



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	LA VERNE, CA	Accident Number:	LAX94FA212
Date & Time:	05/01/1994, 2119 PDT	Registration:	N47628
Aircraft:	PIPER PA-28R-201T	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Analysis

THE PILOT ASKED THE FSS FOR ONLY THE CURRENT AND FORECAST DESTINATION WEATHER. A NOTAM REGARDING THE CLOSURE OF THE DESTINATION AIRPORT WAS NOT GIVEN TO THE PILOT. EN ROUTE THE PILOT CONTACTED ATC FOR VFR ADVISORIES THROUGH THE ARSA TO THE DESTINATION AIRPORT. HE WAS THEN ADVISED IT WAS CLOSED FOR THE NIGHT. SHORTLY THEREAFTER THE PILOT REPORTED HE WOULD RETURN TO CLAREMONT. RECORDED RADAR DATA SHOWED THAT THE AIRPLANE REVERSED COURSE, BEGAN A CLIMB FROM 6,500 TO 7,000 FT, THEN BEGAN A DESCENT WHICH CONTINUED TO IMPACT IN THE FOOTHILLS IMMEDIATELY NORTH OF THE GREATER LOS ANGELES BASIN. THE LAST RECORDED MODE C ALTITUDE WAS 3,400 FT. THE ACCIDENT SITE WAS AT 2,600 FT. TOXICOLOGICAL EXAMINATION SHOWED THERAPEUTIC LEVELS OF PSEUDOEPHEDRINE (0.64 MG/L BLOOD, 0.15 MG/L LIVER), PROMETHAZINE (3.4 MG/KG LIVER), AND BROMPHENIRAMINE (3.0 MG/KG LIVER). PROMETHAZINE IS PROHIBITED FOR USE BY PILOTS WHILE FLYING. THE PILOT HAD A COLD AT THE TIME OF THE ACCIDENT.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: THE PILOT'S SELECTION OF A FLIGHT ROUTE AND EN ROUTE DESCENT ALTITUDE INSUFFICIENT TO MAINTAIN ADEQUATE TERRAIN CLEARANCE. FACTORS WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACCIDENT WERE: THE DARK NIGHT LIGHT CONDITION AND THE MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT

Findings

1. NOTAMS - NOT ADVISED - ATC PERSONNEL(FSS)
2. (F) LIGHT CONDITION - DARK NIGHT
3. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - MOUNTAINOUS/HILLY
4. (C) ALTITUDE - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
5. USE OF INAPPROPRIATE MEDICATION/DRUG - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

HISTORY OF FLIGHT

On May 1, 1994, about 2119 hours Pacific daylight time, a Piper PA-28R-201T, N47628, was destroyed during a collision sequence with mountainous terrain near La Verne, California. The private pilot was fatally injured. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed for the personal night cross-country flight and no flight plan was filed. The flight originated about 2100 hours at Cable Airport, Claremont, California, and was destined for Whiteman Airport, Pacoima, California.

At 1804 on the evening of the accident, the pilot contacted the Riverside Automated Flight Service Station (AFSS) and requested specific preflight weather information (abbreviated briefing), prior to departure. At the time of the briefing, the Riverside Flight Service Station had on file a NOTAM (notice to airmen) for the closure of the Whiteman Airport. The closure was for weekdays from 2000 hours to 0600 hours effective April 29, 1994. Review of a transcript of the briefing revealed that the NOTAM information was not given to the pilot.

While en route about 2108, the pilot contacted Burbank Approach Control and stated that he was 25 distance measuring equipment miles (DME) east of Van Nuys, California, at 6,500, and was requesting visual flight rules (VFR) advisories from Burbank Approach Control for the route of flight through the Airport Radar Service Area to the Whiteman Airport.

The pilot was assigned a transponder code of 5536. The pilot was then advised that the Whiteman Airport was closed for maintenance. The pilot questioned the duration of the closure, and the controller stated, "all night." The pilot acknowledged. The controller asked the pilot his intentions, and he said, "I'm thinking, just a minute." He then questioned the controller regarding the weather outlook. Shortly thereafter, he stated that he would return to his home base at Cable.

About 2111, Burbank Approach Control terminated their services and requested that the pilot change his transponder code to 1200, and they approved a frequency change.

The aircraft was observed by Burbank recorded radar data to reverse course eastbound and proceed out of the Burbank radar service area. Review of the radar data revealed that after the course reversal, the aircraft began a climb from 6,500 to 7,000 feet, then began a descent which continued to impact in the foothills immediately north of the greater Los Angeles Basin. The last recorded Mode C altitude information recorded for the aircraft was 3,400 feet. The accident site is at 2,600 feet.

On the evening of the accident, a family member reported the airplane overdue about 2308. Recorded radar data was obtained from the Burbank and Ontario Approach Control facilities. According to the data, the airplane was tracked back into the Ontario radar service area. About 2118:22, the aircraft was lost from radar contact in the vicinity of the accident site.

PILOT INFORMATION

The personal pilot flight time records were not recovered. According to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) medical records, the pilot reported a total flight time of 2,200 hours, with 55 hours in the last 6 months, at his last third-class flight physical dated August 17, 1993.

AIRCRAFT INFORMATION

According to logbook records, the last documented annual inspection was accomplished on June 22, 1993, at a recording tachometer time of 818.5 hours. At that inspection, the total flight time for the airplane was annotated to be 1,978.93 hours. According to the engine logbook, the engine time since major overhaul was 182.29 hours. At the accident site, the recording tachometer indicated 933.87 hours.

METEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION

The Brackett Field Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT), at LaVerne, California, located about 5 miles south of the accident site, reported the last weather observation of the evening at 2046 hours PDT: 2,500 feet scattered clouds; 4,000 feet scattered clouds; visibility 4 miles; fog and haze; wind 250 degrees at 5 knots; and, the altimeter was 30.00 inches of mercury.

The Ontario International Airport ATCT, Ontario, California, located about 13 miles southeast of the accident site and about 5 miles southeast of the accident airplane's departure/homebase airport, reported a scheduled weather observation at 2155 hours as: weather clear; visibility 7 miles; temperature 56 degrees Fahrenheit; dewpoint 53 degrees Fahrenheit; wind 260 degrees at 3 knots; and, the altimeter was 30.00 inches of mercury.

WRECKAGE AND IMPACT INFORMATION

The accident site was located in the Angeles National Forest on Johnstone Peak, about 2,600 feet mean sea level (msl). The wreckage path was measured to be on an approximate 075 degree magnetic bearing. The wreckage path was through a ravine, densely covered by trees, on a descending path of about 10 degrees to the horizontal.

Both wings, horizontal stabilizers, vertical stabilizer, and rudder had been severed from the airframe and were strewn the length of the wreckage path, which was measured to be about 150 feet in length.

Examination of the No. 1 navigation/communication radio revealed that the communication frequency was on 123.0 MHz, and the navigation frequency was on 110.4 MHz.

Examination of the recording tachometer revealed an indicator needle imprint at 2,225 rpm.

MEDICAL AND PATHOLOGICAL INFORMATION

On May 5, 1994, the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner performed an autopsy on the pilot. Specimens were obtained from the pilot during the autopsy for toxicological analysis by the FAA Civil Aeromedical Institute (CAMI) in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

The results of the toxicological analysis conducted on the specimens were negative for carbon monoxide and cyanide. The analysis was positive for the following drugs in the amounts listed: 1) pseudoephedrine, 0.64 mg/L in blood, 0.15 mg/L in liver tissue; 2) promethazine, 3.4 mg/kg in liver tissue; and 3) brompheniramine, 3.0 mg/kg in liver tissue. According to the CAMI toxicologists, the quantities of pseudoephedrine found in the blood sample were at therapeutic levels. According to the FAA Western Pacific Regional Flight Surgeon's office, pseudoephedrine and brompheniramine are approved for use by pilots while flying, assuming there are no adverse side effects. Promethazine is prohibited for use and is medically disqualifying.

According to the pilot's wife, he had a cold at the time of the accident.

Prescription and nonprescription drug containers were found during the on-scene examination

of the wreckage. A prescription container for pseudoephedrine with an expiration date of 12/92 was found along with an over-the-counter nasal decongestant spray bottle.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

According to the FAA Air Traffic Control Handbook 7110.10K, Conduct of Abbreviated Briefing, paragraph 3-11.(a): "When a pilot requests specific information only, provide the requested information. If adverse conditions are present or forecast, advise the pilot of this fact."

On January 9, 1995, the wreckage was released to the insurance company representative of the pilot.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	61, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine Land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	08/17/1993
Occupational Pilot:		Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	2200 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	PIPER	Registration:	N47628
Model/Series:	PA-28R-201T PA-28R-201	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	7704311
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	06/22/1993, Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2900 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	15 Hours	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	1994 Hours	Engine Manufacturer:	CONTINENTAL
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	TSIO-360-FB1
Registered Owner:	PAUL A. GORDON	Rated Power:	200 hp
Operator:	PAUL A. GORDON	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Night/Dark
Observation Facility, Elevation:	POC, 1011 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	5 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	2047 PDT	Direction from Accident Site:	158°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 2500 ft agl	Visibility	4 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None / 0 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	5 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	240°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	CLAREMONT, CA (CCB)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	PACOIMA, CA (WHP)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	2100 PDT	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Wreckage and Impact Information

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

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	GEORGE E PETERSON,	Report Date:	03/30/1995
Additional Participating Persons:	PAT PATTERN; RIVERSIDE, CA		
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 , 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](#).