National Transportation Safety Board
Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	Decatur, IL	**Accident Number:**	CEN11LA090
Date & Time:	12/02/2010, 1406 CST	**Registration:**	N415US
Aircraft:	SOUTHERLAND FREEBIRD LITESPORT U	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Defining Event:	Loss of control in flight	**Injuries:**	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot was performing a high-speed taxi in his amateur-built airplane when it inadvertently became airborne. The inadvertent flight was the airplane's first flight. The pilot requested a landing clearance and was given one. The pilot reported that he had trouble getting the airplane's nose down. He reported a MAYDAY and indicated that he had no control of the airplane. He was given a clearance to land on any runway. During his last transmission, the pilot reported that he could not keep the nose down. The airplane was observed descending tail-end down and then nose down. The airplane impacted the ground, coming to rest about two miles east of the airport. An on-scene examination of the airplane revealed that the wing separated from the fuselage. The separation was consistent with overload. No other anomalies were detected. The on-scene investigation did not document center of gravity or trim settings.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's reported inability to control his amateur-built airplane for undetermined reasons after the airplane inadvertently became airborne while conducting a high-speed taxi.

Findings

Aircraft	Pitch control - Attain/maintain not possible (Cause)
Not determined	Not determined - Unknown/Not determined (Cause)

Factual Information

On December 2, 2010, about 1406 central standard time, an experimental amateur-built Southerland Freebird Litesport Ultra airplane, N415US, sustained substantial damage when it impacted terrain following an in-flight loss of control while maneuvering after climbout from runway 18 at the Decatur Airport (DEC), near Decatur, Illinois. The personal flight was operating under 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the accident. No flight plan was on file. The pilot was fatally injured. The local flight departed about 1359 and was returning to DEC at the time of the accident.

The pilot had requested a high-speed taxi clearance and the air traffic control tower cleared him to perform a high-speed taxi on runway 18. During the high-speed taxi, the airplane became airborne. The pilot requested a landing clearance and was given one. The pilot reported that he had trouble getting the airplane's nose down. He subsequently told the control tower that he had a MAYDAY. He indicated that he had "no control" of the airplane. He was given a clearance to land on any runway. His last transmission was that he "can't seem to keep the nose down." The airplane was observed by airport rescue and firefighting personnel to come "tail-end down" and then "nose down."

The airplane came to rest about two miles east of DEC in a field near the 7300 block of Ridge Road. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)inspectors examined the wreckage on-scene. The airplane's right wing separated from the fuselage in flight and it came to rest about 285 feet east of the main wreckage. The pilot was found about 63 feet west of the main wreckage. The examination and review of photographs taken of the wreckage revealed the separation was consistent with overload. No other anomalies were detected.

A FAA designated pilot examiner issued the pilot a FAA sport pilot certificate with an airplane single-engine land rating on November 1, 2010, after the pilot had passed his airman examination using the designated examiner's Flightstar IISC airplane. The pilot reported on the application for that sport pilot certificate that he had accumulated a total flight time of 60.7 hours of which 15.2 hours were as pilot-in-command flight time.

N415US was a single-engine, high-wing, experimental amateur-built Southerland Freebird Litesport Ultra airplane. Airworthiness documents indicated the airplane was powered by a Chevy Geo Metro G10 three cylinder 4 stroke engine. A FAA designated airworthiness representative inspected the airplane and issued its special airworthiness certificate on October 15, 2010. The inadvertent flight was the airplane's first flight.

At 1354, the recorded weather at DEC was: Wind 230 degrees at 6 knots; visibility 10 statute miles; sky condition few 1,400 feet, overcast 4,300 feet; temperature 1 degree C; dew point -3 degrees C; altimeter 30.17 inches of mercury.

An autopsy was performed on the 55-year-old pilot by the Macon County Coroner's Office. The cause of death was listed as multiple injuries due to an aircraft accident.

The FAA Civil Aerospace Medical Institute prepared a Final Forensic Toxicology Accident Report. The report, in part, stated:

Desmethylsertraline detected in Spleen

Desmethylsertraline detected in Spinal Fluid

Desmethylsertraline detected in Gastric
1.101 (ug/mL, ug/g) Desmethylsertraline detected in Blood (Cavity)
Desmethylsertraline detected in Muscle
Desmethylsertraline detected in Kidney
Desmethylsertraline detected in Vitreous
Desmethylsertraline detected in Brain
Sertraline detected in Gastric
1.323 (ug/mL, ug/g) Sertraline detected in Blood (Cavity)
Sertraline detected in Muscle
Sertraline detected in Kidney
Sertraline detected in Brain
Sertraline detected in Spleen
Sertraline detected in Spinal Fluid
A family member indicated that the pilot was taking an antidepressant for work stress.

History of Flight

Maneuvering	Loss of control in flight (Defining event)
Uncontrolled descent	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Sport Pilot	**Age:**	55, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine Land	**Seat Occupied:**	Front
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	**Restraint Used:**	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	**Second Pilot Present:**	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	**Toxicology Performed:**	Yes
Medical Certification:	Sport Pilot None	**Last Medical Exam:**	
Occupational Pilot:		**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	
Flight Time:	61 hours (Total, all aircraft), 15 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Manufacturer:	SOUTHERLAND	**Registration:**	N415US
Model/Series:	FREEBIRD LITESPORT U	**Aircraft Category:**	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		**Amateur Built:**	Yes
Airworthiness Certificate:	Experimental	**Serial Number:**	1
Landing Gear Type:	Tricycle	**Seats:**	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:		**Certified Max Gross Wt.:**	
Time Since Last Inspection:		**Engines:**	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		**Engine Manufacturer:**	Chevy Geo Metro
ELT:	Installed, not activated	**Engine Model/Series:**	
Registered Owner:	On file	**Rated Power:**	
Operator:	On file	**Air Carrier Operating Certificate:**	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Observation Facility, Elevation:	DEC, 682 ft msl	**Observation Time:**	1354 CST
Distance from Accident Site:	2 Nautical Miles	**Condition of Light:**	Day
Direction from Accident Site:	263°	**Conditions at Accident Site:**	Visual Conditions
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Few / 1400 ft agl	**Temperature/Dew Point:**	1°C / -3°C
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast / 4300 ft agl	**Visibility**	10 Miles
Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	6 knots, 230°	**Visibility (RVR):**	
Altimeter Setting:	30.17 inches Hg	**Visibility (RVV):**	
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Decatur, IL (DEC)	**Type of Flight Plan Filed:**	None
Destination:	Decatur, IL (DEC)	**Type of Clearance:**	VFR
Departure Time:	1359 CST	**Type of Airspace:**	

Airport Information

Airport:	Decatur Airport (DEC)	**Runway Surface Type:**	
Airport Elevation:	682 ft	**Runway Surface Condition:**	
Runway Used:	N/A	**IFR Approach:**	None
Runway Length/Width:		**VFR Approach/Landing:**	None

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Fire:**	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Explosion:**	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal		

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Edward F Malinowski	**Adopted Date:**	04/20/2012
Additional Participating Persons:	Brian L Lands; Federal Aviation Administration; Springfield, IL		
Publish Date:	04/20/2012		
Investigation Docket:	http://dms.ntsb.gov/pubdms/search/dockList.cfm?mKey=77929		

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