



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Data Summary

Location:	LA JUNTA, CO	Accident Number:	DEN00LA002
Date & Time:	10/01/1999, 2006 MDT	Registration:	N6406P
Aircraft:	Piper PA-24-250	Injuries:	1 Serious, 1 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot and pilot-certificated passenger were on a return cross-country flight that originated from Washington, D.C., with a final destination of Lancaster, California. They departed Missouri earlier in the day, and had planned a stop in Colorado. While approaching Colorado's La Junta airport for landing, the aircraft encountered wind shifts, downdrafts and turbulent weather conditions. As the pilot turned onto final approach during one of several unsuccessful landing attempts, the aircraft impacted the ground at an elevation of 4,500 feet msl in dark night conditions.

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot-in-command's failure to maintain a proper altitude during final approach to landing, and his misjudgment of altitude clearances. Factors were the sudden windshift, downdraft and turbulent weather conditions, the dark night, and the pilot's lack of familiarity with the geographic area.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT ENCOUNTER WITH WEATHER
Phase of Operation: APPROACH - VFR PATTERN - FINAL APPROACH

Findings

1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - SUDDEN WINDSHIFT
2. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - DOWNDRAFT
3. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - TURBULENCE

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: APPROACH - VFR PATTERN - FINAL APPROACH

Findings

4. TERRAIN CONDITION - GRASS
5. PROPER ALTITUDE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
6. LACK OF FAMILIARITY WITH GEOGRAPHIC AREA - PILOT IN COMMAND
7. LIGHT CONDITION - DARK NIGHT
8. ALTITUDE/CLEARANCE - MISJUDGED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	53
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine Land	Instrument Rating(s):	None
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Instructor Rating(s):	None
Flight Time:	690 hours (Total, all aircraft), 286 hours (Total, this make and model), 690 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 34 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 28 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 10 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N6406P
Model/Series:	PA-24-250 PA-24-250	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Operator:	DANNY C. & RALPH C. OLSEN	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None	Engine Model/Series:	O-540
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Night/Dark
Observation Facility, Elevation:	LHX, 4238 ft msl	Weather Information Source:	Weather Observation Facility
Lowest Ceiling:	None / 0 ft agl	Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	25 knots / 32 knots, 20°
Temperature:	12° C	Visibility	10 Miles
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	FREDERICKTOWN, MO (H88)	Destination:	, CO (LHX)

Airport Information

Airport:	LA JUNTA MUNICIPAL (LHX)	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Runway Used:	8	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Length/Width:	6852 ft / 100 ft		

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	1 Serious	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Latitude, Longitude:			

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): B. BEACH SCOTT

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, or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at <http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/>.

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