

National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Aviation Safety
Central Region



CEN21LA346

RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Thomas Ballard, FAA Airworthiness Inspector

August 6, 2021

Interviewee: Thomas Ballard (FAA Airworthiness Inspector)
Date/Time: August 6, 2021 / 1400 CDT
Location: Telephone Call
Investigator: Andrew Todd Fox, NTSB Air Safety Investigator

Mr. Ballard is employed as a Federal Aviation Administration Airworthiness Inspector with the San Antonio Flight Standards District Office. Inspector Ballard conducted two onsite examinations of the glider; The first examination was completed on July 31, 2021, before the airplane was recovered from the accident site and a follow-up examination on August 6, 2021, when the fractured elevator control tube was retrieved.

Inspector Ballard stated that the tow pilot told him that shortly after takeoff and while the tow plane was about 300 ft above the runway, the experimental glider unexpectedly released from the towline. The glider entered a left turn and landed in a wings level attitude. The tailboom separated from fuselage during the landing. The tow airplane and the towline were not damaged during the event.

Inspector Ballard stated that experimental glider sustained substantial damage to the aft fuselage and empennage during the landing. Flight control continuity was confirmed for the ailerons, flaps, speed brakes, and rudder. Examination of the elevator control system revealed a fractured control tube in the vertical stabilizer. Visual examination of the elevator control tube revealed substantial corrosion on the inside surface of the steel tube. The control tube was fractured about 0.75 inch above the clevis fitting at the lower end of the elevator control tube and there was a large longitudinal fracture/hole near the upper end of the elevator control tube where a rubber boot covers the control tube.

Inspector Ballard stated that, according to the maintenance logbook, on July 6, 2021, the glider was inspected and found to be in an airworthy condition. The aviation mechanic with inspector authorization noted in the corresponding logbook entry that he had "checked controls" and that the condition inspection had been completed in accordance with Federal Aviation Regulations Part 43, Appendix D.

NTSB Investigator Fox requested that the elevator control tube and rubber boot be retained and shipped to the NTSB Materials Laboratory for additional examination. FAA Inspector Ballard stated that he would prepare the items for shipment.