



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Data Summary

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<b>Location:</b>	PRESQUE ISLE, ME	<b>Accident Number:</b>	NYC98FA071
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	03/01/1998, 0352 EST	<b>Registration:</b>	N777HM
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Piper PA-31-310	<b>Injuries:</b>	2 Fatal
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General Aviation - Positioning		

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## Analysis

The pilot was performing a night VOR/DME approach during which instrument meteorological conditions prevailed. The airplane was equipped with VOR, LORAN, and R-NAV receivers. There were two step-downs fixes on the approach. At 13 DME the minimum altitude was 1,800 feet. At 10 DME the minimum altitude was 1,040 feet. The missed approach point was at 6 DME, and the VOR/DME transmitter was located 5.5 miles beyond the airport. Radar data revealed a descent profile based upon distances from the end of the runway, rather than DME from the VOR. The airplane reached an altitude of 1,000 feet when it was 13.52 miles from the VOR, and 7.58 miles from the approach end of the runway. It subsequently impacted rising terrain at an altitude of about 900 feet, about 11.5 miles from the VOR, and 5.5 miles from the approach end of the runway. Impact damage and a post-crash fire precluded a check of the radio set up at the time of the accident. According to FAR 135 a pilot-in-command was required to have 1,200 hours total time. The investigation documented the pilot's total time as about 1,057 hours.

## Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's failure to follow the published instrument approach procedure and his descent below the minimum descent altitude. Contributing factors were the night conditions, low ceilings, and fog.

## Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER  
Phase of Operation: APPROACH - IAF TO FAF/OUTER MARKER (IFR)

### Findings

1. (F) LIGHT CONDITION - DARK NIGHT
2. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - LOW CEILING
3. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - FOG
4. (C) IFR PROCEDURE - NOT FOLLOWED - PILOT IN COMMAND
5. (C) MINIMUM DESCENT ALTITUDE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Commercial	<b>Age:</b>	24
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land	<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	Airplane
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None
<b>Flight Time:</b>	1057 hours (Total, all aircraft), 440 hours (Total, this make and model), 629 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Piper	<b>Registration:</b>	N777HM
<b>Model/Series:</b>	PA-31-310 PA-31-310	<b>Engines:</b>	2 Reciprocating
<b>Operator:</b>	BIRD AIR FLEET	<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	Lycoming
<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	On-demand Air Taxi (135)	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	TSIO-540-A2B
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General Aviation - Positioning		

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Instrument Conditions	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Night/Dark
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>	PQJ, 534 ft msl	<b>Weather Information Source:</b>	Weather Observation Facility
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	Overcast / 100 ft agl	<b>Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:</b>	3 knots / , 230°
<b>Temperature:</b>	2°C	<b>Visibility</b>	0.5 Miles
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>			
<b>Departure Point:</b>	BANGOR, ME (BGR)	<b>Destination:</b>	(PQJ)

## Airport Information

<b>Airport:</b>	PRESQUE ISLE (PQJ)	<b>Runway Surface Type:</b>	Asphalt
<b>Runway Used:</b>	1	<b>Runway Surface Condition:</b>	
<b>Runway Length/Width:</b>	7438 ft / 150 ft		

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	1 Fatal	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>	1 Fatal	<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	On-Ground
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>			

## Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): RANDI-JEAN KUKLA

Adopted Date: 06/21/2000

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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