



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Data Summary

Location:	Walthourville, GA	Accident Number:	MIA08FA001
Date & Time:	10/03/2007, 1959 EDT	Registration:	N96HA
Aircraft:	Piper PA-28-181	Injuries:	2 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The non-instrument rated pilot landed at an intermediate airport before departing to his destination airport in night marginal VFR flight conditions. Prior to departure a passenger called a person at their destination and told them they were aware of the weather, and would arrive in about 2 hours. The pilot received an initial weather briefing before departing on his initial leg of the flight. The briefer encouraged the pilot to obtain an updated weather briefing due to changing weather conditions for both of his planned flight legs. There is no record that the pilot obtained an updated weather briefing. The pilot departed on the accident flight and was in cruise flight at 3,500 feet, using flight following services from approach control. As he neared the airport the controller informed the pilot that the airport was at his 12 o'clock position, 5 miles, and flight following was terminated. The pilot reported the airport was in sight, and initiated a right descending turn instead of continuing direct to the airport. There was no other radio communication with the pilot. The weather observation for the airport had overcast clouds at 2,200 feet, broken clouds at 1,000 feet, scattered clouds at 500 feet, and few clouds at 200 feet. Review of radar data revealed the airplane made several descending turns, with the last radar contact at 300 feet. The airplane collided with trees about 1 mile from the airport. Because of the clouds that had moved into the area, the pilot likely could not distinguish ground cues that would have helped him determine the airplane's attitude. Without an instrument rating, the pilot was unable to use his flight instruments to help him successfully orient and land the airplane. No anomalies were noted with the airframe, flight controls, flight instruments, engine assembly and accessories.

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:
The non-instrument rated pilot's loss of control at night in marginal night VFR operations due to spatial disorientation. A factor in the accident was the pilot's improper decision to continue the flight.

Findings

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

Findings

1. LIGHT CONDITION - DARK NIGHT
2. WEATHER CONDITION - CLOUDS

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

Findings

3. (F) IN-FLIGHT PLANNING/DECISION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (C) SPATIAL DISORIENTATION - PILOT IN COMMAND
5. (F) UPDATING OF RECORDED WEATHER INFORMATION - NOT OBTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	56
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine Land	Instrument Rating(s):	None
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Instructor Rating(s):	None
Flight Time:	238 hours (Total, all aircraft), 150 hours (Total, this make and model), 172 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 7 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N96HA
Model/Series:	PA-28-181	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Operator:	Om P. Rehil	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None	Engine Model/Series:	O-360-A4M
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Night/Dark
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KLHW, 45 ft msl	Weather Information Source:	Weather Observation Facility
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 1000 ft agl	Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	4 knots / , 40°
Temperature:	24° C	Visibility	10 Miles
Precipitation and Obscuration:	Light - Fog		
Departure Point:	Anderson, SC (KAND)	Destination:	Hinesville, GA (2J2)

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Latitude, Longitude:	31.780556, -81.647222		

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Carrol A Smith	Adopted Date:	02/28/2008
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.nts.gov/pubdms/ .		

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