



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Data Summary

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|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------|------------|
| Location: | Kutztown, PA | Accident Number: | NYC04FA137 |
| Date & Time: | 06/02/2004, 1017 EDT | Registration: | N8681T |
| Aircraft: | Cessna 182C | Injuries: | 1 Fatal |
| Flight Conducted Under: | Part 91: General Aviation - Other Work Use | | |

Analysis

The student glider pilot was being towed by the accident tow plane for a local flight. Shortly after takeoff, the student glider pilot noticed that the tow rope had "some slack" in it, and that the tow plane did not appear to be climbing "at the rate he should have been." The student glider pilot made slight control adjustments to tighten the tow rope; however, the tow rope "went slack" again at 200-300 feet above the ground, and the airplane began to descend below the glider. The glider pilot then decided to release from the tow plane, and he turned back to the airport. During the turn, he observed the airplane drop its left wing slightly, and then begin a turn to the right. The airplane then impacted a quarry, and a post-crash fire ensued. Examination of the airplane and engine revealed no pre-flight mechanical deficiencies. During a previous training flight with the student glider pilot and accident tow pilot, the airplane began to descend during a climb, when the tow pilot failed to realize that the throttle had vibrated back to a lower power setting when he took his hand off it. According to the operator of the airplane, the tow pilot had performed approximately 70 tows during the past year; however, he had been "signed off" to fly without an instructor less than a month prior to the accident. The student glider pilot had accumulated approximately 50 hours of total flight experience. The FAA Glider Flying Handbook, states in part that "One of the most dangerous occurrences during the aerotow is allowing the glider to rise high above and losing sight of the towplane. The tension on the towrope by the glider pulls the towplane tail up, lowering its nose. If the glider continues to rise pulling the towplane tail higher, the towpilot may not be able to raise the nose. Ultimately, the towpilot may run out of up elevator authority. This situation can be critical if it occurs at altitudes below 500 feet AGL. Upon losing sight of the towplane, the glider pilot must release immediately."

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The towplane pilot's failure to maintain a climb while towing a glider for undetermined reasons, which resulted in the early release of the glider and the tow plane's subsequent impact with trees.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: CLIMB

Findings

1. (C) CLIMB - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings

2. OBJECT - TREE(S)

Pilot Information

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|----------------------------------|---|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Certificate: | Flight Instructor; Commercial | Age: | 49 |
| Airplane Rating(s): | Single-engine Land | Instrument Rating(s): | Airplane |
| Other Aircraft Rating(s): | None | Instructor Rating(s): | Airplane Single-engine |
| Flight Time: | 300 hours (Total, this make and model), 665 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 15 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft) | | |

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

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|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Aircraft Make: | Cessna | Registration: | N8681T |
| Model/Series: | 182C | Engines: | 1 Reciprocating |
| Operator: | Kutztown Airport | Engine Manufacturer: | Continental |
| Operating Certificate(s) Held: | None | Engine Model/Series: | O-470 |
| Flight Conducted Under: | Part 91: General Aviation - Other Work Use | | |

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Conditions at Accident Site: | Visual Conditions | Condition of Light: | Day |
| Observation Facility, Elevation: | ABE, 394 ft msl | Weather Information Source: | Weather Observation Facility |
| Lowest Ceiling: | None | Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction: | 10 knots / , 250° |
| Temperature: | 21° C | Visibility | 10 Miles |
| Precipitation and Obscuration: | | | |
| Departure Point: | Kutztown, PA (N31) | Destination: | (N31) |

Airport Information

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|-----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|
| Airport: | Kutztown Airport (N31) | Runway Surface Type: | Unknown |
| Runway Used: | NA | Runway Surface Condition: | Unknown |
| Runway Length/Width: | | | |

Wreckage and Impact Information

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|-----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| Crew Injuries: | 1 Fatal | Aircraft Damage: | Destroyed |
| Passenger Injuries: | N/A | Aircraft Fire: | On-Ground |
| Ground Injuries: | N/A | Aircraft Explosion: | On-Ground |
| Latitude, Longitude: | 40.499444, -75.782778 | | |

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Jill M Andrews

Adopted Date: 09/13/2005

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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