



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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<b>Location:</b>	CANTWELL, AK	<b>Accident Number:</b>	ANC98LA105
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	08/01/1998, 1340 AKD	<b>Registration:</b>	N2350T
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Piper PA-28-140	<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 non-instrument rated pilot transmitted that he was lost in the clouds and requested help. He began to transmit his position and heading, and then no further transmissions were overheard. The airplane was located at 7,200 feet msl in steep, mountainous terrain extending upwards to 10,000 feet msl. Pilots flying in the area reported VFR weather with cloud bases at 5,000 feet msl, and cloud tops at 9,000 feet msl. These pilots stated that most of the mountain was in the clear, and that they were able to pick their way around the clouds. The airplane and pilot could not be recovered due to hazardous terrain and inclement weather.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's intentional continued VFR flight into IMC. Factors were the scattered to broken clouds, and the mountainous terrain.

## Findings

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

### Findings

1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - CLOUDS
2. (C) VFR FLIGHT INTO IMC - INTENTIONAL - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER  
Phase of Operation: CRUISE

### Findings

3. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - MOUNTAINOUS/HILLY

## Factual Information

On August 1, 1998, about 1340 Alaska daylight time, a Piper PA-28-140 airplane, N2350T, was destroyed when it collided with rising terrain, about 37 miles southwest of Cantwell, Alaska, at position 63 degrees 14.54 minutes North latitude, 150 degrees 11.95 minutes West longitude. The solo private pilot sustained fatal injuries. The flight was conducted under 14 CFR Part 91. The flight departed Merrill Field, Anchorage, Alaska, at 1238, destined for Fairbanks, Alaska. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed along the proposed route of flight at the time of the accident, and a VFR flight plan was filed. The pilot did not hold an instrument rating.

About 1335, an air taxi pilot inbound for Talkeetna, Alaska, overheard a radio transmission on 123.6 MHz from the accident pilot calling Talkeetna Radio. The accident pilot stated his full aircraft call sign, and said he was lost in the clouds and wanted help. The Talkeetna Flight Service Station did not receive the transmission, but two airborne air taxi pilots did. Both air taxi pilots told the NTSB investigator-in-charge (IIC) during telephone interviews on August 4, that the pilot sounded stressed and frantic. They reported to the IIC that the pilot began to give his position, and then stated he was tracking 235. No other transmissions were received.

An Emergency Locator Transmitter signal was received from the south side of Mount McKinley at 1440.

The airplane was located about 2100 in mountainous terrain by an Alaska Air National Guard helicopter. Terrain within 10 miles of the accident site extends up to 10,000 feet msl. The wreckage was situated approximately 7,200 feet msl, about 300 feet below a ridge.

Two Alaska Air National Guard Pararescuemen (PJs) climbed to the accident site after being landed by helicopter on the ridge above, and confirmed the pilot was deceased. These two PJs informed the NTSB IIC on August 2 that the airplane had impacted a 45 degree snow slope in a level attitude. They described the front half of the airplane buried in the snow, and the tail sticking out. The cabin was full of camping gear. The airplane was described as unstable, with the possibility of sliding down a several thousand feet long snow slope. No photographs were taken by the PJs.

Due to unfavorable weather, nearly continuous snowfall, avalanche danger, and steep terrain, the airplane and pilot were not recovered.

The reported clouds at Cantwell, 27 miles northeast of the accident site, at the time of the accident were scattered clouds at 7,000 feet msl. Three air taxi pilots interviewed by the IIC related that after overhearing the pilot's distress call, they looked to the north and observed a layer of scattered to broken clouds and cumulus buildups along the eastern flank of the McKinley massif. All the pilots interviewed indicated the bases of the clouds were about 5,000 feet msl, and that it was clear above 9,000 feet. They each stated that most of the mountain range was in the clear, and that they were able to pick their way around the clouds.

The pilot's brother was interviewed by the IIC on August 3. He indicated that the pilot departed California on July 11, and did not intend to return until the end of August. He had purchased a new GPS for the trip. The airplane and pilot logs were in the airplane. The pilot's family completed the NTSB Pilot/Operator report.

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	38, 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>	
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	No
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 1 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	01/01/1997
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>		<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	900 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Piper	<b>Registration:</b>	N2350T
<b>Model/Series:</b>	PA-28-140 PA-28-140	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Airplane
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	No
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Normal	<b>Serial Number:</b>	28-7225054
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Tricycle	<b>Seats:</b>	4
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	Unknown	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	2050 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>		<b>Engines:</b>	1 Reciprocating
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>		<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	Lycoming
<b>ELT:</b>	Installed, activated, aided in locating accident	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	O-320
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	CALVIN J. SIPPOLA	<b>Rated Power:</b>	180 hp
<b>Operator:</b>	CALVIN J. SIPPOLA	<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:	PAT, 2190 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	37 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	1453 ADT	Direction from Accident Site:	30°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 7000 ft agl	Visibility	20 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 25000 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	10 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	200°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	22° C / 11° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	ANCHORAGE, AK (MRI)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	VFR
Destination:	FAIRBANKS, AK (FAI)	Type of Clearance:	VFR
Departure Time:	1238 ADT	Type of Airspace:	Class G

## Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	Unknown
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	Unknown
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	

## Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	MATTHEW L THOMAS	Report Date:	07/02/1999
Additional Participating Persons:	GERALD A MARTELLI; ANCHORAGE, AK KRIS WETHERELL; MONROE, 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 <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> .		

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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](#).