



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	MILES CITY, MT	Accident Number:	DEN88FA001
Date & Time:	10/01/1987, 0730 MDT	Registration:	N1377A
Aircraft:	PIPER PA-18-125	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Fatal, 1 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Business		

Analysis

A CATTLE RANCHER WAS FLYING HIS AIRCRAFT LOOKING FOR STRAY CATTLE AND CHECKING THE CONDITION OF THE RANCH. HE WAS AT APPROXIMATELY 300 FEET AGL WHEN HE SPOTTED CATTLE THAT HAD STRAYED OFF THE RANCH. THE PILOT TURNED TO GET A BETTER VIEW OF THE CATTLE AND FLEW INTO A BOX CANYON. THE INVESTIGATION REVEALED THE AIRCRAFT IMPACTED THE GROUND IN A NEAR VERTICAL ATTITUDE AT THE FAR END OF THE BOX CANYON. NO PREIMPACT MALFUNCTIONS/FAILURES WERE FOUND.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

Findings

1. (C) IN-FLIGHT PLANNING/DECISION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - BLIND/BOX CANYON
3. (C) PROPER ALTITUDE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (C) STALL - INADVERTENT - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings

5. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - MOUNTAINOUS/HILLY

Factual Information

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	32, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine Land	Seat Occupied:	Front
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	Seatbelt
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	07/22/1987
Occupational Pilot:		Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	225 hours (Total, all aircraft), 15 hours (Total, this make and model), 185 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 15 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	PIPER	Registration:	N1377A
Model/Series:	PA-18-125 PA-18-125	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	18-1208
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	06/02/1987, Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1500 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	32 Hours	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	1360 Hours	Engine Manufacturer:	LYCOMING
ELT:	Installed, activated, aided in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	O-290-D
Registered Owner:	SMITH CATTLE, INC.	Rated Power:	125 hp
Operator:	SMITH CATTLE, INC.	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Dawn
Observation Facility, Elevation:	MLS, 2628 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	39 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	0531 MDT	Direction from Accident Site:	93°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 14000 ft agl	Visibility	30 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None / 0 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	6 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	280°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	9°C / -1°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:		Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	0604 MDT	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Wreckage and Impact Information

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

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	VERLIN B TRANTER	Report Date:	04/24/1989
Additional Participating Persons:	LEIGH ASKLAKSON; HELENA, MT		
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/ .		

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. A factual report that may be admissible under 49 U.S.C. § 1154(b) is available [here](#).