National Transportation Safety Board
Aviation Accident Data Summary

Location: Atlanta, GA  
Accident Number: ERA15FA208

Date & Time: 05/08/2015, 0959 EDT  
Registration: N5802V

Aircraft: PIPER PA-32R-300  
Injuries: 4 Fatal

Flight Conducted Under: Part 91: General Aviation - Personal

Analysis
Several days before the accident flight, the commercial pilot told his mechanic and flight instructor that the airplane had not been climbing well. The pilot had completed an engine run-up and subsequent test flight, and found no anomalies with the airplane. The accident flight was the second leg of a cross-country trip that originated earlier in the morning. During the accident takeoff, the pilot stated to air traffic control that the airplane was having trouble climbing. The airplane subsequently collided with terrain about 2 miles from the runway.
Postaccident testing of the fuel manifold showed that it was not operating normally and was contaminated with debris. The composition of debris and its origin could not be determined, but it was likely that the debris moved within the fuel manifold during operation and resulted in fluctuating power indications. Examination of the engine did not reveal any mechanical anomalies. Although the airplane was likely loaded 24 pounds in excess of its maximum gross weight, takeoff distance calculations showed that sufficient runway was available when loaded at the maximum gross weight for the departure and climb, assuming nominal performance of the airplane, engine, and pilot. Given that the airplane was having difficulty climbing, as communicated by the pilot to air traffic control during the departure, it is likely that during the takeoff, the debris in the fuel manifold prevented the engine from obtaining full power.

Flight Events
Initial climb - Loss of engine power (partial)
Emergency descent - Off-field or emergency landing
Emergency descent - Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

Probable Cause
The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:
A partial loss of engine power due to contamination in the fuel manifold, which resulted in a collision with terrain shortly after takeoff.

Findings
Aircraft-Fluids/misc hardware-Fluids-Fuel-Fluid condition - C
Aircraft-Aircraft systems-Fuel system-Fuel distribution-Not specified - C
The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), established in 1967, is an independent federal agency mandated by Congress through the Independent Safety Board Act of 1974 to investigate transportation accidents, determine the probable causes of the accidents, issue safety recommendations, study transportation safety issues, and evaluate the safety effectiveness of government
agencies involved in transportation. The NTSB makes public its actions and decisions through accident reports, safety studies, special investigation reports, safety recommendations, and statistical reviews.

The Independent Safety Board Act, as codified at 49 U.S.C. Section 1154(b), precludes the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an incident or accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report.