



Accident to the PIPER PA18 SuperCub
registered **HB-OKB**
on Monday 26 May 2025
at Mens

Time	Around 16:10 ¹
Operator	Aéroclub de Genève
Type of flight	Instruction
Persons on board	Instructor, student pilot
Consequences and damage	Aeroplane damaged
This is a courtesy translation by the BEA of the Final Report on the Safety Investigation. As accurate as the translation may be, the original text in French is the work of reference.	

**Windsock strike during go-around on mountain airstrip,
in instruction**

1 HISTORY OF THE FLIGHT

Note: the following information is principally based on statements and GNSS² data recorded by the Skydemon application used during the flight.

The instructor and student pilot undertook a day of flights with the intention of landing on several mountain airstrips to initiate the student pilot in mountain flight. They took off from Geneva airport bound for Alpe d'Huez mountain airstrip to have lunch there. They took off again at 15:30 bound for Notre-Dame de La Salette mountain airstrip and then headed to Mens mountain airstrip. On arrival, the instructor³ scanned the airstrip, at a height of 950 ft (see **Figure 1**, point **①**) and then directly joined the crosswind leg. On very short final, the instructor was surprised by the very long grass on the runway and decided to carry out a missed approach by carrying out a go-around. During the manoeuvre, the instructor and student pilot felt a slight impact. The instructor, after reaching a height of 1,050 ft, flew overhead the airstrip (point **②**) to identify the cause of the impact, without success. Observing no visible damage to the aeroplane nor difficulty with piloting it, the instructor decided to continue the flight to the following destination, Aspres-sur-Buëch mountain airstrip. While flying over Aspres-sur-Buëch, he felt strong turbulence which led him to divert to Gap-Tallard aerodrome.

¹ Except where otherwise indicated, the times in this report are in local time.

² The glossary of abbreviations and acronyms frequently used by the BEA can be found on its [web site](#).

³ The instructor piloted the aeroplane throughout the flight.

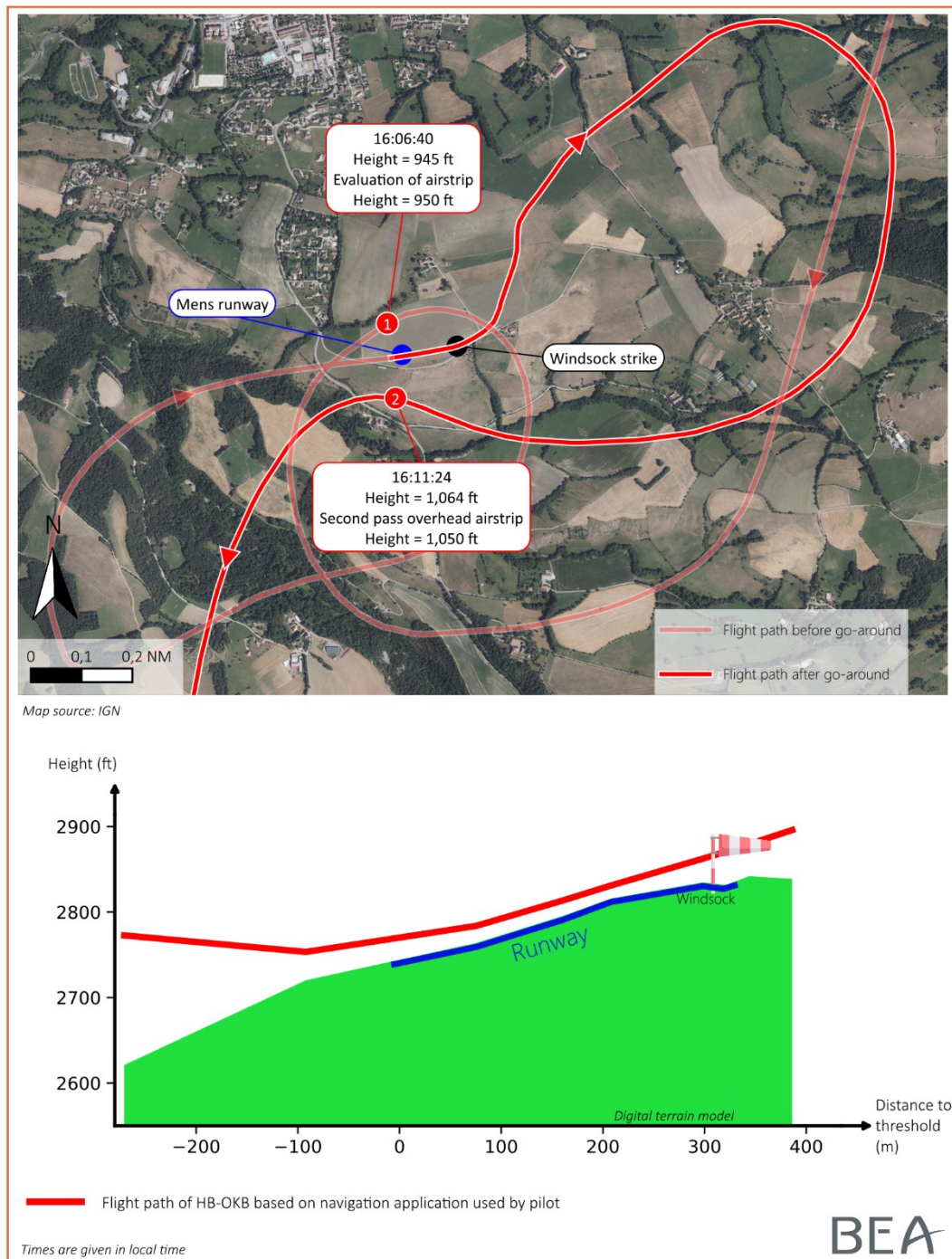


Figure 1: flight path of HB-OKB

Once on the ground, the instructor and student pilot observed a dent on the right-hand strut of the aeroplane as well as substantial damage to the right-hand part of the elevator (see **Figure 2**).



Figure 2: damage observed on aeroplane (source: instructor, annotations BEA)

2 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

2.1 Aircraft information

HB-OKB is a 150 hp Piper SuperCub PA18. This is a high-wing monoplane with two tandem seats and conventional landing gear. HB-OKB has three flap positions: 10°, 25° and 40°. The flap control is situated at the front and the trim is located between the rear and front seats. From the rear seat, forward visibility is reduced. In instruction flight, the instructor is generally sat in the rear and the student pilot in the front. When not in instruction, the pilot normally sits in the aeroplane's front seat.

2.2 Mens mountain airstrip information

The Mens mountain airstrip is situated at an altitude of 2,790 ft and has an unpaved runway 08/26 measuring 345 m x 17 m. The mountain airstrip information sheet published by [BASULM](#) and available on the AFPM site⁴ indicates that landings must be performed on runway 08 and take-offs from runway 26. The runway circuit is joined from the right-hand side at a height of 210 ft. The Mens mountain airstrip is situated in a valley (see **Figure 3**). Runway 08 has a smooth upward gradient of 8.2%.

⁴ Association Française des Pilotes de Montagne.



Figure 3: Mens mountain airstrip (source: AFPM, annotations BEA)

Following the accident, the airstrip operator checked for possible signs of a strike with objects close to the runway, he observed that the windsock was damaged (see **Figure 4**).



Figure 4: damage to the windsock (source: operator, annotation BEA)

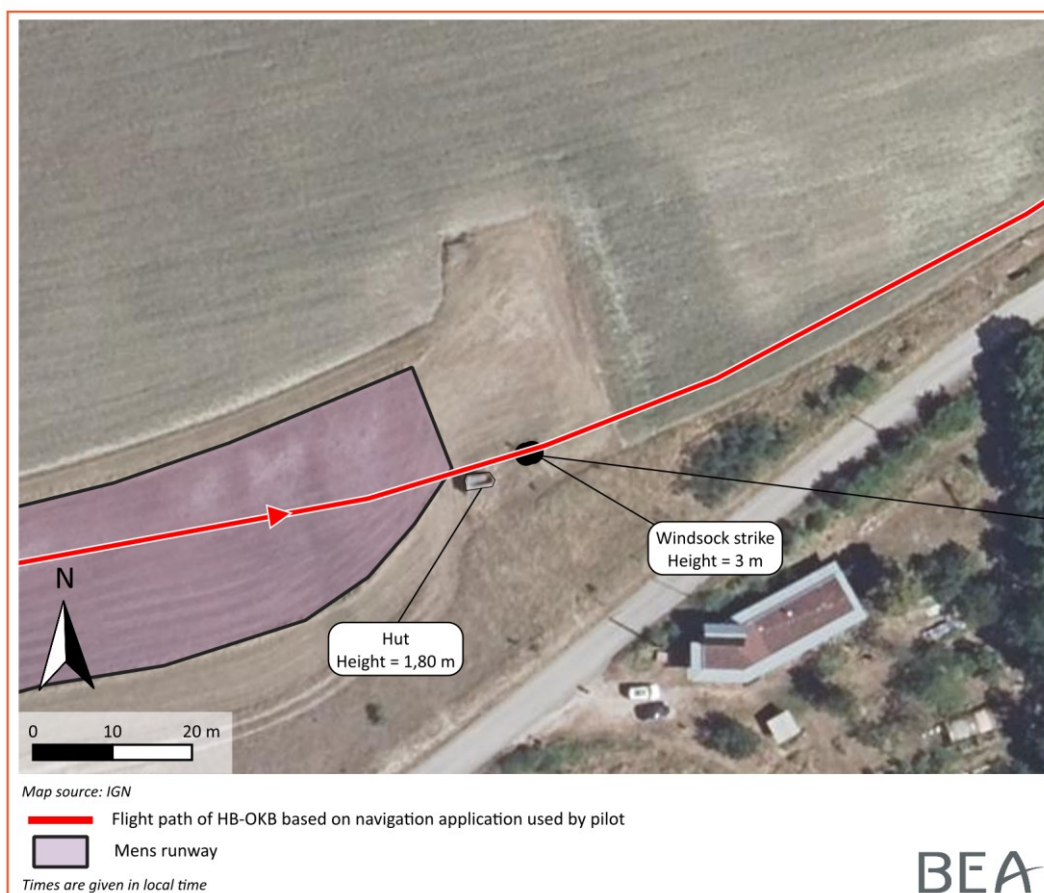


Figure 5: flight path of aeroplane during go-around

The airstrip information sheet indicates in the comments part, that the runway curves in on the left-hand side on landing. In **Figure 5**, it can be seen that the windsock and hut are more or less on the extended centreline of runway 08.

2.3 Meteorological information

A weather station, situated at 13 km to the north-east and at the same altitude as Mens mountain airstrip, recorded at the time of the accident, a north-easterly wind at 13 kt with gusts up to 24 kt and a temperature of 18°C. Close to the Mens mountain airstrip, the sky was cloudy with cumulus and stratocumulus present, their bases between 1,500 ft and 4,000 ft.

2.4 Instructor and student-pilot information

2.4.1 Instructor's statement

The 50-year-old instructor held a PPL(A) obtained in 1995 along with mountain ratings wheels and skis since 2006, an instructor rating FI(A) since 2021 and a mountain instructor wheels rating MI(A), passed at Geneva flying club in 2024. The day of the accident, he had logged 1,315 flight hours, including 10 h 30 min on the PA18 in the last three months. During this period, he had carried out 32 landings including several landings on mountain airstrips and airfields.

He indicated that the aim of this day of flights was to familiarize the student pilot with the mountainous environment and to land on various mountain airstrips and airfields. The aim was not to have the student pilot at the controls during the landings but rather to show her the piloting techniques in the mountains. During the accident flight, the instructor was sat in the rear seat.

When arriving at Mens, he carried out a three sixty overhead the runway to observe the windsock and check the information available on the AFPM sheet⁵. He indicated that he did not carry out a low-height evaluation in order to minimize noise pollution and because he remembered that the airstrip was referenced as green on the AFPM site. He added that on final, the aeroplane was configured for landing with the flaps set to flaps 2 (25°) and the carburettor heat control deactivated. He explained that he accompanied the extension of the flaps with a nose-down trim setting of around seven turns of the crank handle. He considered that the approach was stabilized and that there had been no particular piloting difficulty during the go-around.

The instructor indicated that in his opinion, during mountain landings, the flaps 3 position (40°) is generally not used. According to him, the goal is to have less drag during the approach in order to increase the effectiveness of an upward slope correction, if necessary. This also means that there is better manoeuvrability to counter turbulence.

He indicated that at a very low height, close to the threshold, he observed the very long grass on the runway. Considering that there was a threat of nosing over during the landing run and a threat of not being able to take off again, he decided to reject the landing.

He added that the go-around slope was close to the runway's slope and that he held the runway's initial centreline. He explained that he tried to have a climb performance on the aeroplane's maximum slope by holding the speed at around 65 mph (around 56 kt) during the go-around.

⁵ The pilot indicated that he had read the Mens mountain airstrip sheet on the AFPM site while preparing the accident flight.

He indicated that a few seconds later he heard a dull thud which he thought came from the underside of the aeroplane. He rapidly thought they had had struck the windsock. He then flew over the runway to confirm the cause of the impact, without success.

The instructor indicated that at the time of the accident, the aeroplane contained around 50 litres of fuel divided between the two wing tanks.

2.4.2 Student pilot's statement

The student pilot was in training for her PPL(A). She had asked for the accident flight in order to familiarize herself with flight in a mountainous environment as well as in piloting an aeroplane with a conventional landing gear.

She heard the instructor mention long grass when starting the go-around. A few seconds later, she felt an impact on the aeroplane, on the forward right-hand side of her position.

2.5 Geneva flying club's recommended practices

The chief pilot at Geneva flying club indicated that for HB-OKB, it is recommended that the approach to a runway with a relatively slight slope (as is the case for Mens mountain airstrip compared to numerous mountain runways) be carried out at a speed of 60 mph with the flaps in the flaps 3 position. On runways with a steeper slope, the club indicated that the approach can be carried out at 70 mph with the flaps in the flap 1 or 2 position.

The club recommended initially flying overhead an airfield at a height of 1,000 ft to take into account the specificities of the terrain, wind and possible obstacles. Mountain instructors are also taught to evaluate the airfield at 500 ft and then 200 ft as required.

Certain mountain runways are the subject of specific briefings in the flying club in order to anticipate as best as possible, the missed approach and associated break-away. There are no specific precautions for Mens runway. However, it is generally taught that a missed approach to this runway is carried out by a break-away to the right-hand side. The club leaves it to each pilot to determine the no-return point, taking into account their experience and the external environment.

2.6 Climb performance of HB-OKB

The climb performance in the take-off configuration (flaps 25°), given in the PA18 flight manual, for the maximum weight and a climb speed of 68 mph, in the conditions of the day of the accident, indicates a rate of climb of around 560 ft/min, i.e. a slope of around 9%.

In the scope of the investigation, flight tests were carried out in conditions close to those of the accident flight⁶. These tests consisted of putting the aeroplane into descent on an approach slope of around 7% and then applying go-around power in order to calculate the time required to obtain a positive evolution of the altimeter needle.

On average, the time obtained was nine seconds. At a speed of 65 mph, without wind, this time corresponds to a covered distance of 250 m.

⁶ Aeroplane with the same power, with two people on board, an identical approach configuration, around the same fuel quantity and a similar density altitude.

On a reflex action, climb can be obtained more quickly by taking a high nose-up attitude; this may imply a substantial reduction in the indicated airspeed. The rate of climb may then decrease if the aeroplane flies on the backside of the power curve.

This assessment acts as a reminder that, even on a runway with a slight slope, the inertia at the start of the go-around and the performance of an aeroplane of this type mean that it is not possible to safely carry out a go-around on short final on a mountain airstrip.

2.7 Use of data from AFPM site

The [AFPM internet site](#) groups various information about flight in mountainous terrain.

A tab lists all the mountain airstrips for wheels⁷, private strips and mountain airfields (see **Figure 6**), and an associated colour code indicating the advisability of using the runway as assessed by the AFPM:

- Landing on runway highly inadvisable
- Landing on runway inadvisable (see safety related comments regarding runway)
- No specific difficulties, airfield usable.

Safety comments are listed in a table for each mountain airstrip.

These safety comments can be updated and modified by the 13 members of the AFPM. These comments are generated by information transmitted by the local contacts in the various mountain flight regions. When operational information is taken into account by a local contact, half a day is generally required before it can be seen on the site.

Local contacts rely on the accuracy of the pilot reports and the mountain airstrip and mountain airfield operator reports to obtain information.

⁷ Mountain airstrips can also be used with skis.

Rappels:

* La décision d'atterrir sur un terrain est de votre entière responsabilité.

* Les trajectoires indiquées sur les fiches et les photos sont des indications, elles doivent être adaptées si besoin (décision du commandant de bord)

Arrêtes Prefectoraux
Toutes données
(réservé administrateurs)

 : précautions particulières - remarque de sécurité (S.V.) à consulter

Retour

Alpes du Sud - Auvergne - Corrèze - Centre - Dauphiné nord - Dauphiné Sud - Rhone loire - EMP - Jura Vosges - Languedoc - Mont Blanc - Périgord - Pyrénées - Savoie

Alpes du Sud						
Dernières nouvelles terrains		ASVM Présentation				
Aspres sur Buech *	L'FNU	-	-	-	-	-
Banon Nord-Sud (A.S.)	L'F468	Fiche.	Photos Aires	Photos Loisir	S.V.2	●
Banon Est-Ouest (A.S.)	L'F468	Fiche.	Photos Aires	Photos Loisir	S.V.2	●
Clamensane (A.S.)	L'F421	Fiche.	Photos Aires	-	S.V.7	●
Colombe d'Eygulians (A.S.)	L'F393	Fiche.	Photos Aires	-	S.V.5	●
Grand Terrus (A.S.)	L'F224	Fiche.	Photos Aires	Photos Loisir	S.V.1	●
Isola2000 (A.S.)	L'F182	Fiche.	Photos Aires	-	S.V.4	●
Pampelonne 07-25 (A.S.)	L'F421	Fiche.	Photos Aires	-	S.V.8	●
Pampelonne 12-30 (A.S.)	L'F421	Fiche.	Photos Aires	-	S.V.8	●
Super Dévoluy (A.S.) Chalet (1 nuit max)	L'F538	Fiche.	Photos Aires	Photos Loisir	S.V.7	●
Serres *	L'F116	-	-	-	-	-
Valberg (A.S.)	L'F384	Fiche.	Photos Aires	Photos Loisir	S.V.6	●

Dauphiné Nord						
Montmeilleur (privée)	L'FKA	Fiche	Photos Aires	Photos Loisir	S.V.3	●
L'Alpe d'Huez (A.P.)	L'F1KJ	-	-	Photos Loisir	-	-
Verdures (privée)	L'F381	Fiche	Photos Aires	-	S.V.3	●
Mens (A.S.)	L'F308	Fiche	Photos Aires	-	S.V.7	●
N. Dame de la Salette (A.S.)	L'F332	Fiche	Photos Aires	Photos Loisir	S.V.4	●
St Jean en Royans *	L'F412	-	-	-	-	-

Dauphiné Sud						
Aix en Diois (privée)	L'F243	Fiche	-	-	-	●
Aubenasson *	L'F1J	-	Photos Aires	-	S.V.0	-
Col du Bacchus (L'F2523)	Fiche	Photos Aires	Photos Loisir	-	S.V.5	●
Faucon (A.S.)	L'F261	Fiche	Photos Aires	Photos Loisir	S.V.5	●
L'Escoulin (A.S.)	L'F284	Fiche	Photos Aires	Photos Loisir	S.V.7	●
La Motte-Chalancon (A.P.)	L'F1JL	Fiche	Photos Aires	-	S.V.3	-

Alpes du Nord:						
Les feux ne renseignent pas sur l'état des terrains des Alpes du Nord						
au jour le jour. Consultez les S.V. et renseignez-vous						
Mont Blanc						
Dernières nouvelles terrains Alpes du Nord			Circulation dans le massif			
Megève (A.P.)	L'F184	-	Photos Aires	-	S.V.0	●
St Roch Mayeres (A.S.)	L'F436	Fiche.	Photos Aires	Photos Loisir	S.V.4	●
Sallanches *	L'F12	-	-	-	-	●

Savoie						
Courchevel (A.P.)	L'F1J	Fiche	-	Photos Loisir	S.V.0	-
L'Arpette (privée)	-	Fiche.	Photos Aires	-	S.V.1	●
La Tovièrè été (A.S.)	L'F725	Fiche.	Photos Aires	-	S.V.3	●
Méribel (A.S.)	L'FKA	Fiche.	-	Photos Loisir	S.V.1	-
Sollière Sardières *	L'F42	-	-	-	S.V.0	●
St Jean d'Arves (A.S.)	L'F731	Fiche.	Photos Aires	Photos Loisir	S.V.8	●
St Rémy de Maurienne *	L'FKA	-	-	-	S.V.0	●

Figure 6: excerpts from "Sheets and wheel info" on the AFPM internet site

Pilots are reminded on this page that the pilot-in-command is responsible for the decision to land.

The Mens mountain airstrip was referenced as “green” (see **Figure 6**). Safety comments made by pilots, the most recent being May 2023, underlined the very long grass on the runway (see **Figure 7**).

Ouvert

Infos opérationnelles nécessitant une attention particulière

Date	Type	Texte	Lien
2024-08-21	Terrain	Bonjour, La Marine Nationale nous informe d'un entraînement sur le terrain de Mens demain jeudi 22/08 entre 18.00 et 18.30. Merci d'éviter le terrain (helico lourd) Bons vols à tous !	
2024-04-07	Terrain	Pas de marche à air	-
2023-05-19	Terrain	L'herbe est très haute	-
2023-04-29	Terrain	Caillouteux sur la fin	
2021-05-29	Terrain	Herbe: voir photos	
2019-01-20	Terrain	Manche à air HS	-
2013-08-05	Environnement	le nombre d'ATT est limité à 3 !	

Infos périmées:

Infos perimees:
vous aurez ainsi une idee des problemes recurents

Date	Type	Texte	Lien
2018-01-01	Terrain	Cloture tout autour du TDP	-
2024-07-03	Terrain	suite aux fortes pluies, possibilité d'un terrain gras et détrempé dans le tiers aval du terrain, voir photo. Il y a 2 grosses ornières (confirmées le 04/07/2024)	🔗

Figure 7: table of safety information regarding Mens mountain airstrip (source: AFPM)

3 CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are solely based on the information which came to the knowledge of the BEA during the investigation.

Scenario

The instructor and student pilot had planned to land on Mens mountain airstrip during a mountain familiarisation flight. The instructor, who had the controls, checked the airstrip to evaluate the wind and any possible obstacles. He did not carry out a low height evaluation of the runway and directly joined the start of the crosswind leg for runway 08.

On final, at a very low height, close to the runway threshold, the instructor considered that the length of the grass compromised landing and take-off. He decided to carry out a go-around. During this manoeuvre, the aeroplane collided with the windsock situated on the runway's extended centreline, after the end of the runway.

Contributing factors

The absence of a low height evaluation may have contributed to the pilot's decision to start the approach although the condition of the runway surface was not compatible with a safe landing. This evaluation would have probably supplemented the information available on the AFPM site, notably with respect to a threat (length of grass) which is difficult to keep sufficiently up to date.

The pilot's risk analysis concerning the length of the grass led him to carry out a go-around on short final, i.e. at a time where continuing the approach and landing on a mountain airstrip should not be called into question.

Safety lessons

Evaluation of airfield

The mountain flying instructor's guide⁸ indicates that after evaluating the airfield at a height (approximately 1,000 ft AGL), the pilot should then descend to around 500 ft, either by continuous descent from overhead the airfield or by descending to a low-height evaluation path which will then be flown in level flight, and will verify the information necessary to make a decision (aerology, potential obstacles, etc.). Following this verification, the pilot can decide to proceed to landing or seek confirmation of a specific parameter by performing a low pass, at a height of 100-200 ft. This parameter to be confirmed could be either the wind, the altimetric reference to determine the circuit altitude, or the surface conditions (grass length, moisture, potholes on the runway, etc.).

Approach and landing on a mountain airstrip or mountain airfield

During mountain flight training, it is taught that in the event of a missed approach to a mountain airfield or airstrip, the break-away is most often carried out laterally. However, after a certain point, this break-away will no longer be as safe and it is recommended to continue the approach. The pilot is responsible for determining this point.

⁸ *Guide de l'instructeur de vol en montagne*, François Gibelli, 2024, published by Cépaduès.

In practice, an aeroplane's average climb slope is below the vast majority of slopes encountered in mountainous terrain and notably, the runway slopes at mountain airfields and airstrips. The book concerning air navigation in mountainous terrain⁹ describes all the procedures linked to the choice of decision point and go-arounds in the mountains.

The BEA investigations are conducted with the sole objective of improving aviation safety and are not intended to apportion blame or liabilities.

⁹ *Navigation aérienne en montagne, Comprendre les menaces, éviter les erreurs*, François Gibelli, 2^e éd. nov. 2025, published by Cépaduès.