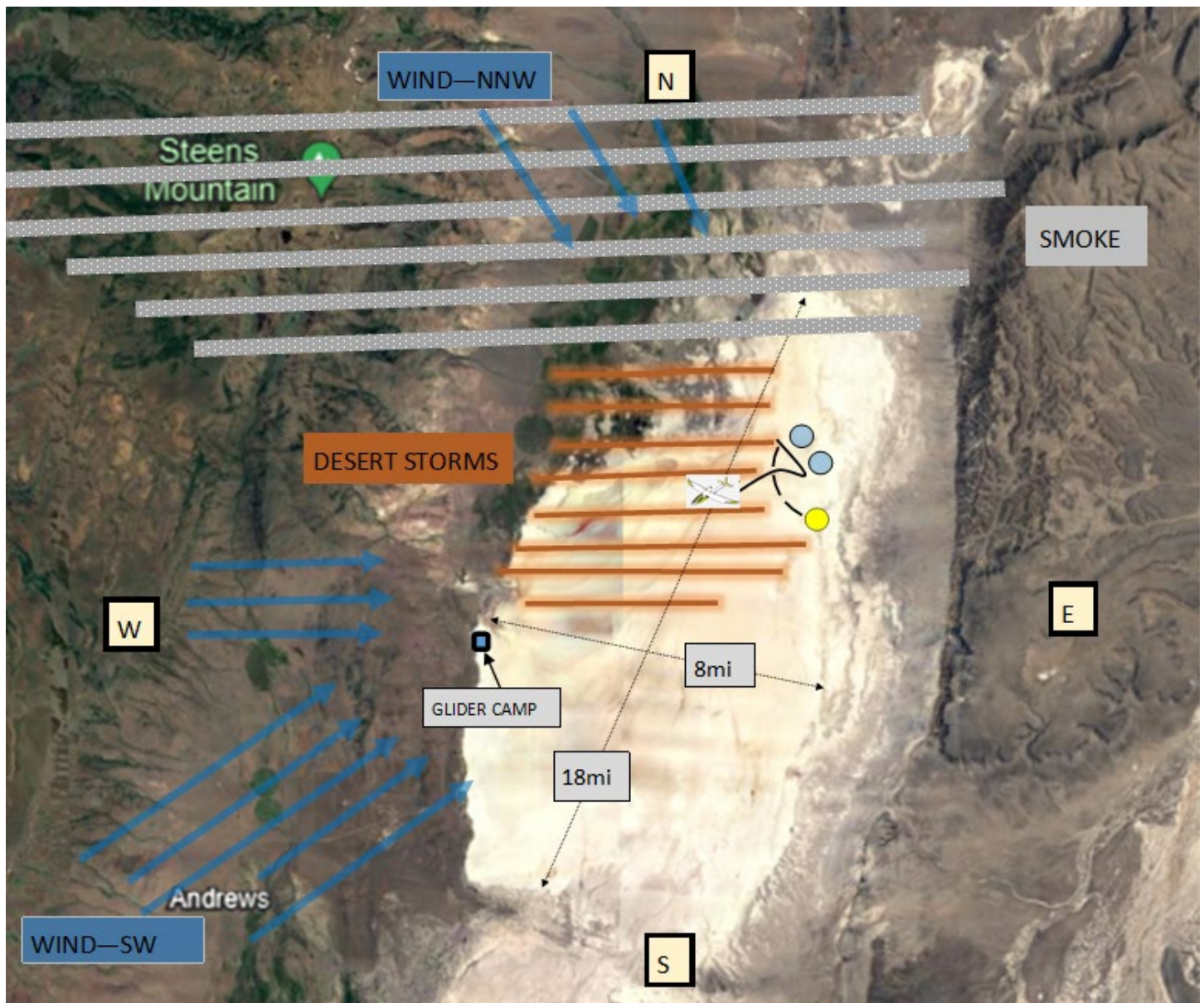




TERRAIN - HARD PACKED DESERT FLOOR

SOUTHERN WINDS - CHANGED FROM S.W. TO W. FREQUENTLY THROUGHOUT THE DAY.

NORTHERN WINDS - BROUGHT SMOKE DOWN FROM THE FALLS FIRE, NORTH OF BURNS, OR.

VELOCITY - 15KT, 20-30KT GUSTING

APPROACH PATH - 280-300 FT. (EST WHEEL TRACKS ON PLAYA)

LOCATION OF ACCIDENT - NORTH END OF THE ALVORD DESERT

NO OSTRUCTIONS

YELLOW CIRCLE: A CLOUD THAT HAD BEEN SHEARED OFF BY THE TIME I FLEW UNDER IT TO FIND LIFT. NO LIFT

BLUE CIRCLES: WHERE STRONG THERMALS HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN. I RETURNED BACK TO THIS AREA TO FIND LIFT SO I COULD REGAIN ALTITUDE. NO LIFT. ALL THERMALS HAD BEEN BLOWN OUT FROM SUDDEN SHIFT IN THE WEATHER, HIGH WINDS AND MIGRATING SMOKE.

AFTER LOOSING 2,000 FT. OF ALTITUDE, I DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH ALTITUDE TO MAKE IT AROUND THE STORM FRONTS THAT HAD SUDDENLY EXPANDED – EXPANDING BOTH VERTICALLY AND HORIZONTALLY.

THE LOSS OF ELEVATION DUE TO ZERO THERMAL ACTIVITY, HIGH WINDS AND SMOKE MIGRATION, FORCED ME TO MAKE THE DECISION TO LAND-OUT IN BETWEEN TWO DESERT DUST STORMS. ALTITUDE WAS APPROX 5.200 MSL AFTER PICKING MY LANDING SPOT AND SETTING UP FOR A BASE TO FINAL APPROACH. AROUND 500 FT AGL ON FINAL APPROACH, I EXPERIENCED SEVERE DOWN DRAFT AND A LOSS OF AIRSPEED. MY AIRSPEED WAS 64KTS ON BASE AND ON FINAL I PITCHED THE NOSE DOWN TO GAIN AIRSPEED. ON BASE I TRIMMED AIRSPEED AT 65KTS AND WHILE ON THE BEGINNING PHASE ON FINAL, I WAS AT 54KTS. I CONTINUED TO PUSH THE NOSE DOWN TO REGAIN AIRSPEED. THERE WAS A SIGNIFICANT HEADWIND COMING FROM THE SW AS EVIDENT OF THE CONTINUED DECREASE IN AIRSPEED. THERE WAS ALSO SIGNIFICANT THERMAL ACTIVITY THAT LASTED AROUND 30 SECONDS AT 200 FT AGL - PUSHING THROUGH THERMALS, AS WELL AS A HEAD WIND, I CONTINUED TO PUSH THE NOSE DOWN TO REGAIN AIRSPEED. UPON FLARING, JUST PRIOR TO TOUCHING DOWN, AIRSPEED WAS INDICATING 40 KTS. (STALL SPEED FOR THIS MAKE/TYPE OF GLIDER IN SMOOTH AIR IS 36KT). THE HEADWIND, DOWN DRAFT AND LIFT PRIOR TO TOUCHDOWN AND A POSSIBLE TAIL WIND CAUSED A WIND GRADIENT THAT CAUSED THE GLIDER TO STALL APPROX 3-4 FT OFF THE GROUND AND A HARD LANDING OCCURRED. AIRBREAKS WERE CLOSED THE WHOLE DURATION ON BOTH BASE AND FINAL. WINGS WERE LEVEL UPON LANDING AND NOT DAMAGE TO THE WINGS OCCURED.

HOWEVER, THE IMPACT ON THE LANDING GEAR CAUSED THE UNDERBELLY OF THE FUSELAGE (APPROX 8-10 INCHES AFT THE LANDING GEAR) TO SUSTAIN FOUR CRACKS IN THE FIBERGLASS. TWO CRACKS ON EACH SIDE OF THE FUSELAGE (APPROX. 3-4 INCHES IN LENGTH) – WITH THE OTHER TWO CRACKS IN BETWEEN THE TWO OUTER CRACKS (APPROX. 6-8 INCHES IN LENGTH) IS THE EXTENT OF THE GLIDER'S DAMAGE.