



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| <b>Location:</b>               | BITTINGER, MD                        | <b>Accident Number:</b> | IAD97FA038 |
| <b>Date &amp; Time:</b>        | 01/01/1997, 1308 EST                 | <b>Registration:</b>    | N8925S     |
| <b>Aircraft:</b>               | Cessna 150F                          | <b>Aircraft Damage:</b> | Destroyed  |
| <b>Defining Event:</b>         |                                      | <b>Injuries:</b>        | 1 Fatal    |
| <b>Flight Conducted Under:</b> | Part 91: General Aviation - Personal |                         |            |

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## Analysis

The noninstrument-rated pilot departed on a cross-country flight after receiving a briefing that VFR flight was not recommended. No flight plan was filed, and a family member stated that the pilot had made this flight numerous times. Witnesses reported, 'a very low overcast (100 feet), fog, and drizzle, which changed to freezing drizzle and rain within one hour of the accident.' Witnesses stated that they 'heard the airplane circling, but did not see the airplane impact' due to obscuring low clouds. Impact occurred in a pasture in a nose down attitude. Examination of the wreckage revealed no preimpact malfunction.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: VFR flight by the noninstrumented-rated pilot into instrument meteorological conditions (IMC), which lead to spatial disorientation of the pilot, his loss of aircraft control, and an uncontrolled collision with the terrain. Factors relating to the accident were: the adverse weather conditions, and the pilot's lack of instrument experience.

## Findings

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Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT ENCOUNTER WITH WEATHER  
Phase of Operation: CRUISE

### Findings

1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - LOW CEILING
  2. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - FOG
  3. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - DRIZZLE/MIST
  4. (C) VFR FLIGHT INTO IMC - PERFORMED - PILOT IN COMMAND
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Occurrence #2: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT  
Phase of Operation: CRUISE

### Findings

5. (C) AIRCRAFT CONTROL - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
  6. (C) SPATIAL DISORIENTATION - PILOT IN COMMAND
  7. (F) LACK OF TOTAL INSTRUMENT TIME - PILOT IN COMMAND
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Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER  
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

## Factual Information

**HISTORY OF FLIGHT** On January 1, 1997, approximately 1308 eastern standard time, a Cessna 150F, N8925S, was destroyed when it descended from cruise flight and collided with terrain near Bittering, Maryland. The certificated private pilot/owner received fatal injuries. Instrument meteorological conditions prevailed, and no flight plan was filed for the personal cross country flight conducted under 14 CFR Part 91.

The pilot departed Connellsville Airport, Connellsville, Pennsylvania, approximately 1230, destined for the Warrenton Airport, Warrenton, Virginia, to pickup his two children. The non instrument rated pilot received a weather briefing from the Altoona Flight Service Station. The pilot was instructed that VFR flight was not recommended due to instrument conditions in the higher terrain area between his departure airport and destination. The pilot did not file a flight plan, and according to a family member, had made this trip numerous times.

Witnesses reported "very low overcast (100 feet), fog, and drizzle, which changed to freezing drizzle and freezing rain within one hour of the accident." The witnesses stated that they "heard the airplane circling, but did not see the airplane impact" in the pasture due to the obscuring low clouds.

The accident occurred during daylight hours, about 39 degrees, 38 minutes North latitude, 79 degrees, 13 minutes West longitude.

**PERSONNEL INFORMATION** The pilot was issued an Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Private Pilot Certificate on October 10, 1993, for airplane single engine land. The pilot did not possess an instrument rating.

He was issued an FAA Airman's Third Class Medical Certificate on August 10, 1995, with no limitations.

The pilot's logbook was not found. On his application for his last Third Class Medical Certificate, dated August 10, 1995, the pilot indicated a total pilot time of 350 hours, of which 50 hours had been flown during the past 6 months.

**AIRCRAFT INFORMATION** No airframe or engine logbooks were found and turned over for further examination. The airplane appeared to have been recently re-skinned on the lower left wing. No material identification was observed on the bare aluminum skin. Door panels were filled with styro foam sheets, which had been duct taped to the inside of the door panels. The rotating beacon was installed with house hold Romex cable and common wire nuts. A hand held GPS unit was mounted on the pilot's yoke. It was connected to an antenna installed with the coax cable routed through one of the four screw holes attaching the original communications antenna.

**METEOROLOGICAL CONDITIONS** A copy of a "WeatherMation Flight Plan" from Connellsville, Pennsylvania to Warrenton, Virginia, computed on January 01, 1997, at 1228, was found in the airplane. The weather report showed visual meteorological conditions at the departure airport and the destination. Weather at Martinsburg, West Virginia (MRB), at 1145, reported winds from 130 degrees at 10 knots; Visibility, 8 miles; Ceiling, 2,500 feet overcast; altimeter, 30.26 inches.

The weather reported by witnesses in the area was very low overcast (100 feet), fog, and drizzle, which changed to freezing drizzle and freezing rain within one hour of the mishap. The pilot

received a telephone weather briefing from the Altoona Flight Service Station and was advised that VFR flight was not recommended. Mountain obscuration was reported by the Altoona Flight Service Station along his intended route of flight and in the vicinity of the mishap.

**WRECKAGE AND IMPACT INFORMATION** The ground impact scarring depicted the front cross section of the airplane. A narrow 20 foot long gash represented the left wing, followed by the 18 inch deep crater for the engine, and a narrow shorter gash for the right wing. Only the left main wheel had made a ground depression, located 2.5 feet offset and back from the engine crater. Small pieces of Plexiglas and other debris were thrown in a 210 degree magnetic heading, but remained close to the initial impact crater. The airplane came to rest approximately 40 feet away from the initial impact crater, facing 080 heading, in an upright position.

The empennage was crushed aft of the baggage compartment and scorpioned to the left. The propeller displayed chord wise scratches and leading edge gouges. The spinner displayed rotational crushing. The engine exhibited continuity to the accessory section, and all cylinders produced thumb compression with the exception of the number 3 cylinder, which had a bent push rod. Both magnetos produced sparks, and fuel was observed in the fuel bowl. The oil filter was free of contaminants. The carburetor fuel bowl was free of contaminants and no evidence of water was observed. The throttle arm and mixture control were found loose.

All flight controls were accounted for at the mishap site and remained attached to their respective hinges. Flight control continuity was confirmed to the cockpit area, but binding occurred in the cockpit due to extensive airframe deformations. Flaps were in the "up" position, confirmed through the flap actuator.

**MEDICAL AND PATHOLOGICAL INFORMATION** An autopsy was conducted on the pilot, on January 2, 1997, by Dennis J. Chute, M.D., the Assistant Medical Examiner for the State of Maryland.

Toxicological testing was also conducted by the FAA Toxicology Accident Research Laboratory, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on January 4, 1997. The results were negative for alcohol, drugs, and carbon monoxide.

The wreckage was released on January 3, 1997, to Robert Pawlikowski, brother of the airplane's owner.

## Pilot Information

|                                  |  |  |            |
|----------------------------------|--|--|------------|
| <b>Certificate:</b>              | Private                                | <b>Age:</b>                              | 36, 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>     | None                                   | <b>Second Pilot Present:</b>             | No         |
| <b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>     | None                                   | <b>Toxicology Performed:</b>             | Yes        |
| <b>Medical Certification:</b>    | Class 3 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim. | <b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>            | 08/10/1995 |
| <b>Occupational Pilot:</b>       |  | <b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b> |            |
| <b>Flight Time:</b>              | 450 hours (Total, all aircraft)        |  |            |

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

|                                      |  |                                       |                 |
|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Aircraft Make:</b>                | Cessna   | <b>Registration:</b>                  | N8925S          |
| <b>Model/Series:</b>                 | 150F 150F  | <b>Aircraft Category:</b>             | Airplane        |
| <b>Year of Manufacture:</b>          |  | <b>Amateur Built:</b>                 | No              |
| <b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>    | Utility  | <b>Serial Number:</b>                 | 15062225        |
| <b>Landing Gear Type:</b>            | Tricycle   | <b>Seats:</b>                         | 2               |
| <b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b> | Unknown  | <b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>       | 1600 lbs        |
| <b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>   |  | <b>Engines:</b>                       | 1 Reciprocating |
| <b>Airframe Total Time:</b>          |  | <b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>           | Continental     |
| <b>ELT:</b>                          | Installed, activated, did not aid in locating accident | <b>Engine Model/Series:</b>           | O-200-A         |
| <b>Registered Owner:</b>             | WILLIAM PAWLIKOWSKI                                    | <b>Rated Power:</b>                   | 100 hp          |
| <b>Operator:</b>                     | WILLIAM PAWLIKOWSKI                                    | <b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b> | None            |

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

|                                  |                         |   |                  |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|---|------------------|
| Conditions at Accident Site:     | Instrument Conditions   | Condition of Light:                     | Day              |
| Observation Facility, Elevation: | , 0 ft msl              | Distance from Accident Site:            | 0 Nautical Miles |
| Observation Time:                | 0000                    | Direction from Accident Site:           | 0°               |
| Lowest Cloud Condition:          | Unknown / 0 ft agl      | Visibility                              | 0 Miles          |
| Lowest Ceiling:                  | Overcast / 100 ft agl   | Visibility (RVR):                       | 0 ft             |
| Wind Speed/Gusts:                | /                       | Turbulence Type<br>Forecast/Actual:     | /                |
| Wind Direction:                  |                         | Turbulence Severity<br>Forecast/Actual: | /                |
| Altimeter Setting:               |                         | Temperature/Dew Point:                  |                  |
| Precipitation and Obscuration:   |                         |   |                  |
| Departure Point:                 | CONNELLSVILLE, PA (2W3) | Type of Flight Plan Filed:              | None             |
| Destination:                     | WARRENTON, VA (W66)     | Type of Clearance:                      | None             |
| Departure Time:                  | 1230 EST                | Type of Airspace:                       | Class E          |

## 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):     | JIM CAIN   | Report Date: | 10/30/1998 |
| Additional Participating Persons: | DOUG LUNDGREN; GLEN BURNIE, MD<br>DAVID GILLEN; GLEN BURNIE, MD<br>EMILE J LOHMAN; WICHITA, KS<br>GEORGE M HOLLINGSWORTH; RESTON, VA   |              |            |
| 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 <a href="mailto:pubinq@ntsb.gov">pubinq@ntsb.gov</a> , or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at <a href="http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/">http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/</a> . |              |            |

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