



BHPA Incident Report: GBR-2016-4112

INCIDENT

Aircraft Type:	Paraglider - Air Design Rise 2 (size XXS); Harness - Woody Valley Wani Light fitted with Ozone Angel Emergency Parachute (size 95); Naviter Oudie 3 electronic flight instrument.
Certification:	Paraglider certification EN-B.
Location:	Ager, Spain.
Date and Time:	29 th October 2016, approximately 14:00 local time (UTC + 2h).
Type of Flight:	Ridge soaring / thermic flight.
Persons Involved:	Pilot A
Injuries:	Fatal
Nature of Damage:	The glider and harness were damaged as a result of the incident, with further damage sustained during the recovery of the pilot.
Pilot's Rating/Licence:	BHPA Paragliding Club Pilot (Hill) rating.
Pilot's Age:	38
Pilot's Experience:	approximately 60 to 70 hours.
Information Source:	Statement from Pilot B; track log information from Pilot A's electronic flight instrument; Pilot A's equipment inspection.

Synopsis

Whilst on a ridge soaring flight in Ager, Spain, the pilot lost control of her paraglider in close proximity to the hillside. The pilot was unable to regain control before impacting the terrain, and sustained fatal injuries.

History of the flight

The GPS track log indicates that Pilot A took off at approximately 13:50 local time and flew on an east-southeasterly track along the ridge. Pilot A soared a south-southwesterly

facing rock face making three beats in light lift, before rounding a corner onto a south-southeasterly facing section of the ridge, and turning in to be closer to the hillside. At this point it appears from the track log that Pilot A impacted the terrain (subsequent track log points appear corrupted). The duration of the flight was approximately 10 minutes.

Pilot B reported that the emergency services were summoned by persons unknown, and Pilot A was evacuated from the hillside by helicopter to a nearby field for emergency treatment, but died from the injuries she sustained.

Focus

Based on the information available, the Investigation considered the site, the local flying conditions, the equipment used by Pilot A and the GPS track log data from Pilot A's electronic flight instrument.

The flying site where the incident occurred is a mountain to the north of the town of Ager, a south-southwesterly facing ridge with rocky outcrops rising near vertically out of a forested hillside. It is popular with paraglider and hang-glider pilots and is known for leisure and competition flying.

The witness statement from Pilot B described the conditions he had experienced on his flight on that hill earlier on the incident day as being smooth with little lift, with an 8 to 9 mph wind. There were approximately 15 other pilots on take-off.

Pilot A gained approximately 120 feet whilst soaring the south-southwesterly rock face, a distinct topographical feature higher than take-off and approximately 1.5km away, along the ridge. Given the distance from take-off and the height of this topographical feature, Pilot A's flight was made out of view of others on the take-off area. When Pilot A soared this rock face, the GPS recorded that her beats made on the east-southeasterly track were considerably faster than her beat in the opposite direction, indicating a significant downwind component. Her downwind beat speed was at an average of 51 km/h, and her into wind beat averaged 18 km/h. Given the apparent wind direction at this point, it would be reasonable to infer that when Pilot A rounded the corner and turned in towards the hillside, she encountered turbulent air in the lee of the rock feature, which led to a departure from normal flight. Pilot A's close proximity to the hillside at this point gave her insufficient time to recover normal flight before impacting the terrain.

Upon examination, the areas of Pilot A's paraglider that were not damaged by the impact or subsequent emergency evacuation were found to be in a good state of trim, with the intact lines being close to the manufacturer's specification. Her emergency parachute was found out of her harness by the emergency services, although it is unclear whether it was in a fully deployed state.

Pilot A's harness had abrasions and tears to the airbag impact pad area commensurate with a heavy landing on rough ground. The parachute container deployment loops and eyelets were not present and appeared to have been cleanly removed - there were no rips or tears around the eyelet holes in the harness material. There was no abrasion damage to this immediate area that would have indicated the parachute handle had caught on a rock. The Investigation considers that the force of the landing and compression of the airbag may have contributed to the ejection of the parachute and handle assembly, rather

than an intentional deployment. The Investigation concludes that it is unlikely that Pilot A would have been able to effect a successful emergency parachute deployment due to her proximity to the terrain.

Findings

As there were no available witnesses to the incident, no conclusion can be reached as to what caused Pilot A to hit the hillside. The Investigation determined from the available evidence that on the balance of probabilities Pilot A encountered turbulent air in the lee of a rock feature on the ridge that caused a departure from normal flight, and her close proximity to the hillside gave her insufficient time to recover normal flight before impacting the terrain.

Recommendations

No recommendations.