



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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<b>Location:</b>	LA VETA, CO	<b>Accident Number:</b>	FTW94FA059
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	01/01/1994, 1224 MST	<b>Registration:</b>	N53049
<b>Aircraft:</b>	CESSNA 177RG	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	2 Serious, 2 Minor, 1 None
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

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## Analysis

THE PILOT ENTERED 9,380-FOOT LA VETA PASS AT 8,000 FEET MSL. HE SAID HE ENCOUNTERED TURBULENCE AND DOWNDRAFTS AS HE APPROACHED THE SUMMIT, AND THE AIRPLANE 'COULDN'T GENERATE ANY LIFT' AND STALLED. MOMENTS AFTER THE ACCIDENT, ANOTHER PILOT REPORTED OCCASIONAL MODERATE TO EXTREME TURBULENCE IN THE VICINITY.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: THE PILOT'S IMPROPER INFLIGHT DECISION TO ENTER A MOUNTAIN PASS AT AN INADEQUATE ALTITUDE, CAUSING THE AIRCRAFT'S CLIMB PERFORMANCE TO BE EXCEEDED. FACTORS WERE TURBULENCE AND DOWNDRAFTS.

## Findings

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Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT ENCOUNTER WITH WEATHER

Phase of Operation: CLIMB

Findings

1. (C) IN-FLIGHT PLANNING/DECISION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (C) ALTITUDE - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (C) AIRCRAFT PERFORMANCE, CLIMB CAPABILITY - EXCEEDED
4. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - TURBULENCE
5. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - DOWNDRAFT

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Occurrence #2: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT

Phase of Operation: CLIMB

Findings

6. STALL - INADVERTENT - PILOT IN COMMAND

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Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT

Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings

7. OBJECT - TREE(S)

## Factual Information

### HISTORY OF FLIGHT

On January 1, 1994, approximately 1224 mountain standard time, a Cessna 177RG, N53049, was destroyed when it struck trees near the top of 9,380-foot La Veta Pass, about 11 miles northwest of La Veta, Colorado. The pilot and one passenger were seriously injured, two passengers received minor injuries, and another passenger was uninjured. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time, and no flight plan was filed for the personal flight.

The following is based on the Pilot/Operator report and a telephone interview with the pilot. According to the weather briefing he obtained prior to departure, only light to moderate turbulence around the Broomfield area was forecast. As the airplane passed Pueblo, Colorado, the Denver Automated Flight Service Station advised the pilot of "light chop" in the area. The flight was uneventful until they entered La Veta Pass at 8000 feet. Approaching the summit, they encountered turbulence and downdrafts. He said the airplane "couldn't generate any lift" and stalled. The airplane struck aspen trees and travelled approximately 100 feet on a magnetic heading of 265 degrees before coming to rest in an inverted attitude.

### METEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION

At 1220, a Beech 35 pilot, flying at 12,500 feet MSL, filed a pilot report (PIREP), in which he reported light turbulence and altocumulus standing lenticular clouds northwest of La Veta Pass. Ten minutes later, the pilot filed another PIREP, reporting occasional moderate turbulence and 1500 feet per minute up and downdrafts west of the pass. At 1259, the pilot filed a third PIREP, reporting extreme turbulence, and noted he was "almost turned upside down" southeast of La Veta Pass in the Sangre de Cristos mountain range.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The wreckage was released to the owner's representative on January 2, 1994.

### Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	39, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Single-engine Land	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Left
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	Seatbelt, Shoulder harness
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	No
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 2 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim.	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	12/02/1992
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>		<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	205 hours (Total, all aircraft), 20 hours (Total, this make and model), 11 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 2 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	CESSNA	Registration:	N53049
Model/Series:	177RG 177RG	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	177RG1331
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	11/10/1993, Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2800 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	27 Hours	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	5542 Hours	Engine Manufacturer:	LYCOMING
ELT:	Installed, activated, did not aid in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	IO-360-A1B6D
Registered Owner:	R&R AVIATION, INC.	Rated Power:	225 hp
Operator:	R&R AVIATION, INC.	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Does Business As:	MILE HIGH FLIGHT TRAINING	Operator Designator Code:	

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	ALS, 7535 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	32 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	1156 MST	Direction from Accident Site:	240°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear / 0 ft agl	Visibility	10 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None / 0 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	180°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	-2° C / -13° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	BROOMFIELD, CO (BJC)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	ALAMOSA, CO (ALS)	Type of Clearance:	VFR on top
Departure Time:	0930 MST	Type of Airspace:	Class G

## Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Serious	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	1 Serious, 2 Minor, 1 None	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 Serious, 2 Minor, 1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	

## Administrative Information

**Investigator In Charge (IIC):** ARNOLD W SCOTT, **Report Date:** 11/14/1994

**Additional Participating Persons:** THOMAS A SCIACCA; DENVER, CO

**Publish Date:**

**Investigation Docket:** NTSB accident and incident dockets serve as permanent archival information for the NTSB's investigations. Dockets released prior to June 1, 2009 are publicly available from the NTSB's Record Management Division at [pubinq@ntsb.gov](mailto:pubinq@ntsb.gov), or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at <http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/>.

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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. A factual report that may be admissible under 49 U.S.C. § 1154(b) is available [here](#).