



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	KETTLE FALLS, WA	Accident Number:	SEA98LA018
Date & Time:	12/01/1997, 1445 PST	Registration:	N1054J
Aircraft:	Aero Commander 112	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	3 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Analysis

According to a FAA aviation safety inspector, witnesses observed the airplane flying 'low' over Lake Roosevelt. The witnesses observed the left wing strike the surface of the lake. The airplane then broke apart and sank in about 40 feet of water. The witnesses stated that there was no smoke or fire coming from the airplane at the time of the accident, and that there were no perceived problems with the engine. FAA inspectors found no evidence of bird strikes, nor of mechanical deficiencies prior to impact. Toxicological testing revealed that a high level of ethanol was detected in bodily fluids.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's failure to maintain terrain clearance while maneuvering. Factors include the physiological impairment of the pilot's judgement due to alcohol.

Findings

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

Findings

1. (C) ALTITUDE/CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (F) IMPAIRMENT(ALCOHOL) - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

On December 1, 1997, about 1445 Pacific standard time, N1054J, an Aero Commander 112 airplane, operated by the owner/pilot, collided with water while maneuvering and was destroyed near Kettle Falls, Washington. The private pilot and his two passengers were fatally injured. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and no flight plan had been filed. The personal flight was conducted under 14 CFR 91. The flight departed from Colville, Washington, about 1430 and was en route to Kent, Washington.

According to a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) aviation safety inspector from Spokane, Washington, witnesses observed the airplane flying "low" over Lake Roosevelt. The lake is formed by the Columbia River near a dam, and is located about 10 miles northwest of the departure airport. The witnesses observed the left wing strike the surface of the lake. The airplane then broke apart and sank in about 40 feet of water. The witnesses stated that there was no smoke or fire coming from the airplane at the time of the accident, and that there were no perceived problems with the engine. FAA inspectors found no evidence of bird strikes, nor mechanical deficiencies prior to impact. The ELT was found to have its switch in the off position.

Toxicological testing revealed that ethanol was detected in bodily fluids. An autopsy was performed by Dr. George R. Lindholm at Holy Family Hospital, Spokane, Washington.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	45, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine Land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Expired	Last FAA Medical Exam:	07/23/1981
Occupational Pilot:		Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	160 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Aero Commander	Registration:	N1054J
Model/Series:	112 112	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	54
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	06/14/1996, Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2800 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	67 Hours	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	1682 Hours	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	IO-360-C1D6
Registered Owner:	DONLEY, RICHARD W	Rated Power:	200 hp
Operator:	DONLEY, RICHARD W	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	CQV, 0 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	0 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	1550 PST	Direction from Accident Site:	0°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 25000 ft agl	Visibility	20 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:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	6° C / 2° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	COLVILLE, WA (63S)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	KENT, WA	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	1430 PST	Type of Airspace:	

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	2 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	3 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): MICHAEL STOCKHILL **Report Date:** 01/28/2000

Additional Participating Persons: JOHN BIANCO; SPOKANE, WA

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/>.

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](#).