



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	NOATAK, AK	Accident Number:	ANC97TA045
Date & Time:	04/01/1997, 1145 AST	Registration:	N4500W
Aircraft:	Piper PA-18	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation -		

Analysis

The pilot, an employee of the National Park Service, related he was returning to his position as a Park Ranger/Pilot after a three month furlough from the park service. The purpose of the accident flight was to regain proficiency in the Piper PA-18 airplane. The pilot said that during the landing roll on the fourth landing, he lost directional control of the airplane, and it ground looped to the left, which resulted in substantial damage to the airframe. Also, the pilot said he did not fly during his furlough, and that his total flight experience in the PA-18 airplane was approximately five hours.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: failure of the pilot to maintain directional control of the airplane, which resulted in an inadvertent ground loop and damage to the airplane. Factors associated with the accident were: the ice/snow covered runway, and the pilot's lack of experience in the make and model of airplane.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - ON GROUND/WATER
Phase of Operation: LANDING - ROLL

Findings

1. (F) AIRPORT FACILITIES,RUNWAY/LANDING AREA CONDITION - SNOW COVERED
2. (F) AIRPORT FACILITIES,RUNWAY/LANDING AREA CONDITION - ICY
3. (C) DIRECTIONAL CONTROL - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (C) GROUND LOOP/SWERVE - INADVERTENT - PILOT IN COMMAND
5. (F) LACK OF TOTAL EXPERIENCE IN TYPE OF AIRCRAFT - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

On April 1, 1997, about 1145 Alaska standard time, a wheel-ski equipped Piper PA-18 airplane, N4500W, registered to the U.S. Department of the Interior and operated by the National Park Service (NPS), received substantial damage while landing at the Noatak Airport, Noatak, Alaska. The solo commercial pilot, a NPS employee, was not injured. The U.S. Government operated flight was initiated for the purpose of maintaining pilot flight proficiency, and operated in visual meteorological conditions under 14 CFR Part 91. The flight last departed Kotzebue, Alaska, and the immediate destination was the Noatak Airport.

During a telephone conversation with the NTSB investigator-in-charge on April 3, the pilot related he was returning to work with the NPS as a Park Ranger/Pilot, after a three month furlough. Since he had not flown during the time he was furloughed, he felt a need to practice his flying skills prior to a mission flight planned for the next day. The pilot was making a series of full stop landings at the Noatak Airport on wheel/ski equipped landing gear with the skis retracted. On the fourth landing on runway 36, the pilot said the airplane porpoised and bounced, and then went to the left during the landing roll. He said he overcorrected to the right, and then to the left. The airplane ground looped to the left, and came to rest facing in a westerly direction.

Postaccident inspection disclosed damage to a longeron and the horizontal stabilizer.

The written report submitted to the NTSB by the pilot indicated his total flight experience in a Piper PA-18 airplane was approximately five hours at the time of the accident.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Airline Transport	Age:	36, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Multi-engine Land; Multi-engine Sea; Single-engine Land; Single-engine Sea	Seat Occupied:	Front
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	Seatbelt, Shoulder harness
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	05/20/1996
Occupational Pilot:		Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	6413 hours (Total, all aircraft), 5 hours (Total, this make and model), 5792 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 7 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 7 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N4500W
Model/Series:	PA-18 PA-18	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal; Utility	Serial Number:	18-8009019
Landing Gear Type:	Ski/wheel; Tailwheel	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	10/20/1996, 100 Hour	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1750 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	21 Hours	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	3109 Hours	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	O-320-B2B
Registered Owner:	U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR	Rated Power:	160 hp
Operator:	NATIONAL PARK SERVICE	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual 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:	Clear / 0 ft agl	Visibility	10 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None / 0 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	Calm /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:		Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:		Temperature/Dew Point:	-26 °C / -18 °C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	KOTZEBUE, AK (OTZ)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	VFR
Destination:	(WTK)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	1100 AST	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	NOATAK (WTK)	Runway Surface Type:	Gravel
Airport Elevation:	88 ft	Runway Surface Condition:	Ice; Snow--compacted
Runway Used:	36	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	4000 ft / 60 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Full Stop; Traffic Pattern

Wreckage and Impact Information

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

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	JAMES D LABELLE	Report Date:	07/13/1998
Additional Participating Persons:	JIM TUPPER; FAIRBANKS, AK DAVID BROADNAX; BOISE, ID		
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](#).