

Safety Investigation Brief

Fatal Paraglider Accident Mt Maunganui

Summary of occurrence

At approximately 1700 hrs on 7 December 2018 the pilot took off from near the summit of Mount Maunganui for the purpose of pleasure flying. The pilot commenced flying the northern face of the Mount.

No other pilots were flying at the time, however four witnesses walking on the top of the Mount stopped briefly to watch the paraglider. The witnesses stated that there appeared to be a change in the wind, and the wing of the paraglider collapsed. The pilot was then observed to fall straight down, out of the sight of the witnesses. The pilot was fatally injured.

Wind reports from Tauranga airport and a marine buoy situated 1.5km north of Mount Maunganui, indicated the wind was changing through north towards the southwest at the time of the accident. Review of video taken by the witnesses to the accident indicated changes in wind speed, good visibility, and no low cloud.

The pilot was observed in the witness videos executing several very steep turns before the accident. The wind conditions at the time were likely to have been causing turbulence in the area in which the pilot was flying. The execution of steep turns in turbulence significantly heightens the risk of the wing collapsing.

Inspection of the wing revealed that the wing was trimmed for its highest speed at the time of the accident. This can reduce the stability of the glider. The wing was in good general condition.

The harness the pilot was wearing was in a worn condition and did not meet a warrantable standard, with some damage and previous unprofessional repairs apparent. It was not possible to determine whether the damage occurred before or during the accident.

The accident most likely occurred as a result of the wing collapsing during high speed manoeuvring in turbulent conditions.

Administrative information

Aircraft manufacturer and model	Ozone Firefly 3.16	
Engine manufacturer and model	N/A	
Serial Number	FF3 – 16 – S – 45E – 52	
Location of incident	Mount Maunganui	
Date and time of incident	7 December 2018, 1815hrs	
Flight rules applying	Private	
	Visual (VFR)	
Occurrence number	18/8632	
Injuries	Crew	One, fatal
	Passengers	Nil
	Others	Nil

Pilot information

Age and gender	Male 48 years	
Pilot licences	NZHGPA PG2	
Pilot ratings	N/A	
Flying experience (hours)	Total helicopter	N/A
	Total fixed wing	202 approximately
	With this aircraft type	Unknown
	In last 7 days	Unknown
	In last 90 days	Unknown
	In last 12 months	202 approximately

Meteorological information and flight plan

Conditions at incident site	Wind (knots)	At 1828hrs WNW 12knots, measured at marine beacon 1.5km north of Mount Maunganui
	Visibility	40 KM
	Cloud (descriptor)	Few – Scattered – Broken – Overcast
	Pressure (hPa)	Tauranga aerodrome QNH 1019
	Temperature (°C)	19° at Tauranga Aerodrome
Departure point		Mount Maunganui
Destination		Mount Maunganui

Wreckage and impact information

Aircraft damage	Destroyed	
Aircraft fire	No fire	
ELT activated?	Not installed	No
ELT signal received by Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC)?		No
Aircraft recovered?	Yes	
Location	S 37° 37' 43.38" E176° 10' 08.6"	

About the CAA

New Zealand's legislative mandate to investigate an accident or incident are prescribed in the Transport Accident Investigation Commission Act 1990 (the TAIC Act) and Civil Aviation Act 1990 (the CAA Act).

Following notification of an accident or incident, TAIC may conduct an investigation. CAA may also investigate subject to Section 72B(2)(d) of the CAA Act which prescribes the following:

72B Functions of Authority

(2) The Authority has the following functions:

(d) To investigate and review civil aviation accidents and incidents in its capacity as the responsible safety and security authority, subject to the limitations set out in [section 14\(3\)](#) of the [Transport Accident Investigation Commission Act 1990](#)

The purpose of a CAA safety investigation is to determine the circumstances and identify contributory factors of an accident or incident with the purpose of minimising or reducing the risk to an acceptable level of a similar occurrence arising in the future. The safety investigation does not seek to ascribe responsibility to any person but to establish the contributory factors of the accident or incident based on the balance of probability.

A CAA safety investigation seeks to provide the Director of the CAA with the information required to assess which, if any, risk-based regulatory intervention tools may be required to attain CAA safety objectives.

About this safety investigation brief

The purpose of this brief is to identify to the aviation community:

- what happened
- factors contributing to the accident
- any relevant safety messages.

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