

Report

Accident on **25 July 2008**
at **Névache (05) France**
to the **Scheibe SF 25C motorised glider**
registered **D-KIOK**

BEA

Ministère de l'Écologie, du Développement durable, des Transports et du Logement

Bureau d'Enquêtes et d'Analyses
pour la sécurité de l'aviation civile

Foreword

This report contains the findings of the BEA on the circumstances and causes of this accident.

In accordance with Annex 13 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, with EC directive 94/56 and with the French Civil Aviation Code, the investigation is not conducted in such a way as to apportion blame or to assess individual or collective responsibility. The sole objective is to draw lessons from this occurrence which may help prevent future accidents.

Consequently, the use of this report for purposes other than prevention could lead to misinterpretation.

SPECIAL FOREWORD TO ENGLISH EDITION

This report has been translated and published by the BEA to make its reading easier for English-speaking people. As accurate as the translation may be, the original text in French is the work of reference.

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Synopsis

Date

25 July 2008 at 11 h 30⁽¹⁾

Place

Clarée valley, municipality of Névache (05)

Type of flight

Local

Aircraft

Scheibe SF25C glider

Owner

Private

Operator

Private

Persons on board

Pilot + 1

⁽¹⁾Unless otherwise specified, the times shown in this report are expressed in Universal Time Coordinated (UTC). Two hours should be added to obtain the time in metropolitan France on the day of the event.

1 - FACTUAL INFORMATION

1.1 History of Flight

The pilot took off from Serres La Batie (05) aerodrome at about 9 h 30 for a local touring flight with a passenger without any experience of aviation. He entered the Clarée valley. At around 11 h 30, a witness saw the glider pass overhead, northbound, with the engine running, at the level of the Drayères refuge at low altitude below the ridge line along the east side of the valley. The north end of the Clarée valley forms a cirque. As he approached the cirque, the pilot turned left and increased engine power to make the turn. During the turn, the witness lost sight of the glider, but heard it hit the ground. He alerted the emergency services. The glider was found on the western slope.

1.2 Killed and Injured

The pilot and passenger were killed.

1.3 Damage to Aircraft

The glider was destroyed.

1.4 Pilot Information

Male, aged 69

- Valid German glider pilot licence issued in 2001
- "D" Licence
- Rating for glider with an independent means of propulsion

Since the pilot had changed the flight log in April 2002, only flight log No. 2 was found. The entries of flying hours are incomplete and do not make it possible to clearly establish the distinction between flying hours as an instructor and as a captain. The only indication is an entry of 515 flying hours at the beginning of the second book. In addition, from April 2002 onwards, all the flying hours performed by the pilot were performed as captain, and only on glider D-KIOK.

- Glider experience:
 - total: 656 flying hours
 - on type: 141 hours since 2002, including 141 as captain
 - in the past six months: 6 hours
 - in the past three months: 6 hours
 - in the last thirty days: 3 hours

1.5 Aircraft information

Manufacturer	Scheibe
Type	Scheibe SF 25 C
Serial number	44522
Registration	D-KIOK
Entry into service	1992
Certificate of Airworthiness	Valid
Utilisation as of 25/07/2008	3,424 hours
Since the annual inspection (27/04/2008)	10 hours
Engine	Limbach L 2000 EA
Propeller	MT 150 L90-1A

1.6 Meteorological Conditions

Estimated weather conditions on-site (source: Météo France)

- Clouds:
 - FEW Cumulus at around 1,000 / 1,300 metres
 - BKN Cirrus around 7,000 metres
- Visibility: over 10 km
- Iso 0 °C at 4,000 metres
- QNH: 1008 hPa
- Turbulence: absent or low
- No icing phenomena

Winds and temperatures

- On the ground and at the bottom of the valley: 180°, 2-4 m/s, 26 °C
- At around 3,000 m: 260° to 340°, 1 to 4 m/s, 8 °C

1.7 Flight Recorders

The glider was not equipped with a flight recorder; none is required by the regulations.

1.8 Wreckage and Impact Information

1.8.1 Examination of the site

The site of the accident is located on the western slope of the Clarée valley on a slope of about 30 to 40° at an altitude of 2,280 metres.

Examination of the site indicated an initial impact of the left wing tip and then, a few metres away, the impact of the glider's nose. The wreckage came to rest on its back about ten metres from the initial impact. Traces of the impact, debris and wing were aligned in a north-south direction corresponding to the route of the glider at the end of a U-turn.



1.8.2 Wreckage Examination

Examination of the wreckage showed that the left wing tip was broken off. The left wing was broken off one metre from the wing root section. The engine was embedded in the cabin. The left main gear was torn off. The aft fuselage was bent forward. All the damage seen on the cell was due to the collision with the ground.

Continuity of the controls was verified: the fractures observed resulted from the impact.

The observations made on the propeller and engine show that it was delivering power at the time of impact. The needle of the speedometer was stuck at 2,700 rpm and the throttle was set to "full throttle".

1.9 Survival Aspects

The violence of the impact and the damage caused to the cockpit indicate that the occupants had no chance of surviving the crash.

1.10 Additional information

1.10.1 Examination of the flight log

Examination of the flight log showed that the pilot had flown in the region in July 2006 and August 2007. The previous day he had flown for 2 hours 50 minutes.

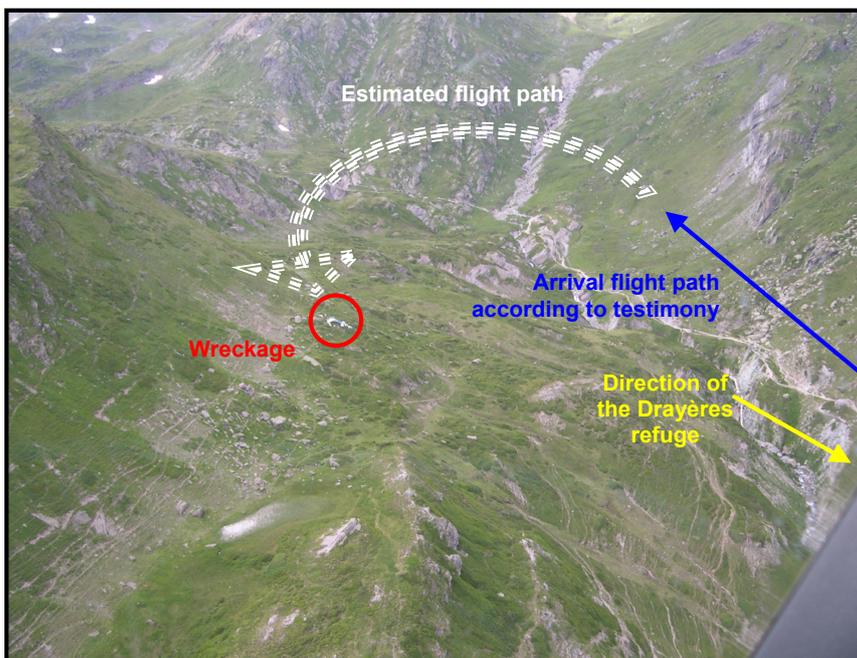
1.10.2 Witnesses

A witness at Serres La Batie aerodrome indicated that the pilot had arrived on Wednesday 23 July from Germany by road with the glider disassembled in its trailer.

Another witness present at the airfield said that he saw the pilot take off under the glider's own power at about 11 h 30 local time.

No-one knew the pilot's intentions, the nature of the flight, its duration, or the estimated time of return.

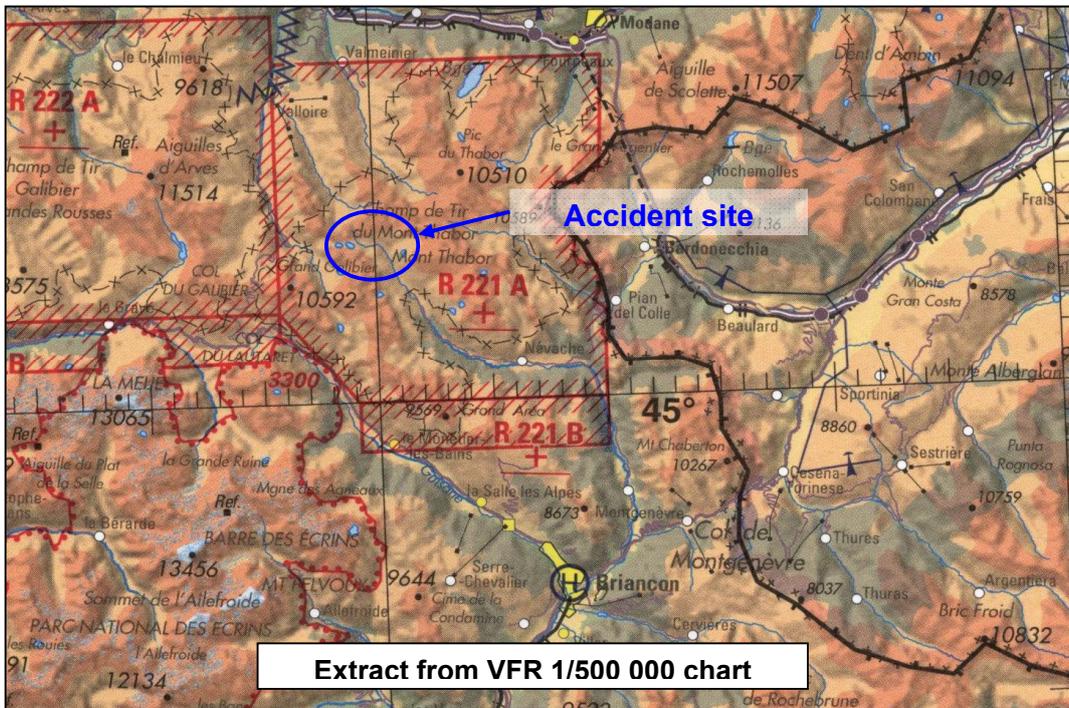
A hiker who witnessed the accident said he was close to the refuge of Drayères when he saw the aircraft at low altitude coming from the south with its engine running, turn up the east side of the Clarée valley, pass the refuge and veer to the left. He lost sight of the glider, heard an increase in engine speed, then the noise of the accident. He alerted the emergency services.



1.10.3 Documentation on board

The following documents were found in the wreckage of the glider:

- VFR map, scale 1/500,000
- The glider logbook
- The flight log and pilot's license



The VFR map shows that from Briançon onwards, to continue northward, the pilot had a choice between two valleys:

- to the right, the Clarée valley which is oriented north-east, then north and then north-west, ending in a cul de sac;
- to the left, the Guisane valley, which is oriented northwest and follows the N91 main road.

2 - ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

2.1 Preparation of the flight

The interviews with the witnesses show that the pilot was completely autonomous. He informed none of those present on the airfield, either the day before or on the day of the accident, of his flight intentions, his destination, his route or the duration of the flight he intended to make. He was a regular visitor to the airport and the region. The weather conditions on the day of the accident were favourable for the flight.

2.2 Operation of the flight

It is not possible to determine the route followed by the pilot during the flight on the day of the accident before he entered the Clarée valley.

Based on the testimony of the hiker, however, we can establish that the pilot was flying at low altitude when he entered the valley.

The attempt to turn around and the increase in engine power suggests that the pilot was probably surprised to see the valley close and end in a cirque. The left wing tip touched the ground on the west side of the valley first as he was turning left, indicating that the glider had a very high bank angle, greater than the angle of the slope, estimated to be 30°.

It is highly likely that the pilot entered the Clarée valley inadvertently.

2.3 Conclusion

The accident was the result of a U-turn deliberately performed by the pilot in a restricted area in a mountainous region. The decision by the pilot to fly at low altitude and insufficient surveillance of navigation instruments were contributing factors.

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Published November 2010

