

Rayner Brian

From: Mikulak, Jason (FAA) [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, April 10, 2020 12:24 PM
To: Rayner Brian
Subject: FW: N271BL accident

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Brian,

I know I said I wasn't working today but I figured out I had a little time left so I had too....bummer. Anyway, here is an email for the tow pilot who answered a few questions for me. Don't know if the answers are of interests to you but here you go.

Jason Mikulak

TCPM

Orlando FSDO-15

From: Jesse Almeida [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, April 10, 2020 12:12 PM
To: Mikulak, Jason (FAA) [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: N271BL accident

Good afternoon Mr. Mikulak,

While I didn't know Mr. Vinarub very well, nobody ever wants to witness an aircraft accident, especially one that involves a traumatic outcome. Thank you for your thoughts. I will answer each of the questions to the best of my ability.

1) For most pilots flying their own private glider they would take a tow to 2,000'. While some pilots may get off sooner if they find themselves in good lift, not many would get off at 500'. Getting off that low at the end of the runway is not a normal procedure, it would be frowned upon within the gliderport operations as it would interfere with landing traffic. It is in my opinion and again speculation that he pulled the release for something that was abnormal. The initial takeoff was normal with slight PIOs from the glider but nothing extreme. While climbing out at approximately 500' we hit a area of turbulence, which is when i notice the glider get low on tow and out of sight in the mirror. At that time is when i felt the glider release I continued straight ahead because in the event it was a rope break, the glider would then have made a turn back to the runway to land. After I landed the rope was still intact with both tow rings in place. Which is why I feel he pulled the release unless there was a malfunction with the hook.

2) I can not say for certain whether he conducted a preflight of the hook. As a former Glider CFI I can say that a proper preflight of the glider would include an inspection of the hook. With that being said, when they hook up the rope to the glider the individual attaching the rope will indicate to the pilot to open the hook and then close the hook. Once the the rope is attached they will pull on the rope to ensure a proper connection. Which in a way is also checking the hook and this was completed as I could see this from my mirror prior to takeoff. The most force on the hook would be during the initial

takeoff roll once airborne the the tension on the rope is less than it would be during the initial pull. Unless they find themselves far out of position.

3) I did not notice whether a control check was performed it is difficult to see from the mirror that far away (200'). But again normal procedures for gliders would be to perform a control check including spoilers prior to takeoff.

4) While the glider was in sight I did not see the spoilers deployed.

I hope this may help in some form.

Regards,

Jesse Almeida

On Friday, April 10, 2020, 11:33:15 AM EDT, Mikulak, Jason (FAA) [REDACTED] wrote:

Mr. Almeida,

Good morning,

I apologize that I did not say this last Tuesday at the Glider Port but I realize that Mr. Vinarub may have been a friend or colleague of yours, and for that, I offer my sincere condolences.

I have a few questions to ask you regarding the accident. Please take a few moments when you have a chance and answer the following:

- 1) Is there anything unusual about the time the pilot released? Is it normal to release so close to the runway and at 500'. If the normal operation is release at a higher altitude what reason may he have had to do at that time. I know that in answering this question might be speculating a little but I want to get an idea normal vs abnormal.
- 2) Do you know if the pilot conducted a preflight of the hook on the glider and its proper operation?
- 3) Do you know if the pilot did a control check before takeoff, including the spoilers?
- 4) All indications are that the right spoiler deployed as a result of the accident. However, you said you lost sight of the glider in the mirror so when you did have the glider in view in the mirror did you ever see the spoiler deployed?

Any information is helpful and we really appreciate your help.

Be safe....

Jason Mikulak

Aviation Safety Inspector

Orlando FSDO-15

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