



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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<b>Location:</b>	Elbow Lake, MN	<b>Accident Number:</b>	CHI03LA242
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	08/02/2003, 0630 CDT	<b>Registration:</b>	NONE
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Teratorn	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	1 Fatal
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

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## Analysis

The unregistered two-place airplane was destroyed on impact with terrain. The non-instrument rated pilot was fatally injured. The accident pilot was told by his wife prior to the flight that the weather conditions at the destination were foggy. The accident pilot replied to his wife that he could see the tops of the trees "and he was going to fly low and follow the rail road tracks." The Sheriff's report stated the pilot's brother said that "it was too foggy to be flying. The only reason he was flying was to look for [the accident pilot,] his brother."

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's intentional flight into known fog and failure to maintain aircraft control during cruise flight. A factor was the fog, and the low altitude flight.

## Findings

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

### Findings

1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - FOG
2. (C) FLIGHT INTO ADVERSE WEATHER - INTENTIONAL - PILOT IN COMMAND

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

### Findings

3. AIRCRAFT CONTROL - NOT MAINTAINED
4. LOW ALTITUDE FLIGHT/MANEUVER

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

### Findings

5. TERRAIN CONDITION - GROUND

## Factual Information

### HISTORY OF FLIGHT

On August 2, 2003, about 0630 central daylight time, an unregistered Teratorn two-place airplane, piloted by a private pilot, was destroyed on impact with terrain about three quarters of a mile west of the Elbow Lake Municipal Airport (Y63), near Elbow Lake, Minnesota. The personal flight was operating under 14 CFR Part 91. Instrument meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the accident. No flight plan was on file. The pilot was fatally injured. The flight originated from a private airstrip near Elbow Lake, Minnesota, about 0600, and was en route to Y63 at the time of the accident.

The Grant County Sheriff's report stated that prior to the flight the pilot's wife told the accident pilot that the weather conditions at Elbow Lake Airport were foggy. The report said that the accident pilot replied that he could see the tops of the trees "and he was going to fly low and follow the rail road tracks into Elbow Lake."

The Grant County Sheriff's report stated:

[The accident pilot's brother] told me that he had flown from Fergus Falls to Elbow Lake this morning looking for his brother's plane which had not arrived at the Elbow Lake Airport. ... [He] then called [his brother's wife] and ... asked what direction [the accident pilot] was taking to get to the airport. [She] said that he was following the train tracks east that come from Wendell to Elbow Lake. [He] then flew over the railroad tracks and followed them east to Elbow Lake and found his brother's plane in the wheat field. ... [He] said that it was too foggy to be flying. The only reason he was flying was to look for his brother.

### PERSONNEL INFORMATION

The pilot held a private pilot certificate with a single-engine land airplane rating. His FAA third-class medical certificate was issued on December 26, 2002, with a limitation for corrective lenses. On his application for that flight physical, the pilot reported that he had accumulated 12 total flight hours. His pilot certificate was issued on April 23, 2003. On his application for that certificate, the pilot reported that he had accumulated 45.8 total flight hours of which 3 hours were listed as instrument flight time.

### AIRCRAFT INFORMATION

The accident airplane was an unregistered Teratorn, two-place airplane. The original kit manufacturer is no longer in business. The airplane's original kit builder could not be confirmed. The accident airplane was a single-engine, high-wing airplane. Its engine was a 64-horsepower Rotax 532 engine, serial number 3488536. The engine was shipped from its manufacturer in April of 1985 to Teratorn Aircraft. The propeller was a three-bladed, 66-inch

diameter, Warp Drive propeller. The propeller was shipped from its manufacturer on July 31, 1994.

#### METEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION

At 0555, the Fergus Falls Municipal Airport-Einar Mickelson Field (FFM), near Fergus Falls, Minnesota, about 15 miles and 330 degrees from the accident site, recorded weather was: Wind 340 degrees at 7 knots; visibility 1 1/4 statute miles; present weather mist; sky condition overcast 200 feet; temperature 16 degrees C; dew point 15 degrees C; altimeter 29.94 inches of mercury.

At 0615, the FFM recorded weather was: Wind 330 degrees at 7 knots; visibility 3/4 of a statute mile; present weather mist; sky condition overcast 200 feet; temperature 16 degrees C; dew point 15 degrees C; altimeter 29.94 inches of mercury.

At 0635, the FFM recorded weather was: Wind 350 degrees at 7 knots; visibility 1/4 of a statute mile; present weather fog; sky condition overcast 200 feet; temperature 16 degrees C; dew point 15 degrees C; altimeter 29.94 inches of mercury.

At 0655, the FFM recorded weather was: Wind 350 degrees at 7 knots; visibility 3/4 of a statute mile; present weather mist; sky condition overcast 200 feet; temperature 16 degrees C; dew point 15 degrees C; altimeter 29.95 inches of mercury.

#### WRECKAGE AND IMPACT INFORMATION

The Grant County Sheriff's report stated:

The nose of the aircraft was pushed back to the left side and the plastic door was in front of the aircraft about 15 feet. The motor appeared to have pushed forward and snapped off two of three propellers. The wings also had damage to the front of them. ...

There was a considerable amount of damage to the cockpit area of the aircraft and it appeared that the aircraft had nose dived directly into the ground, bounced back up into the air, and landed upright, approximately 10 yards away from an area where you could see the plane possibly hit.

#### MEDICAL AND PATHOLOGICAL INFORMATION

An autopsy was performed at the Department of Pathology, Lake Region Healthcare Corporation, in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, on August 2, 2003.

The FAA Civil Aeromedical Institute prepared a Final Forensic Toxicology Accident Report. The report was negative for the tests performed.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The FAA was a party to the investigation.

### Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	46, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Single-engine Land	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Unknown
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	Seatbelt
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	Yes
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 3 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim.	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	12/26/2002
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>		<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	46 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

### Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>		<b>Registration:</b>	NONE
<b>Model/Series:</b>	Teratorn	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Airplane
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	Yes
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>		<b>Serial Number:</b>	
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Tricycle	<b>Seats:</b>	2
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	Unknown	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>		<b>Engines:</b>	1 Reciprocating
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>		<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	Rotax
<b>ELT:</b>		<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	532
<b>Registered Owner:</b>		<b>Rated Power:</b>	64 hp
<b>Operator:</b>	Richard A. Johnson	<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Instrument Conditions	Condition of Light:	Dawn
Observation Facility, Elevation:	FFM, 1205 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	15 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	0635 CDT	Direction from Accident Site:	330°
Lowest Cloud Condition:		Visibility	0.25 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast / 200 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	7 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	350°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29.94 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	16° C / 15° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	Elbow Lake, MN (PVY)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	ELBOW LAKE, MN (Y63)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	0600 CDT	Type of Airspace:	Class G

## Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	45.986111, -95.991944

## Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Edward F Malinowski	Report Date:	06/30/2004
Additional Participating Persons:	John Mertens; Federal Aviation Administration; Minneapolis, MN		
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 <a href="mailto:pubinquiry@ntsb.gov">pubinquiry@ntsb.gov</a> , or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at <a href="http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/">http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/</a> .		

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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](#).