



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	CORDELE, GA	Accident Number:	ATL91FA047
Date & Time:	02/02/1991, 1914 EST	Registration:	N9209P
Aircraft:	PIPER PA-24-260	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	3 Fatal

Flight Conducted Under: Part 91: General Aviation - Personal

Analysis

THE PILOT AND TWO PASSENGERS WERE FLYING TO AN AIRPORT TO PICK UP A FRIEND. NIGHT VMC PREVAILED. WITNESSES OBSERVED THE AIRPLANE FLYING AT ABOUT 300 FT AGL AT VARIOUS POSITIONS OVER THE CITY, VARYING HEADINGS, AND SOMETIMES CIRCLING. ONE WITNESS STATED THAT THE PILOT 'SEEMED LIKE HE DIDN'T KNOW WHERE HE WAS GOING.' THE AIRPLANE THEN PROCEEDED TOWARD THE MIDFIELD POINT OF THE AIRPORT ON A NORTHERLY HEADING. IT COLLIDED WITH PINE TREES, THEN FELL INTO THE ROOF OF A CHURCH LOCATED 150 FEET FARTHER NORTH. THE AIRCRAFT, AND CHURCH, WERE DESTROYED BY FIRE. THE FUEL SELECTOR VALVE WAS FOUND IN THE 'LEFT AUX' TANK POSITION; HOWEVER, AUX TANKS WERE TO BE USED IN LEVEL FLIGHT ONLY. ACTUATOR SETTINGS INDICATED THE GEAR WAS DOWN & THE FLAPS WERE UP. PROP SIGNATURES INDICATED PROP ROTATION IN A POWER PRODUCING MODE AT IMPACT. THE RUNWAY LIGHTS FOR RWY 9/27 WERE ON AT THE TIME, AND THE AIRCRAFT'S NORTHERLY HEADING WAS NOT ALIGNED WITH ANY RUNWAY. THE LOCATION OF THE AIRPORT DID NOT REQUIRE THE CITY TO BE OVERFLOWN.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: FAILURE OF THE PILOT TO ATTAIN PROPER RUNWAY ALIGNMENT AND TO MAINTAIN PROPER ALTITUDE. RELATED FACTORS WERE: DARKNESS AND THE PILOT BECOMING LOST/DISORIENTED.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT

Phase of Operation: APPROACH

Findings

1. (F) LIGHT CONDITION - DARK NIGHT
2. (F) BECAME LOST/DISORIENTED - INADVERTENT - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (C) PROPER ALIGNMENT - NOT ATTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. OBJECT - TREE(S)
5. (C) PROPER ALTITUDE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT

Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings

6. OBJECT - BUILDING(NONRESIDENTIAL)

Factual Information

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	60, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine Land; Single-engine Sea	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	Seatbelt
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	
Instructor Rating(s):		Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	03/02/1989
Occupational Pilot:		Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	775 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	PIPER	Registration:	N9209P
Model/Series:	PA-24-260 PA-24-260	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:		Serial Number:	24-4704
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	01/02/2000, Unknown	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	3100 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	LYCOMING
ELT:	Installed	Engine Model/Series:	IO-540-D4A5
Registered Owner:	CARTER, RICHARD C.	Rated Power:	260 hp
Operator:	CARTER, RICHARD C.	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Night/Dark
Observation Facility, Elevation:	ABY, 197 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	34 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	1948 EST	Direction from Accident Site:	220°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear / 0 ft agl	Visibility	15 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None / 0 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	6 knots / 1 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	10°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	16 °C / 11 °C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	LOCUST GROVE, GA (GA04)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	1830 EST	Type of Airspace:	

Airport Information

Airport:	CRISP-COUNTY CORDELE (02J)	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	308 ft	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	0	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	Traffic Pattern

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	2 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	On-Ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	On-Ground
Total Injuries:	3 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Ralph E Hicks, Jr.	Report Date:	02/08/1993
Additional Participating Persons:	PRESTON E HICKS; ATLANTA, GA GEORGE C JONES; COLLEGE PARK, GA JOHN J TREY; VANDALIA, OH ROBERT BOOB; VERO BEACH, FL		
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 pubinquiry@ntsb.gov , or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/ .		

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