



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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<b>Location:</b>	TALKEETNA, AK	<b>Accident Number:</b>	ANC02LA067
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	07/02/2002, 1400 AKD	<b>Registration:</b>	N1129A
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Piper PA-18	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	2 None
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

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## Analysis

The private certificated pilot was searching for a lost hiker along a river drainage in a float-equipped airplane. The pilot said he was maneuvering between 500 to 1,000 feet above the ground and had encountered turbulence that was being produced in the canyons along the river. Just before the accident, the pilot said a strong gust of wind yawed the airplane sideways, and lifted the left wing. The airplane descended toward the ground. The pilot leveled the airplane just before the float assembly collided with alder bushes along the bank of the river. The airplane then did a cartwheel and came to rest facing opposite the initial direction of travel. The airplane received damage to the float assembly, fuselage, and wings.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's inadequate weather evaluation, which resulted in a turbulence encounter and subsequent collision with a river embankment during maneuvering flight. A contributing factor was the presence of terrain induced turbulence.

## Findings

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

### Findings

1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - TURBULENCE, TERRAIN INDUCED
2. (C) WEATHER EVALUATION - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND

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Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER  
Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

### Findings

3. TERRAIN CONDITION - DIRT BANK/RISING EMBANKMENT

## Factual Information

On July 2, 2002, about 1400 Alaska daylight time, a float-equipped Piper PA-18 airplane, N1129A, sustained substantial damage when it collided with an embankment after encountering turbulence while maneuvering along a river, about 15 miles northeast of Talkeetna, Alaska. The airplane was being operated as a visual flight rules (VFR,) local-area personal flight, when the accident occurred. The airplane was operated by the pilot. The private certificated pilot, and the sole passenger, were not injured. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed. The flight originated from Talkeetna about 1215.

During a telephone conversation with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigator-in-charge (IIC), on July 2, the pilot reported that he departed Christensen Lake, Talkeetna, and was searching for a lost hiker along the Sheep River, east of Talkeetna. The pilot said he was flying between 500 to 1,000 feet above the ground, and was returning to Talkeetna. During the flight, the pilot said he encountered moderate turbulence that was being produced in the canyons along the river. Just before the accident, the pilot said a strong gust of wind yawed the airplane sideways, and lifted the left wing. The airplane descended toward the ground. The pilot leveled the airplane just before the float assembly collided with alder bushes along the bank of the river. The airplane then did a cartwheel and came to rest facing opposite the initial direction of travel. The airplane received damage to the float assembly, fuselage, and wings.

At 1353, an Aviation Routine Weather Report (METAR) at Talkeetna was reporting in part: Wind, 200 degrees (true) at 10 knots; visibility, 10 statute miles; clouds and sky condition, 2,300 feet broken, 2,800 feet overcast; temperature, 61 degrees F; dew point, 48 degrees F; altimeter, 30.03 inHg.

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	48, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Single-engine Land; Single-engine Sea	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Front
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	Seatbelt, Shoulder harness
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	Airplane	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	No
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 2 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	03/06/2001
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>		<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	08/19/2001
<b>Flight Time:</b>	1750 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N1129A
Model/Series:	PA-18	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal; Utility	Serial Number:	18-722
Landing Gear Type:	Float	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	03/05/2002, Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1750 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	76 Hours	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	3391 Hours at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	LYCOMING
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	O-320-A2A
Registered Owner:	WILLIAM J. FITZGERALD	Rated Power:	150
Operator:	WILLIAM J. FITZGERALD	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	PATK, 358 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	15 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	1353 ADT	Direction from Accident Site:	225°
Lowest Cloud Condition:		Visibility	10 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 2300 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	10 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	176°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.03 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	16° C / 9° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	TALKEETNA, AK	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	1215 ADT	Type of Airspace:	Class E

## Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 None	Latitude, Longitude:	62.366111, -149.626389

## Administrative Information

**Investigator In Charge (IIC):** SCOTT ERICKSON **Report Date:** 04/01/2003

**Additional Participating Persons:** RICHARD MAHL; FAA-AL-ANC FSDO 03; ANCHORAGE, AK

**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](mailto: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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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](#).