



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	Koliganek, AK	Accident Number:	ANC08LA046
Date & Time:	04/01/2008, 1540 AKD	Registration:	N8327S
Aircraft:	PIPER PA-32	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Loss of visual reference	Injuries:	1 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 135: Air Taxi & Commuter - Non-scheduled		

Analysis

The pilot reported that he was in cruise flight about 700 feet agl over near featureless snow-covered terrain when he encounter lowering ceilings. He described the weather conditions as rapidly deteriorating. He began a turn to reverse direction, and the airplane collided with terrain. His destination, about 10 miles away, was reporting a visibility of 2 miles in mist, and a ceiling of 400 feet broken. The ceiling was variable between 200 to 900 feet. A low ceiling and snow-covered terrain likely produced flat lighting conditions, making visual reference to terrain, and determining height above the ground difficult.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's VFR flight into adverse weather conditions that resulted in a collision with snow-covered terrain during a turn to reverse direction. Factors contributing to the accident were low ceilings, flat lighting conditions, and the snow-covered terrain.

Findings

Personnel issues	Incorrect action selection - Pilot (Cause)
Environmental issues	Flat light - Effect on personnel (Factor)
	Snowy/icy terrain - Contributed to outcome (Factor)
	Low visibility - Contributed to outcome (Factor)

Factual Information

On April 1, 2008, about 1540 Alaska daylight time, a Piper PA-32 airplane, N8327S, sustained substantial damage when it collided with snow-covered terrain while in cruise flight, about 10 miles south-southwest of Koliganek, Alaska. The airplane was being operated as a visual flight rules (VFR) cross-country air taxi flight under Title 14, CFR Part 135, when the accident occurred. The airplane was operated as Flight 245, by Peninsula Airways Inc., Anchorage, Alaska. The commercial certificated pilot, the sole occupant, received minor injuries. Instrument meteorological conditions prevailed in the area of the accident. VFR company flight following procedures were in effect. The flight originated at the Dillingham Airport, Dillingham, Alaska, about 1510, and was en route to Koliganek, with cargo and mail.

During a telephone conversation with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigator-in-charge (IIC), on April 2, the director of operations for the operator reported that the pilot was on the first segment of his flight from Dillingham, then to Koliganek, then to New Stuyahok, Alaska, and return to Dillingham. The pilot did not arrive in Koliganek, and an emergency locator transmitter (ELT) signal was received from the airplane. The pilot was located by search and rescue personnel about 2040, and transported to Koliganek by snow machine.

In a written statement from the pilot on April 3, he reported that he was in cruise flight about 700 feet agl, and the visibility was good until about 20 miles from Koliganek. The weather began to deteriorate rapidly, and the pilot decided to turn around. The airplane then collided with terrain.

Personnel from the operator reported that when they arrived at the accident scene to begin recovery operations, they found that the airplane collided with almost featureless snow-covered terrain on a northwest heading. They reported the right main landing gear separated first, followed by the left main gear, followed by an impact that separated the right wing.

At 1540, a special observation at Koliganek was reporting in part: Wind, 130 degrees (true) at 15 knots; visibility, 2 statute miles in mist; clouds, 400 feet broken, 1,300 feet broken, 8,500 feet overcast; temperature, 34 degrees F; dew point, 32 degrees F; altimeter, 29.67 inHg. Remarks; ceiling variable from 200 to 900 feet.

History of Flight

Enroute-cruise	VFR encounter with IMC
Maneuvering	Loss of visual reference (Defining event) Controlled flight into terr/obj (CFIT)

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Flight Instructor; Commercial	Age:	52, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	Seatbelt, Shoulder harness
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane Single-engine	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 1 With Waivers/Limitations	Last Medical Exam:	02/15/2008
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	03/24/2008
Flight Time:	3669 hours (Total, all aircraft), 33 hours (Total, this make and model), 2440 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 33 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 33 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 3 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Manufacturer:	PIPER	Registration:	N8327S
Model/Series:	PA-32	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	32-8106039
Landing Gear Type:	Tricycle	Seats:	7
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	03/08/2008, AAIP	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	3600 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	84 Hours	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	15026 Hours	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, activated, aided in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	IO-540K
Registered Owner:	Peninsula Airways Inc.	Rated Power:	300 hp
Operator:	Peninsula Airways Inc.	Air Carrier Operating Certificate:	Commuter Air Carrier (135)
Operator Does Business As:		Operator Designator Code:	PNSA

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Observation Facility, Elevation:	PAJZ, 269 ft msl	Observation Time:	1540 ADT
Distance from Accident Site:	10 Nautical Miles	Condition of Light:	Day
Direction from Accident Site:	20°	Conditions at Accident Site:	Instrument Conditions
Lowest Cloud Condition:		Temperature/Dew Point:	1° C / 0° C
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 400 ft agl	Visibility	2 Miles
Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	15 knots, 130°	Visibility (RVR):	
Altimeter Setting:	29.67 inches Hg	Visibility (RVV):	
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	Dillingham, AK (PADL)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	Company VFR
Destination:	Koliganek, AK (PAJZ)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	1510 ADT	Type of Airspace:	

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Minor		

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Scott R Erickson	Adopted Date:	12/11/2008
Additional Participating Persons:	Patrick Sullivan; FAA-AL-ANC FSDO 03; Anchorage, AK		
Publish Date:	12/11/2008		
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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