopted Date: 06/25/2003

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/>.

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