

# Upkeep Cited in De Kalb Plane Crash

By Scott Fornek  
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The operator of a De Kalb County skydiving center failed to properly maintain a twin-engine plane that crashed last year, killing two of his sons and 10 other people, federal investigators said Thursday.

Jim Baron, the owner of the Hinckley Parachute Center, failed to follow inspection and maintenance rules that led the left engine of the BE-18 Beechcraft to lose power "during the critical takeoff phase," according to the National Transportation Safety Board.

That laxity and the failure or

inability of pilot James Mahr to adjust a propeller caused the crash moments after takeoff, according to the board's report on the 1992 Labor Day accident. The plane crashed in a soybean field near an airport in Hinckley, about 50 miles west of Chicago.

Baron could not be reached for comment. His sons, Chris and Ed, were among those killed in the crash. Relatives and associates said Baron still owns the business but no longer operates skydiving flights.

At the time of the crash, the plane was overdue for inspection, which the Federal Aviation Administration requires after every 100 flight hours, the report said. The plane had flown 184 hours

without inspection.

Proper propeller and engine inspection would have detected any deficiencies, said Brent Bahler, an NTSB spokesman.

Federal records indicate that the engine that failed had been installed in the plane early in 1992 by Baron and one of his employees. Neither held licenses to perform such work, but Baron told investigators that an FAA-certified mechanic supervised them.

The FAA has said Baron's installation of the engine did not violate regulations. FAA officials could not say whether any action will be taken against Baron based on this week's findings, because officials have not seen the report.