National Transportation Safety Board
Aviation Accident Data Summary

Location:	BELMONT¤, WI	**Accident Number:**	CHI92LA194
Date & Time:	07/02/1992, 2220 CDT	**Registration:**	N9735J
Aircraft:	PIPER PA-28-180	**Injuries:**	3 Minor, 2 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Analysis

THE PILOT DEPARTED AT NIGHT IN INSTRUMENT METEOROLOGICAL CONDITIONS WITHOUT A FLIGHT PLAN. ABOUT TEN MINUTES AFTER TAKEOFF, THE PILOT REALIZED WEATHER CONDITIONS WERE 'FAR POORER' THAN EXPECTED AND THE FOG WAS HAMPERING HIS VISION. HE CHOSE TO RETURN TO THE DEPARTURE AIRPORT, AND WAS IN A LEFT HAND TURN WHEN THE AIRPLANE IMPACTED TREES. THE PILOT STATED DUE TO THE POOR WEATHER HIS ATTENTION WAS DIVERTED FROM NAVIGATION. THE AIRPLANE HAD WANDERED SEVERAL MILES OFF COURSE, INTO AN AREA OF HIGHER TERRAIN. A POST-IMPACT GROUND FIRE ENSUED.

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:
THE PILOT'S POOR PLANNING/DECISION MAKING. RELATED FACTORS ARE THE LOW CEILINGS AND FOG, THE DARK NIGHT, THE PILOT'S INACCURATE WEATHER EVALUATION AND DIVERTED ATTENTION, AND THE PILOT'S FAILURE TO MAINTAIN CLEARANCE FROM THE HIGHER TERRAIN ENCOUNTERED.

Findings

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

Findings
1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - LOW CEILING
2. (F) WEATHER EVALUATION - INACCURATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (F) LIGHT CONDITION - DARK NIGHT
4. (C) PLANNING/DECISION - POOR - PILOT IN COMMAND
5. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - FOG
6. (F) VISUAL LOOKOUT - RESTRICTED - PILOT IN COMMAND

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

Findings
7. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - HIGH TERRAIN
8. FLIGHT/NAVIGATION INSTRUMENT(S) - NOT FOLLOWED - PILOT IN COMMAND
9. (F) DIVERTED ATTENTION - PILOT IN COMMAND
10. TERRAIN CONDITION - HIGH VEGETATION

Occurrence #3: FIRE
Phase of Operation: OTHER

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	**Age:**	33
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine Land	**Instrument Rating(s):**	Airplane
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	**Instructor Rating(s):**	None
Flight Time:	900 hours (Total, all aircraft), 880 hours (Total, this make and model), 880 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 50 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 15 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	PIPER	**Registration:**	N9735J
Model/Series:	PA-28-180 PA-28-180	**Engines:**	1 Reciprocating
Operator:	TIMBER CITY FLYERS, INC.	**Engine Manufacturer:**	LYCOMING
Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None	**Engine Model/Series:**	O-360
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Instrument Conditions	**Condition of Light:**	Night/Dark
Observation Facility, Elevation:	DBQ, 1076 ft msl	**Weather Information Source:**	Weather Observation Facility
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 200 ft agl	**Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:**	8 knots / , 250°
Temperature:	-18°C	**Visibility**	3 Miles
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	MINERAL POINT, WI (C32)	**Destination:**	MAQUOKETA, IA (OQW)

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	**Aircraft Damage:**	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	2 Minor, 2 None	**Aircraft Fire:**	On-Ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Explosion:**	None
Latitude, Longitude:			

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	JODI L REEVES	**Adopted Date:**	06/30/1993
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.ntsb.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.