



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Brian C. Rayner
Senior Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: August 19, 2021
Person: Ira Blieden – Pilot
NTSB Accident Number: ERA21LA329 Sterling, MA
Subject: Alexander Schleicher ASW 27-18

Narrative:

Mr. Blieden was the pilot/owner of the glider involved in the accident cited above. He was interviewed by telephone, and the following is a summary of the interview.

Mr. Blieden held a private pilot certificate with ratings for airplane single engine land and glider. He declared 3,216 hours of flight experience of which 435 hours was in the accident glider make and model.

Mr. Blieden provided an NTSB Form 6120.1, email statements, and photographs. In a telephone interview, he stated that the accident flight was the second flight of the day, and that the glider performed as designed. He said there were no mechanical deficiencies that would have precluded normal operation.

According to Mr. Blieden, there was a slight depression in the narrow, paved strip used for glider takeoffs, and that during the takeoff roll, the left wing “flexed” and “dipped” such that the wingtip contacted the turf which created the pivot point around which the glider “ground-looped.”

Mr. Blieden stated that there had been “3 weeks of heavy rain” prior to the day of the accident and that the grass on either side of the takeoff strip was longer than usual, which reduced his wingtip clearance. He stated that while he had successfully departed the strip earlier that day, a lower grass height would have lowered his risk exposure during the takeoff run.