National Transportation Safety Board
Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	San Simeon, CA	**Accident Number:**	LAX02LA077
Date & Time:	02/03/2002, 1128 PST	**Registration:**	N34NL
Aircraft:	Beech T-34B/D-45	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Defining Event:		**Injuries:**	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The airplane lost engine power during cruise, made an emergency landing, and collided with a fence. The pilot conducted a preflight of the airplane and noted that the left and right fuel tanks were filled to the "caps." He noted no discrepancies with the airplane or fuel system during the preflight inspection. After flying for about 2 hours the airplane experienced a complete loss of engine power. While established on final for a road, he discovered that he was unable to slow down enough to avoid oncoming traffic and maneuvered the airplane to the right of the road. The left gear contacted the asphalt and the airplane continued through a cattle fence, collapsing the nose landing gear. U.S. Navy search and rescue personnel responded to the accident site, and noted that there was no fuel in the fuel tanks. The pilot did not have the fuel valve open during preflight. He was only able to get a small sample of fuel from the low point drain (LPD), which was the residual fuel in the lines from the previous flight. The pilot inadvertently locked the LPD in the up (open) position during preflight, which would result in fuel leaking from the airplane once he turned the fuel valve on.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: the pilot's inadequate preflight of the airplane in which he failed to close the fuel drain resulting in a fuel leak and fuel exhaustion.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER(TOTAL) - NONMECHANICAL
Phase of Operation: CRUISE - NORMAL

Findings
1. (C) FUEL SYSTEM,DRAIN - OPEN
2. (C) AIRCRAFT PREFLIGHT - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. FLUID,FUEL - LEAK
4. (C) FLUID,FUEL - EXHAUSTION

Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY DESCENT/LANDING

Occurrence #3: ON GROUND/WATER COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: LANDING - ROLL

Findings
5. TERRAIN CONDITION - ROUGH/UNEVEN
6. OBJECT - FENCE

Factual Information

On February 3, 2002, at 1128 Pacific standard time, a Beech T34B/D-45, N34NL, lost engine power during cruise and made an emergency landing in an open field near San Simeon, California. The airplane, owned by the NAS Lemoore Navy Flying Club and rented to the pilot, was being operated under the provisions of 14 CFR Part 91. The airplane sustained substantial damage after it collided with a fence. The private pilot, the sole occupant, was not injured. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed for the personal local area flight, and a visual flight rules (VFR) flight plan had been filed. The flight departed NAS Lemoore (NLC) at 1022, and was scheduled to terminate at NLC.

In the pilot's written statement to the National Transportation Safety Board, after arrival at the airport he conducted a preflight of the airplane about 0930. The preflight included a check of the fuel valve in the engine compartment. He noted that the safety wire was in place. He also checked the left and right fuel tanks and noted that both tanks were filled to the "caps." He noted no discrepancies with the airplane or fuel system during the preflight inspection.

After engine startup, the pilot contacted ground control and taxied to the active taxiway. He noted that the left magneto had a drop of 300 rpm. He conducted a 'burn-out' procedure and rechecked the magnetos. The rpm drop was within manufacturer's specifications. He then contacted the tower and received a takeoff clearance. The pilot stated that after he departed the class D airspace he went through the in-flight checks, and ensured that the oil pressure, fuel pressure, and power were within limits. He proceeded direct to Paso Robles airport and entered the pattern. He did one touch-and-go landing and then departed for the Morro Bay very high frequency omni-directional radio range (VOR). After reaching the Morro Bay VOR, he flew direct towards the Big Sur VOR. During the turn to the north for the Big Sur VOR he noted that the fuel gages "were a little erratic, but was not depending on them for a good 'read'."

The pilot stated that he continued the flight inland and was deciding on whether or not to fly back to Paso Robles when the airplane experienced a complete loss of engine power. He established the best glide speed and picked out Highway 1 as a place to land. He then attempted to restart the engine. The pilot setup on the downwind leg of the approach for the forced landing. While established on final for Highway 1, he was attempting to avoid traffic and decrease the airplane's airspeed for landing. He noted that he was not able to slow down enough to avoid oncoming traffic. He maneuvered the airplane to the right of the highway. The left gear contacted the asphalt and the airplane continued through a cattle fence. The nose landing gear collapsed, and the airplane came to rest on its nose.

U.S. Navy search and rescue personnel responded to the accident site, and noted that there was no fuel in the fuel tanks. They also indicated that they did not see or smell fuel on the ground or around the airplane.

A Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspector and the Navy inspected the airplane at the Navy's facilities in Lemoore on February 12, 2002. Visual examination of the airplane revealed no signs of fuel stains. The interior of the engine compartment was also free of visible fuel staining. The FAA inspector noted that the left and right fuel caps were in place with no indication of fuel staining.

Navy personnel conducted further inspection of the airplane. The Aviation Safety Officer

(ASO) reinterviewed the pilot. The pilot stated that during his preflight he had difficulty obtaining a proper fuel sample from the low point drain (LPD). He stated that the fuel valve was not open and that he was only able to obtain a small amount of fuel. The ASO noted that without the valve in the open position the sample from the LPD would have been residual fuel from the previous flight. The pilot indicated that he was satisfied with the fuel sample and closed the LPD panel and completed his preflight.

The ASO stated that the LPD is located under the fuselage behind the pilot's seat. He said that the pilot locked the LPD in the up (open) position, which would result in the fuel draining from the LPD during flight. From the pilot's seated position, the fuel leakage would not be visible.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	**Age:**	35, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine Land	**Seat Occupied:**	Front
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	**Restraint Used:**	Seatbelt, Shoulder harness
Instrument Rating(s):	None	**Second Pilot Present:**	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	**Toxicology Performed:**	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim.	**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	09/12/2001
Occupational Pilot:		**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	12/27/2001
Flight Time:	220 hours (Total, all aircraft), 13 hours (Total, this make and model), 122 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Beech	**Registration:**	N34NL
Model/Series:	T-34B/D-45	**Aircraft Category:**	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		**Amateur Built:**	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal; Utility	**Serial Number:**	BG139
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	**Seats:**	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	11/12/2001, Annual	**Certified Max Gross Wt.:**	2985 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		**Engines:**	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	8845 Hours as of last inspection	**Engine Manufacturer:**	Continental
ELT:	Installed, not activated	**Engine Model/Series:**	O-470
Registered Owner:	NAS Lemoore Navy Flying Club	**Rated Power:**	225
Operator:	NAS Lemoore Navy Flying Club	**Operating Certificate(s) Held:**	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	**Condition of Light:**	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	PRB, 836 ft msl	**Distance from Accident Site:**	26 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	1053 PST	**Direction from Accident Site:**	80°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	**Visibility**	10 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	**Visibility (RVR):**	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	3 knots /	**Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:**	/
Wind Direction:	320°	**Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:**	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.34 inches Hg	**Temperature/Dew Point:**	7°C / 3°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	Lemoore, CA (NLC)	**Type of Flight Plan Filed:**	None
Destination:	(NLC)	**Type of Clearance:**	None
Departure Time:	1022 PST	**Type of Airspace:**	Class G

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Fire:**	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Explosion:**	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	**Latitude, Longitude:**	36.000000, -119.000000

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	TEALEYE C CORNEJO	**Report Date:**	06/30/2004
Additional Participating Persons:	Margaret Fredoyz; Federal Aviation Administration; San Jose, CA		
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 pubinq@ntsb.gov, or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at http://dms.ntsb.gov/pubdms/.		

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