



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Data Summary

<b>Location:</b>	Tajique, NM	<b>Accident Number:</b>	FTW03FA055
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	12/03/2002, 2035 MST	<b>Registration:</b>	N3855C
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Cessna 421C	<b>Injuries:</b>	1 Fatal
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 135: Air Taxi & Commuter - Non-scheduled		

## Analysis

Prior to departing on the first leg of the flight, the dispatcher advised the pilot that he needed him to check the weather. After advising the pilot that he would be flying an additional leg, the dispatcher again advised the pilot that he needed him to check the weather, which the pilot did, as observed by the dispatcher. After reaching 14,500 feet at 2028 the pilot contacted Albuquerque Approach Control, advising the controller that he had information "Yankee" and was requesting a lower altitude. The controller instructed the pilot to proceed via his own navigation and to descend at pilot's discretion. The pilot replied "Roger." From 2034 to 2041 the controller made four attempts to contact the pilot, each without success. At 2039 and 2042 the controller asked two other aircraft in the area to try establishing radio communication with the pilot; neither were successful. At 2033:19 the last radar return with altitude information was received from the aircraft, with a reported altitude of 10,200 feet MSL. A primary radar contact, with no transponder or altitude information, was received at 2033:32, 2.2 nautical miles southeast of the accident site, putting it on a straight line between the last radar contact and destination airport. The accident site was located at the 9,012 foot level of a mountain range, 19 nautical miles southeast of the destination airport. Post-accident examination revealed no anomalies with the airframe or engines which would have prevented normal operations. At 1956, the weather observation facility located at the destination airport reported a few clouds at 800 feet, scattered clouds at 2,500 feet, and overcast clouds at 4,200 feet. The remarks section stated rain ended at 35 minutes past the hour, and mountains obscured northeast to southeast. At 2024, the same weather facility reported scattered clouds at 600 feet and overcast clouds at 4,200 feet.

## Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's failure to maintain terrain clearance. Factors contributing to the accident were the high mountains, mountain obscuration, the dark night condition, and the pilot's improper in-flight planning/decision making.

## Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER  
Phase of Operation: DESCENT

### Findings

1. (C) CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (F) IN-FLIGHT PLANNING/DECISION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - OBSCURATION
4. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - MOUNTAINOUS/HILLY
5. (F) LIGHT CONDITION - DARK NIGHT

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Commercial	<b>Age:</b>	46
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land	<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	Airplane
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None
<b>Flight Time:</b>	2500 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Cessna	<b>Registration:</b>	N3855C
<b>Model/Series:</b>	421C	<b>Engines:</b>	2 Reciprocating
<b>Operator:</b>	Air Transport Inc.	<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	Continental
<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	On-demand Air Taxi (135)	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	GTSIO-520L
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 135: Air Taxi & Commuter - Non-scheduled		

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Visual Conditions	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Night/Dark
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>	ABQ, 5355 ft msl	<b>Weather Information Source:</b>	Weather Observation Facility
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	Overcast / 4200 ft agl	<b>Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:</b>	7 knots / , 350°
<b>Temperature:</b>	3° C	<b>Visibility</b>	10 Miles
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>			
<b>Departure Point:</b>	Alamogordo, NM (ALM)	<b>Destination:</b>	Albuquerque, NM (ABQ)

## Airport Information

<b>Airport:</b>	Albuquerque International Apt. (ABQ)	<b>Runway Surface Type:</b>	
<b>Runway Used:</b>	NA	<b>Runway Surface Condition:</b>	
<b>Runway Length/Width:</b>			

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	1 Fatal	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	None
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	34.758889, -106.407500		

## Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Thomas M Little

Adopted Date: 03/30/2004

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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