



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Data Summary

Location:	El Dorado, CA	Accident Number:	LAX02FA038
Date & Time:	12/02/2001, 1815 PST	Registration:	N6946P
Aircraft:	Piper PA-24-250	Injuries:	4 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The airplane collided with the ground in a steep nose down attitude at high speed. There were no known witnesses to the accident. No flight plan had been filed for the personal flight and no records were found of an FAA preflight weather briefing or en route communications with any FAA facility. The accident site is about 8 miles east of the flight's intended destination airport. Examination of available weather data disclosed that an unusually strong late fall weather system was affecting the general accident site area. Overcast clouds were banked over the Sierra Nevada foothills and consisted of a southwest-northeast oriented cloud band with scattered light rain showers present in the accident area. Cloud bases were probably 1,000 to 2,000 feet above ground level, and cloud tops were probably around 16,000 feet msl. Winds and temperatures at the accident airplane's estimated flight envelope of 3,000 to 4,500 feet msl were southwesterly at 30 knots and 34 to 41 degrees Fahrenheit, respectively. The freezing level in the accident area was about 5,000 feet msl with the possibility of moderate to severe mixed icing conditions above that altitude. The presence of a light rain shower near the accident site and an upslope flow condition indicated that super cooled large water droplets were likely present in the area. Occasional moderate turbulence was likely in the area with severe turbulence possible near convective activity. A deputy sheriff patrolling near the accident site reported that at the time of the accident there was heavy rain and wind. Local accident area residents reported that they were experiencing strong winds and heavy rain with lightning and thunder at the time of the accident. Examination of the wreckage disclosed no evidence of a preimpact mechanical malfunction or failure.

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: the pilot's intentional flight into adverse weather conditions and his subsequent failure to maintain aircraft control.

Findings

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

Findings

1. LIGHT CONDITION - DARK NIGHT
2. WEATHER CONDITION - LOW CEILING
3. WEATHER CONDITION - TURBULENCE
4. WEATHER CONDITION - RAIN
5. (C) FLIGHT INTO ADVERSE WEATHER - INTENTIONAL - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: CRUISE

Findings

6. (C) AIRCRAFT CONTROL - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings

7. TERRAIN CONDITION - GROUND

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	39
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine Land	Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Instructor Rating(s):	None
Flight Time:	703 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N6946P
Model/Series:	PA-24-250	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Operator:	Scott E. Mills	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:	Instrument Conditions	Condition of Light:	Night
Observation Facility, Elevation:	MHR	Weather Information Source:	Weather Observation Facility
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	11 knots / , 180°
Temperature:	9° C	Visibility	10 Miles
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	N. Las Vegas, NV (VGT)	Destination:	El Dorado, CA (O61)

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	3 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	On-Ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Latitude, Longitude:	38.604722, -120.850000		

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	GEORGE E PETERSON	Adopted Date:	04/28/2004
Investigation Docket:	NTSB accident and incident docket 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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