



Accident to the SCHEMPP HIRTH - DUO DISCUS
registered **F-CXBD**
on 22 April 2022
at Col du Portillon mountain pass

Time	Around 15:40 ¹
Operator	Aéroclub de Luchon
Type of flight	Introductory flight
Persons on board	Pilot and one passenger
Consequences and damage	Glider substantially 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.

Collision with terrain, in soaring flight, during an introductory flight

1 HISTORY OF THE FLIGHT

Note: the following information is principally based on statements and FLARM data from the glider.

The pilot, accompanied by a passenger, carried out a towed take-off from Bagnères-de-Luchon aerodrome at 15:25. He released the cable at an altitude of approximately 1,700 m (see Figure 1, point ①) and flew alongside the terrain to the north of the Col du Portillon mountain pass. He then performed a few spirals. The glider did not gain altitude and the pilot found the conditions too turbulent. He decided to turn around and return to the aerodrome.

While flying alongside the terrain, he lost control of the glider. The glider hit the ground and bounced before coming to rest on the slope.

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

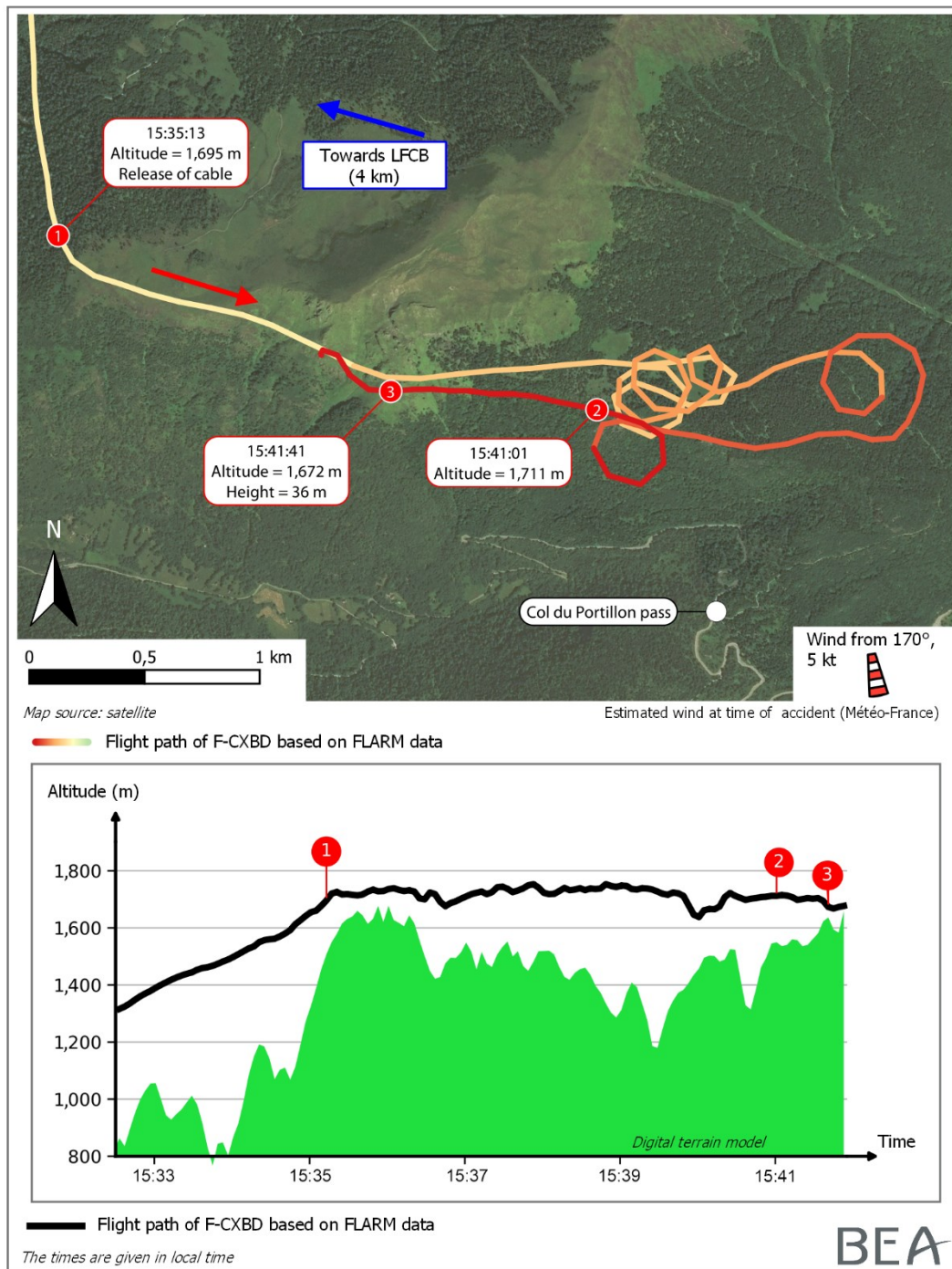


Figure 1: flight path

2 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

2.1 Site and wreckage

The wreckage was balanced on a slope at an altitude of 1,660 m: the left wing was held by a rock, the right wing and the nose touched the ground. The tail of the glider was broken and the canopy was cracked. Due to the difficult access conditions, no examination could be carried out on site.



Figure 2: photo of wreckage (source: aéroclub de Luchon)

2.2 Meteorological information

The weather conditions at the accident site estimated by Météo-France were as follows: wind from 170° at 5 kt gusting to 15 kt, visibility greater than 10 km, broken altocumulus clouds based at an altitude of about 4,500 m, sky overcast (cirrus clouds) at an altitude of about 5,500 m, temperature 12°C, light to moderate turbulence.

2.3 Pilot information

The 65-year-old pilot held an SPL glider pilot licence. He had logged 1,353 hours, 22.5 hours of which in the previous three months. He regularly carried out introductory flights.

He also held an aeroplane private pilot licence PPL(A) and a towing rating. He was a mechanic in the aero club.

2.4 Pilot's statement

The pilot stated that he had completed a 35-min introductory flight in the same area before the accident flight. He added that this previous flight had been conducted in good conditions, with a moderate wind at the altitude at which he had flown. He said that the conditions were more turbulent during the accident flight when he entered another valley, the wind being "more pronounced and choppy". He performed a few spirals and then, due to the passenger's discomfort, he decided to turn around.

On the return leg, he felt the effect of a strong crosswind. He explained that the glider suddenly drifted to the right. He tried to counter the drift while trying to get away from the terrain. He indicated that he had the stick fully pushed to the left, but the glider did not seem to react to the inputs. The glider touched down and bounced, then turned 270° to the left, before coming to rest with the nose facing the mountain.

He said that he was familiar with this part of the terrain and knew that it should be avoided in strong southerly winds conditions. He had not thought that the conditions had changed so quickly in this zone.

2.5 Chief pilot's statement

The club's chief pilot reported that there was a southerly wind of up to 30-40 km/h and that it was possible to fly in these conditions. He added that the spot where the accident occurred should be avoided when there are strong southerly winds because of the risk of being "becalmed".

3 CONCLUSIONS

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

Scenario

During an introductory flight, the pilot considered that the conditions were too turbulent for the passenger's comfort and turned around. While flying alongside the terrain on a route he had flown earlier in the day, he encountered downdrafts that caused the glider to drift towards the face of the mountain. The glider touched the ground and bounced before coming to rest on the slope.

Contributing factor

The following factor may have contributed to the loss of control:

- the pilot failing to take additional margins on the return leg, after realising that the wind conditions had deteriorated.

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