



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Eastern Region – Ashburn, Virginia

Record of Conversation

Who: Andrew Neilson, Tow Pilot Skyline Soaring Club

When: February 11, 2020

In a telephone conversation, Mr. Neilson stated that he was the club's tow pilot on the day of the accident. He said he talked to Pete Maynard before they took off because he wanted to make sure that he knew the correct tow climb speed and flight profile for Mr. Maynard's Russian glider. Mr. Neilson said that he had only towed him once before. Mr. Neilson described Mr. Maynard as "very thorough", but he did have to look at his flight manual to recall what his tow speed was for his glider. He said that Mr. Maynard did not rush and took his time that afternoon getting ready for his flight. When Mr. Maynard was ready to be towed, he called Mr. Neilson over the radio, and they launched. Mr. Maynard did not discuss with Mr. Neilson about what he planned to do while airborne.

Mr. Neilson said they departed at 1224 and he described the weather as a "little bouncy" on takeoff. There was a "lot of lift" going on, which was good for gliders. The rate of climb for the tow plane (a Husky) was 1,200 ft per/minute, which he said was higher than normal. Mr. Neilson towed Mr. Maynard north-northwest of the airport and Mr. Maynard released at 3,000 ft.

Mr. Neilson said he returned to the airport and towed Carlos Troncoso at 1250 and then Hugh McElrath at 1306, to altitude. At 1320 he towed Jim Kellet who was getting a flight review done with flight instructor Rufus Decker. Mr. Neilson said he was unaware that Mr. Decker and Mr. Kellet were going to do an emergency tow-rope release maneuver, and he felt the glider release when he was about 500-600 ft above the ground. He said Mr. Kellet made a radio announcement after he released letting him know what they were doing.

Mr. Neilson then entered the traffic pattern for runway 28. He thought he heard a radio call, but it was quiet, and he asked the person to repeat, but there was no response. Then he heard Mr. Decker announce over the radio that a glider was spinning at low level near the downwind/right base area for runway 28. Mr. Neilson said he immediately flew to that area and located Mr. Maynard's glider in wooded terrain.

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