



Accident to the GLASFLÜGEL 304
registered **F-CEBU**
on Thursday 31 July 2025
at Sainte Marie de Cuines

Time	Around 15:50 ¹
Operator	Association Aéronautique Provence Côte d'Azur (AAPCA)
Type of flight	Cross country
Persons on board	Pilot
Consequences and damage	Pilot seriously injured, glider destroyed
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.	

Collision with a tree then the ground during an off-field landing

1 HISTORY OF THE FLIGHT

Note: The following information is principally based on GNSS² data downloaded from the Naviter system on board the glider and the XCSoar aeronautical application installed on the pilot's telephone.

At 11:30, the pilot carried out a towed take-off from runway 10 at Fayence aerodrome. He headed north, crossed the southern Alps and entered Maurienne valley by passing over the ridge at a height of around 300 m (see **Figure** , point **1**). He intended to then turn around and head back south. The pilot tried to find uplifts but the glider's altitude progressively decreased. In a very short interval, the altitude was such that it was no longer possible to safely exit the valley. The pilot decided to fly in the valley in a westerly direction to search for more favourable air conditions while being aware of the probable need to carry out an off-field landing. At around 15:05, he was able to use uplifts and gain 300 m in altitude which enabled him to reach around 2,300 m (point **2**). The pilot decided to carry out a precautionary landing at Saint-Rémy-de-Maurienne aerodrome situated at a distance of around 30 km at an altitude of 430 m.

He reached the town of Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne at 15:35, at an altitude of 1,500 m, and was at this point only 12 km from the aerodrome. On continuing northwards, he found himself on the lee side of steep ground (point **3**) which resulted in a sudden, quick loss of altitude (around 430 m in 1 min 15 s, i.e. a mean rate of sink of 5.7 m/s). The pilot flew around the high ground to reach flat land to search for a favourable area for an off-field landing. The valley was initially narrow and did not offer a suitable field for landing. The glider was at a height of around 160 m when the pilot

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](#).

reached a more favourable sector (point 4). He selected a field and then carried out a U-turn at a height of 70 m to reach it (point 5). At a height of a few metres, the pilot perceived and avoided a power line. The glider struck a tree and then collided with the ground.

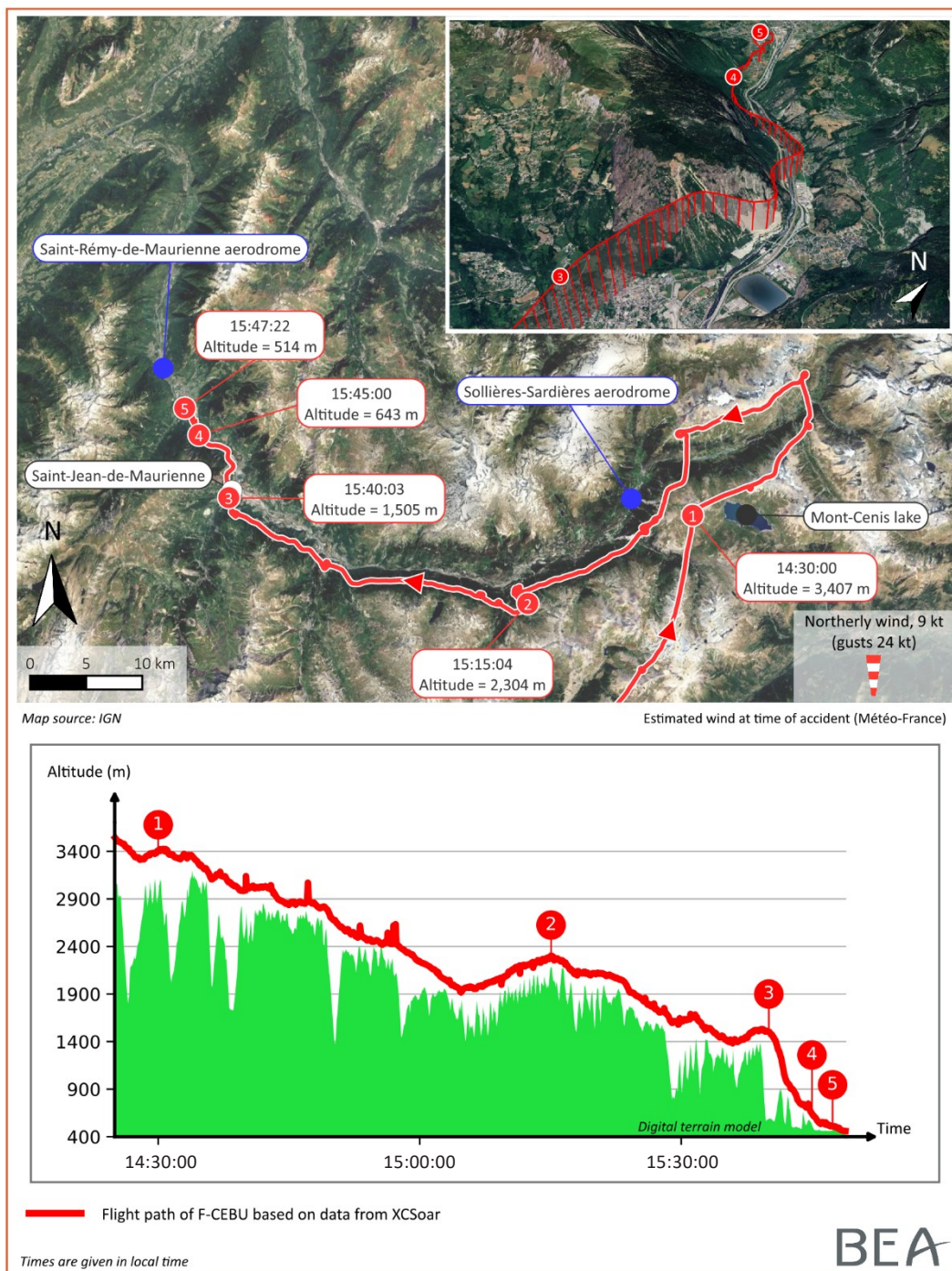


Figure 1: flight path

2 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

2.1 Site information

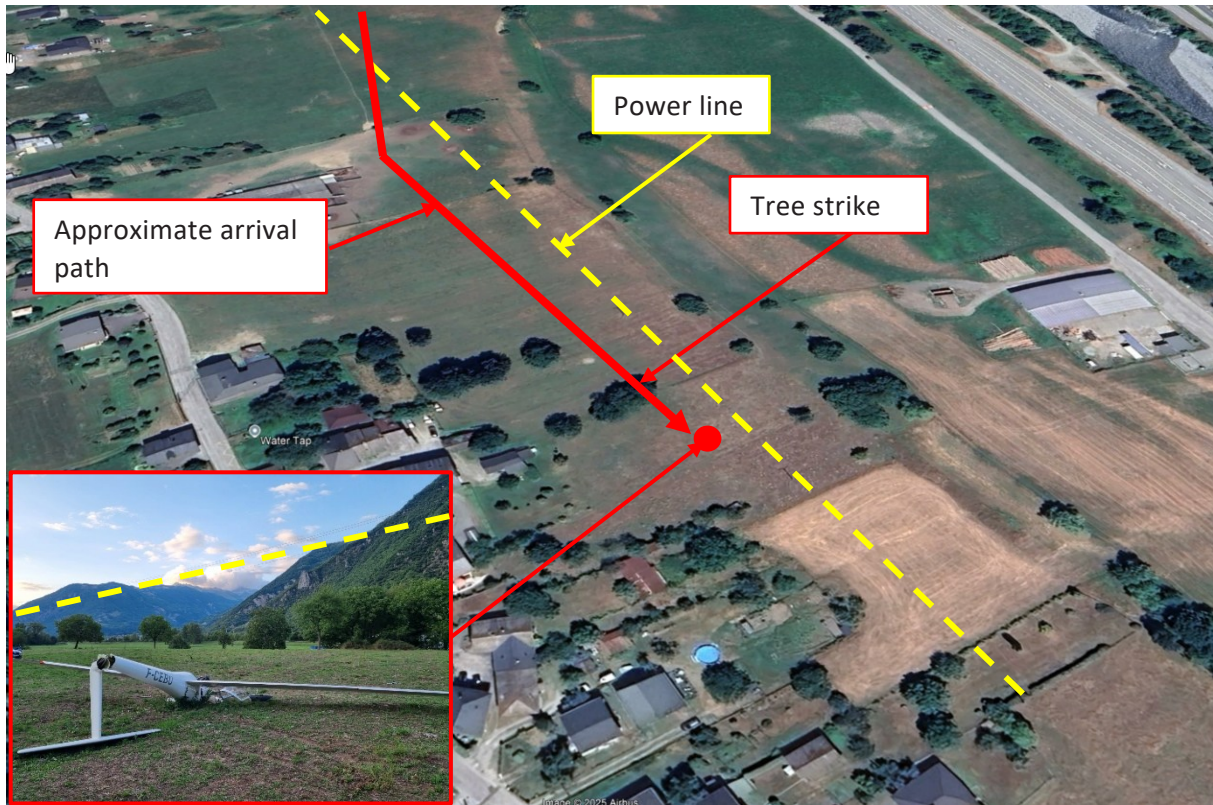


Figure 2: accident site (source: Google Earth and BEA, annotations BEA)

The glider was on a south-easterly flight path when it struck the trees and then collided with the ground. The wreckage was situated approximately ten metres from the power line.

Numerous power lines were present in the sector. To the north of the sector was a built-up area. To the south, over around 4 km, the very narrow valley, along which runs a road and river, offered no landing possibilities.

2.2 Landing areas in the sector

No landing area in the sector of the accident was listed in the Guide to safe landing areas in the Alps published by the FFVP. The closest area was Saint-Rémy-de-Maurienne aerodrome.

During his flight, the pilot had flown over Sollières-Sardières aerodrome in the Val-Cenis district. When he decided to carry out a precautionary landing, this aerodrome was around 15 km away.

2.3 Glider information

F-CEBU was a single-seater glider with a wingspan of 15 m. Its maximum lift-to-drag ratio was 43 (at 116 km/h). It belonged to Association Aéronautique Provence Côte d'Azur (AAPCA) and had logged around 9,700 h at the time of the accident.

2.4 Meteorological information

The data from the Sainte Marie de Cuines weather station indicated at the time of the accident:

- a clear sky;
- a northerly surface wind of around 9 kt with gusts up to 24 kt at the time of the accident, indicating a moderate to quite strong valley breeze;
- visibility greater than 10 km;
- an outside air temperature of 29°C on the plain.

2.5 Pilot information

2.5.1 Experience

The 69-year-old pilot held a sailplane pilot license (SPL) obtained in 1989. He had logged approximately 1,500 glider flight hours, including 1,200 hours in mountainous regions according to the pilot. He was a member of the Fayence gliding club since 1995. In the previous three months, he had flown around 55 h, including four cross-country flights of 7 h to 8 h, two of which on F-CEBU. A few days before the accident flight, during an instruction flight, he had reached the Plampinet ridges bordering Maurienne valley.

He indicated that he knew Maurienne valley which he had flown over several times.

2.5.2 Statement

The morning of the accident, the pilot attended the gliding club's daily briefing. He described the air conditions in Maurienne valley, presented during this briefing, as "average".

Requisitioned for tasks at the club, he took off approximately one hour after the other pilots and had initially intended to turn around at Mont-Cenis lake. As it seemed to him that the air conditions were suitable for pursuing the flight, he continued by entering Maurienne valley, before turning around and heading back south. According to him, his altimeter indicated 3,700 m, i.e. a height of 1,000 m to pass over the ridge. He quickly observed a deterioration in the air conditions and searched for uplifts several times, first on the south-east facing slope and then on the opposite slope. He indicated that the wind had changed direction and that the ridges which had provided favourable conditions before entering the valley, were becalmed. Unable to safely cross back over the pass, he decided to continue in the valley, in a westerly direction. He explained that he quickly envisaged the need to carry out a precautionary landing either at Saint-Rémy-de-Maurienne aerodrome or at Sollières-Sardières aerodrome. In his opinion, the glider's lift-to-drag ratio allowed him to reach both aerodromes.

A little later, he managed to gain altitude before it decreased again. He decided to carry out a precautionary landing at Saint-Rémy-de-Maurienne aerodrome, in the descending direction of the valley, rather than at Sollières-Sardières aerodrome located in an area where it seemed to him, the uplifts were unstable and fewer.

He indicated that a few kilometres from the aerodrome, heading north and approaching the high ground which “bars the valley”, the glider was subject to a sudden downdraft in a curl-over. He explained that the glider became momentarily uncontrollable. He flew around the high ground and then, given the loss of height, looked for a suitable field for an off-field landing. He identified one and started a landing pattern. During this manoeuvre, the wind pushed him off course. He observed that he could no longer land in the field envisaged. He perceived the power line at a late stage. He explained that, given the configuration of the site, he aimed for the tree hoping it would slow him down before landing.

3 CONCLUSIONS

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

Scenario

After a four-hour cross-country flight in the Alps, the pilot encountered adverse air conditions for a thermo-dynamic flight³ which did not allow him to use the dynamic uplifts. The glider’s altitude progressively decreased. The pilot decided to carry out a precautionary landing and, given the altitude of the glider, to head to Saint-Rémy-de-Maurienne aerodrome, situated around 30 km away. At around 10 km from the aerodrome, in the presence of a strong northerly valley breeze, he encountered very strong downdrafts on the lee side of steep terrain, resulting in a sudden, quick loss of altitude. As he was no longer able to reach the aerodrome, he decided to carry out an off-field landing on the plain. The configuration of the valley forced him to choose a field late, leaving him little time to prepare his landing. During the approach, the pilot overshoot the field he had envisaged using and was then surprised, at a low height, by the presence of a power line. The glider collided with a tree and then with the ground.

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

³ Combined use of ridge lift and thermal lift.