



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Data Summary

<b>Location:</b>	San Luis Obispo, CA	<b>Accident Number:</b>	LAX05FA255
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	08/01/2005, 2153 PDT	<b>Registration:</b>	N4401X
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Piper PA-28-151	<b>Injuries:</b>	1 Fatal
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General Aviation - Business		

## Analysis

While on the crosswind leg during initial climb, the pilot cruised into upsloping terrain about 0.9 miles from the runway. The pilot's day began when he departed his residence about 0700. Thereafter, he commuted to work, which involved flying a borrowed airplane to a neighboring city. Upon completing work, the pilot was dropped off at the airport. The pilot intended either to fly home or to the location where his next day's work was to be performed. He was due to report to work the following morning at 0730. It was a dark night, and an overcast ceiling existed at 800 feet above the ground. No moon or stars were visible from the airport. A hill was located about 1 mile northeast of the airport. The pilot departed using runway 11, made a left crosswind turn, and impacted the hill while climbing in controlled flight. Fire department personnel responding to the accident site said that the clouds were nearly at ground level and that the forward (horizontal) visibility was between 1/4- and 1/2-mile. The pilot had received his private pilot certificate the preceding month, at a total flight time of 69.6 hours, including 3.5 hours at night.

## Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's continued flight into instrument meteorological conditions, and his failure to maintain clearance from the rising hilly terrain. Contributing factors were the pilot's inexperience regarding flying during the dark, nighttime condition, and the low ceiling.

## Findings

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

### Findings

1. (F) LIGHT CONDITION - DARK NIGHT
  2. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - LOW CEILING
  3. (C) VFR FLIGHT INTO IMC - CONTINUED - PILOT IN COMMAND
  4. (F) LACK OF TOTAL EXPERIENCE IN TYPE OPERATION - PILOT IN COMMAND
- 

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER  
Phase of Operation: CLIMB - TO CRUISE

### Findings

5. TERRAIN CONDITION - MOUNTAINOUS/HILLY
6. (C) ALTITUDE/CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	44
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Single-engine Land	<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	None
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None
<b>Flight Time:</b>	70 hours (Total, all aircraft), 70 hours (Total, this make and model), 20 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Piper	<b>Registration:</b>	N4401X
<b>Model/Series:</b>	PA-28-151	<b>Engines:</b>	1 Reciprocating
<b>Operator:</b>	Herber J. Meeks	<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	Lycoming
<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	O-320-E3D
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General Aviation - Business		

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Instrument Conditions	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Night/Dark
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>	SBP, 212 ft msl	<b>Weather Information Source:</b>	Weather Observation Facility
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	Overcast / 800 ft agl	<b>Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:</b>	3 knots / , 120°
<b>Temperature:</b>	14° C	<b>Visibility</b>	10 Miles
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
<b>Departure Point:</b>	SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA (SBP)	<b>Destination:</b>	Not Determined

## Airport Information

<b>Airport:</b>	San Luis Obispo (SBP)	<b>Runway Surface Type:</b>	Asphalt
<b>Runway Used:</b>	11	<b>Runway Surface Condition:</b>	Dry
<b>Runway Length/Width:</b>	5300 ft / 150 ft		

## 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>	On-Ground
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	35.252778, -120.625000		

## Administrative Information

**Investigator In Charge (IIC):** Wayne Pollack

**Adopted Date:** 02/26/2007

**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/>.

---

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), established in 1967, is an independent federal agency mandated by Congress through the Independent Safety Board Act of 1974 to investigate transportation accidents, determine the probable causes of the accidents, issue safety recommendations, study transportation safety issues, and evaluate the safety effectiveness of government agencies involved in transportation. The NTSB makes public its actions and decisions through accident reports, safety studies, special investigation reports, safety recommendations, and statistical reviews.

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.