National Transportation Safety Board
Aviation Accident Data Summary

Location:	Cabazon, CA	**Accident Number:**	LAX08FA058
Date & Time:	02/02/2008, 1340 PST	**Registration:**	N354TJ
Aircraft:	CESSNA 340A	**Injuries:**	4 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The airplane departed under daytime visual meteorological conditions on a cross-country flight from an airport on the east side of a mountain range to a destination on the west side of the mountains. The airplane, which had been receiving flight following, then collided with upsloping mountainous terrain in a mountain pass while in controlled flight after encountering instrument meteorological conditions. The controller terminated radar services due to anticipation of losing radar coverage within the mountainous pass area, and notified the pilot to contact the next sector once through the pass while staying northwest of an interstate highway due to opposing traffic on the south side of the highway. The pilot later contacted the controller asking if he still needed to remain on a northwesterly heading. The controller replied that he never assigned a northwesterly heading. No further radio communications were received from the accident airplane. Radar data revealed that while proceeding on a northeasterly course, the airplane climbed to an altitude of 6,400 feet mean sea level (msl). A few minutes later, the radar data showed the airplane turning to an easterly heading and initiating a climb to an altitude of 6,900 feet msl. The airplane then started descending in a right turn from 6,900 feet to 5,800 feet msl prior to it being lost from radar contact about 0.65 miles southeast of the accident site. A weather observation station located at the departure airport reported a scattered cloud layer at 10,000 feet above ground level (agl). A weather observation system located about 29 miles southwest of the accident site reported a broken cloud layer at 4,000 feet agl. A pilot, who was flying west bound at 8,500 feet through the same pass around the time of the accident, reported overcast cloud coverage in the area of the accident site that extended west of the mountains. The pilot stated that the ceiling was around 4,000 feet msl and the tops of the clouds were 7,000 feet msl or higher throughout the area. Postaccident examination of the airframe and both engines revealed no anomalies that would have precluded normal operation.

Flight Events

Enroute - VFR encounter with IMC
Enroute - Controlled flight into terr/obj (CFIT)

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:
The pilot's continued visual flight into instrument meteorological conditions and failure to maintain terrain clearance while en route. Contributing to the accident were clouds and mountainous terrain.

Findings

Personnel issues-Action/decision-Info processing/decision-Decision making/judgment-Pilot - C
Environmental issues-Conditions/weather/phenomena-Ceiling/visibility/precip-Below VFR minima-Decision related to condition - C
Environmental issues-Physical environment-Terrain-Mountainous/hilly terrain-

Response/compensation - C
Environmental issues-Conditions/weather/phenomena-Ceiling/visibility/precip-Clouds-Not specified - F
Environmental issues-Physical environment-Terrain-Mountainous/hilly terrain-Not specified - F

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	**Age:**	75
Airplane Rating(s):	Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land	**Instrument Rating(s):**	Airplane
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	**Instructor Rating(s):**	None
Flight Time:	5972 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Manufacturer:	CESSNA	**Registration:**	N354TJ
Model/Series:	340A	**Engines:**	2 Reciprocating
Operator:	Michael J. Bybyk	**Engine Manufacturer:**	Teledyne Continental
Air Carrier Operating Certificate:	None	**Engine Model/Series:**	TSIO-520 SER
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Observation Facility, Elevation:		**Weather Information Source:**	Witness
Conditions at Accident Site:	Instrument Conditions	**Lowest Ceiling:**	Overcast / 4000 ft agl
Condition of Light:	Day	**Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:**	8 knots, 320°
Temperature:	16°C / 2°C	**Visibility**	10 Miles
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Palm Springs, CA (UDD)	**Destination:**	Chino, CA (CNO)

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	**Aircraft Damage:**	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	3 Fatal	**Aircraft Fire:**	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Explosion:**	None

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Howard D Plagens	**Adopted Date:**	03/05/2009
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.ntsb.gov/pubdms/.		