

Investigator Name: Leah D. Read
Title: Sr. ASI
Division: ERA

Date: August 31, 2024

Subject: ERA24FA362

Contact: Christian Maurer, tow pilot

Witness: Manfred Maurer, Uncle

Witness: Inspector Robert Craig, CVG FAA/FSDO

I interviewed Mr. Maurer in person at the Ceasar Creek Soaring Club Gliderport. He stated that this was the third and final tow of the day. He knew the glider pilot, Mr. Dieter Schmidt, who he had towed on numerous occasions. Mr. Maurer regarded Mr. Schmidt as a very conscientious and conservative pilot. Mr. Maurer said he performed a radio check with Mr. Schmidt, who then "wagged" the glider's rudder when he was ready for takeoff.

Mr. Maurer said he rotated about half-way down the 2,800-ft-long grass runway. At that time, he noted that the glider became airborne earlier than normal which was "unusual." By the time he was about three-quarters of the way down the runway, and about 100 to 150-ft above the ground, the glider had climbed above and to the left of the tow plane (a Piper Pawnee). The glider started pulling the tail of the tow plane up and Mr. Maurer said he had to apply full aft elevator to compensate. Mr. Maurer released the glider and felt the tow rope release. He was able to climb out and return to land. While climbing out, he briefly saw the glider make a slight left hand turn but did not see him crash. Mr. Maurer said there were no communications from Mr. Schmidt during the short flight.

Mr. Maurer said Mr. Schmidt seemed/sounded normal that morning, but his actions after takeoff were definitely not consistent with his normal flying habits. He was not correcting for the situation which was very unlike him.

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Contact: Manfred Maurer, eyewitness

Witness to Interview: Christian Maurer, two pilot

Witness to Interview: Inspector Robert Craig, CVG FAA/FSDO

I interviewed Mr. Maurer in person at the Caesar Creek Soaring Club Gliderport. He said that the pilot, Mr. Dieter Schmidt, had his glider ready to fly on the flight line. Mr. Schmidt's flight would be the third and final flight of the day. Mr. Maurer said Mr. Schmidt appeared normal prior to the flight. Mr. Maurer connected the tow rope to the glider, and everything checked good for a successful tow. Mr. Maurer ran alongside the glider during the takeoff roll until its wings were level. After releasing the wing, Mr. Maurer proceeded to walk back to the initial takeoff point. When he turned around to look in the direction of the takeoff, he noticed that the glider was released.

Mr. Maurer said that when the glider was about 150-ft above the ground, it made a shallow right turn followed by an abrupt descending left turn. He could not tell the glider's pitch attitude from his location. The glider impacted the ground in a steep nose down attitude. Mr. Maurer said the glider departed in the clean configuration and the spoilers were not deployed, nor did he see them "pop out" during the short flight.

Mr. Maurer described Mr. Schmidt as a very "conservative" and "meticulous" pilot, who flew regularly. He was a very active member (30+ yrs.) of the Caesar Creek Soaring Club. Mr. Maurer did not see Mr. Schmidt make any attempts to correct or recover the glider before it impacted the ground, which was "very abnormal." Mr. Maurer noted that the Mr. Schmidt had sufficient room to complete a 180-degree turn

and land on the runway. There were also several local fields around the gliderport if he needed to put the glider down.



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Contact: James Fox, eyewitness

I interviewed Mr. Fox in person at the Caesar Creek Soaring Club Gliderport. He stated that the accident flight was the third and final glider flight of the day. He was in charge of the first two tows, and Mr. Manfred Maurer was in charge of the last (accident) tow since he was more familiar with attaching the tow rope to this particular make/model glider. Mr. Fox said he spoke with the pilot, Mr. Dieter Schmidt, prior to the flight and he seemed "ok." It was a hot day and he offered Mr. Schmidt water, but Mr. Schmidt declined and said he had bottled water with him onboard the glider. Mr. Fox observed Mr. Schmidt give the thumbs up that he was ready to be towed and heard the tow pilot and Mr. Schmidt complete a radio check.

Mr. Fox said Mr. Maurer ran alongside the glider for the takeoff roll. Once the glider became airborne it appeared higher than normal. The glider then pitched up "radically" and stalled at a height of about 100-150 ft above the ground. The glider's right wing dropped slightly, then the left wing dropped, and the glider rolled almost 90 degrees to left. The glider descended nose down and straight into the ground.

End