



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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<b>Location:</b>	ROSWELL, NM	<b>Accident Number:</b>	FTW94LA117
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	04/01/1994, 1354 MDT	<b>Registration:</b>	N8961P
<b>Aircraft:</b>	PIPER PA-24-260	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	2 None
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

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## Analysis

FLIGHT WAS EN ROUTE AT 10,000 FEET MSL WITH SCATTERED CLOUDS WHEN THE PILOT ENCOUNTERED 'SEVERE DOWNDRAFTS' AND THE AIRPLANE ENTERED AN UNCONTROLLED ALTITUDE DEVIATION AND DESCENT. THE PILOT INADVERTENTLY EXCEED THE NEVER EXCEED SPEED. AIRPLANE CONTROL WAS RECOVERED AT 4,400 FEET MSL. THE PILOT REPORTED THE AIR WAS 'RELATIVELY SMOOTH WITH SCATTERED CLOUDS AND NO OBVIOUS WARNING SIGNS.' HORIZONTAL STABILIZERS WERE BENT DOWNWARD.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: THE LOSS OF CONTROL DUE TO CLEAR AIR TURBULENCE.

## Findings

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Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT  
Phase of Operation: CRUISE

### Findings

1. (C) WEATHER CONDITION - TURBULENCE, CLEAR AIR
2. AIRSPEED(VNE) - EXCEEDED - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. WEATHER CONDITION - DOWNDRAFT

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Occurrence #2: AIRFRAME/COMPONENT/SYSTEM FAILURE/MALFUNCTION  
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

### Findings

4. HORIZONTAL STABILIZER SURFACE - BENT

## Factual Information

On April 1, 1994, at 1354 mountain daylight time, a Piper PA-24- 260, N8961P, sustained substantial damage during cruise near Roswell, New Mexico. The private pilot and the sole passenger did not receive injuries. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed for the personal cross country flight.

Air traffic control data indicated the airplane was 35 miles southeast of Roswell, New Mexico, at 10,000 feet MSL en route to Albuquerque, New Mexico, when the pilot reported "severe downdrafts." The airplane entered an uncontrolled altitude deviation and descent. Recovery of airplane control, as reported by the pilot, was 4,400 feet MSL. The flight diverted to Roswell, New Mexico, and landed without further incident.

An examination of the airplane by the pilot and a mechanic (statement enclosed) reported the horizontal stabilizers were bent downward. The pilot reported that he closed the throttle as the speed approached the never exceed speed; however, the speed continued to increase.

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	63, 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
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	Airplane	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	No
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 3 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim.	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	08/02/1993
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>		<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	1835 hours (Total, all aircraft), 162 hours (Total, this make and model), 1759 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 28 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 26 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 7 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	PIPER	Registration:	N8961P
Model/Series:	PA-24-260 PA-24-260	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	24-4418
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	6
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	03/24/1994, Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	3100 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	23 Hours	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	4293 Hours	Engine Manufacturer:	LYCOMING
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	IO-540-D4A5
Registered Owner:	GILCRIST, ROBERT P.	Rated Power:	260 hp
Operator:	GILCRIST, ROBERT P.	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	ROW, 3669 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	1 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	1500 MDT	Direction from Accident Site:	1°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear / 0 ft agl	Visibility	40 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None / 0 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:		Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	24° C / 18° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	BROWNSVILLE, TX (BRO)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	IFR
Destination:	ALBUQUERQUE, NM (ABQ)	Type of Clearance:	IFR
Departure Time:	1030 CDT	Type of Airspace:	Class E

## Wreckage and Impact Information

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

## Administrative Information

**Investigator In Charge (IIC):** JOYCE M SMITH, **Report Date:** 11/14/1994

**Additional Participating Persons:** CAMILLA Z KATTELL; ALBUQUERQUE, NM

**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](#).