

Man's miraculous escape after home-built kit plane crashes at Gawler

• Steve Rice - The Advertiser - February 02, 2015 7:13PM



Police inspect the scene of a plane crash at Gawler Airfield this afternoon. Picture: Stephen Laffer

A GLIDER pilot dived from the sky to help a man whose light aircraft crashed at Gawler Aerodrome in the the second incident at the airfield today.

Adelaide Soaring Club gliding branch chief flying instructor Rob Richter was about 300m above the ground when he saw the homemade single seater plane crash and catch fire beneath him about 3.10pm.

The 50-year-old crash pilot, understood to be retired Cathay-Pacific airline captain Steve Nelson, escaped the crash with minor injuries.

He was treated by paramedics at the scene and taken to hospital for further assessment.

About two hours earlier, another pilot escaped injury after making an emergency landing when the rudder on his sports aircraft jammed.

He was not injured in the crash.

Of the later incident, Mr Richter said the plane appeared to take off and climb normally to about 50m before sustaining engine failure.

He said the plane had been airborne for only about 30 seconds.

“The pilot tried to get back on the runway and he was that low when he turned that it just hit the ground on the final turn,” he said.

“I watched from the air and it was flying fast and low.

“The wingtip hit the ground together with the nose at the same time and it slid about 20 to 30 yards.”

Mr Richter, who has 30 years' flying experience, said he immediately descended and landed his glider next to the wreckage, fearing the pilot had died.

He said the pilot was standing near the aircraft, which had caught fire and was starting to burn.

“I was elated to see him standing in front of the aircraft,” he said.

Extracted from:

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/national/mans-miraculous-escape-after-home-built-kit-plane-crashes-at-gawler/story-fnii5yv7-1227205317118?nk=8fc069bf6dd5e5a22240a55c6792a4cd>

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