



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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<b>Location:</b>	LONG BEACH, CA	<b>Accident Number:</b>	LAX96LA001
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	10/01/1995, 1907 PDT	<b>Registration:</b>	N79820
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Mooney M20E	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	1 Fatal, 2 Minor
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

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## Analysis

While flying over the ocean, the pilot reported to the radar sector controller that the engine lost power. Then the pilot said that the engine restarted, but didn't sound good. Moments later he reported that the engine lost power and that he was going to ditch the airplane in the ocean. The sector controller immediately initiated search and rescue procedures. The two passengers were rescued. Neither the airplane nor the pilot was recovered. A fixed-base operator reported that on the evening before the accident, the airplane's right fuel tank was almost full; the left fuel tank was between 1/4 and 1/2 full. The pilot had purchased the airplane about 2 weeks before the accident; it could not be determined if the pilot received any instruction or a check-out in the airplane.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: a loss of engine power for undetermined reasons.

## Findings

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Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER  
Phase of Operation: CRUISE

### Findings

1. (C) REASON FOR OCCURRENCE UNDETERMINED
2. LACK OF FAMILIARITY WITH AIRCRAFT - PILOT IN COMMAND

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Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING  
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY LANDING

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Occurrence #3: DITCHING  
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY LANDING

### Findings

3. TERRAIN CONDITION - WATER

## Factual Information

On October 1, 1995, at 1907 hours Pacific daylight time, a Mooney M20E, N79820, crashed into the Pacific Ocean after sustaining a total loss of power about 18 miles south of Long Beach, California. The pilot was conducting a visual flight rules (VFR) personal flight to Brackett Airport, La Verne, California. The pilot did not file a flight plan; he was, however, receiving radar flight following from Southern California TRACON. The airplane, owned by the pilot, sank in the ocean and is presumed to be destroyed. The certificated private pilot was not found and is presumed to have sustained fatal injuries; the remaining passengers, rescued by the U.S. Coast Guard, sustained minor injuries. The passengers were hospitalized for 24 hours for observation. All three occupants were South Korean nationals. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed. The flight departed Catalina Airport, Avalon, California, about 1850 hours.

Catalina Airport personnel reported that the airplane arrived at the airport at 1730 hours.

The pilot's sister said the pilot arrived from Korea earlier that day; he had been in Korea for about two weeks on a business trip. She said the pilot and two passengers departed his home about 1600 hours and intended to go to Catalina Island for a sight-seeing flight. The pilot had not flown the airplane since he bought it in September, 1995.

The recorded communications between the pilot and the FAA Southern California Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON) sector controller revealed that the pilot initially contacted him at 1858 hours. The pilot reported his position about 8 miles northeast of Catalina Island. The sector controller assigned the pilot a discrete transponder code.

At 1859:20 hours, the pilot made a mayday distress call and stated that the engine failed. The sector controller advised the pilot that he was 10 miles northeast of Catalina Island. He said, in part, ". . .we have a engine back we try like ah going toward the Pomona engine sounded not so good. . . ." The sector controller instructed the pilot to keep him informed.

About 1900 hours, the pilot said the engine failed again and that he was going to have to ditch in the ocean. He said he was descending out of 3,200 feet (all altitudes herein are mean sea level altitudes unless otherwise noted).

At this time the sector control requested a commuter flight, Skywest 577, to track N79820 and provided Skywest 577 radar vectors toward the aircraft. The commuter pilot suggested to the pilot to switch fuel tanks. The pilot responded "I'm trying to shut it off now."

At 1904:40, the sector controller advised the pilot that radar contact was lost. At 1907:20, the commuter pilot said that he saw the aircraft descending and moments later lost sight of the airplane. There were no further communications between the pilot and the sector controller or any other airplane.

The two passengers were subsequently rescued by U.S. Coast Guard personnel. Neither the pilot nor the airplane was found. Both passengers left the hospital the day after the accident and returned to Korea before they could be interviewed. Safety Board investigators attempted to contact them through their attorney and the South Korean consulate, but without success.

The pilot held a private pilot certificate with airplane single and multiengine land, and instrument airplane ratings. He also held an unrestricted third-class medical certificate dated July 26, 1994.

Safety Board investigators did not recover the pilot's flight hours logbook. The flight hours reflected on page 3 of this report were obtained from the pilot's last airman certificate application form. The application form, dated July 16, 1995, was for the pilot's multiengine rating.

The owner of Howard Aviation, Inc., said in a telephone interview conducted on April 26, 1996, that he flew with the pilot shortly after he purchased the airplane. He said that the pilot had never flown the accident airplane make and model before he bought the accident airplane.

Safety Board investigators were unable to determine if the pilot received any instruction or a check-out in the accident airplane.

The pilot purchased the airplane from Aero Improvements, Brackett Airport, on September 14, 1995. The purchase was consummated after the pilot retained Howard Aviation, Inc., Brackett Airport, to conduct a prepurchase inspection on September 12, 1995. Besides the prepurchase inspection, the pilot contracted Howard Aviation, Inc., to install a horizontal situation indicator. The owner of Howard Aviation, Inc., reported that minor discrepancies were found and repaired, which included replacing the spark plugs during the prepurchase inspection.

Safety Board investigators did not recover the airplane's maintenance logbooks. According to the Howard Aviation, Inc. prepurchase sheet, the airplane accrued 3,217.2 hours. The engine and propeller accrued 728 hours since major overhaul. The last annual inspection was completed in July, 1995.

The owner of Howard Aviation, Inc., also said in a telephone interview conducted on April 26, 1996, that after installing the horizontal situation indicator and during the prepurchase inspection, he flight tested the airplane at least three times. He said that he last flew the airplane on the evening preceding the accident. When he departed on the flight the right fuel tank was nearly full and the left fuel tank was between 1/4 and 1/2 full. He said that the airplane did not have any known discrepancies when he last flew it.

The owner of Aero Improvements reported that to his knowledge, the airport fueler fueled the airplane about 30 days before the accident.

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	34, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Left
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	
<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--no waivers/lim.	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	07/26/1994
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>		<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	212 hours (Total, all aircraft), 196 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Mooney	Registration:	N79820
Model/Series:	M20E M20E	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	484
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	07/01/1995, Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2575 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	IO-360-A1A
Registered Owner:	SANG HO HAN	Rated Power:	180 hp
Operator:	SANG HO HAN	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Night/Bright
Observation Facility, Elevation:	LGB, 56 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	15 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	1850 PDT	Direction from Accident Site:	180°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear / 0 ft agl	Visibility	15 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None / 0 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	4 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	130°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	22° C / 18° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	AVALON, CA (AVX)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	LA VERNE, CA (POC)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	1850 PDT	Type of Airspace:	Class G

## Wreckage and Impact Information

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

## Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): A. D LLORENTE Report Date: 07/03/1996

Additional Participating Persons: DENNIS FOGARTY; LONG BEACH, 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](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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