



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Data Summary

Location:	Hungry Horse, MT	Accident Number:	WPR09FA176
Date & Time:	04/01/2009, 1630 MDT	Registration:	N2007U
Aircraft:	MAULE M-4-220C	Injuries:	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The private pilot departed for a short local flight while visual meteorological conditions existed in the immediate vicinity of the departure airport. He proceeded to climb to the northeast, through a mountain pass, and then to the south, paralleling the shore of a frozen, snow-covered reservoir. The flight continued for about 20 miles. Analysis of radar and recorded GPS data showed that the airplane then experienced large fluctuations in ground speed while still on the same approximate track. Shortly thereafter, the airplane began a 180-degree left turn and collided with the reservoir surface. GPS data, airplane instrumentation, and ground scars indicated that the airplane was in a descending left turn when it struck the ground. All major sections of airplane were accounted for at the accident site, and post accident examination of the engine and airframe revealed no obvious anomalies that would have precluded normal operation. Mountain obscuration and occasional precipitation were forecast for the area of the accident flight. Additionally, weather observation stations and local pilot reports indicated that moderate snow showers were in the vicinity of the site at the time of the accident. The white surface of the frozen lake, in conjunction with the snow and limited visibility, would have provided the pilot limited external visual references, and as such could have resulted in him becoming spatially disoriented or affected by a visual illusion. The pilot's logbooks revealed that he had a history of flying in marginal weather conditions, and had performed multiple Special VFR takeoffs and landings. The pilot did not possess an instrument rating.

Flight Events

Enroute - VFR encounter with IMC
Enroute - Loss of control in flight
Uncontrolled descent - Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's improper decision to continue flight into an area of reduced visibility and snow showers during cruise flight, which resulted in the pilot's spatial disorientation and subsequent loss of aircraft control.

Findings

Aircraft-Aircraft oper/perf/capability-Performance/control parameters-(general)-Not attained/maintained - C
Personnel issues-Action/decision-Info processing/decision-Decision making/judgment-Pilot - C
Personnel issues-Psychological-Perception/orientation/illu-Spatial disorientation-Pilot - C
Personnel issues-Experience/knowledge-Experience/qualifications-Total instrument experience-Pilot
Environmental issues-Conditions/weather/phenomena-Ceiling/visibility/precip-Snow-Decision related to condition - C

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	50
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine Land	Instrument Rating(s):	None
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Instructor Rating(s):	None
Flight Time:	609 hours (Total, all aircraft), 496 hours (Total, this make and model), 559 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 14 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 4 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 0 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Manufacturer:	MAULE	Registration:	N2007U
Model/Series:	M-4-220C	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Operator:	Hugh A. Rogers	Engine Manufacturer:	Franklin
Air Carrier Operating Certificate:	None	Engine Model/Series:	6A-350C1
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Observation Facility, Elevation:	GPI, 2977 ft msl	Weather Information Source:	Weather Observation Facility
Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 6500 ft agl
Condition of Light:	Day	Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	12 knots/ 20 knots, 250°
Temperature:	6°C / -7°C	Visibility	10 Miles
Precipitation and Obscuration:	Moderate - In the Vicinity - Showers - Snow		
Departure Point:	Kalispell, MT (GPI)	Destination:	Kalispell, MT (GPI)

Airport Information

Airport:	Glacier Park International (GPI)	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Runway Used:	20	Runway Surface Condition:	Unknown
Runway Length/Width:	9007 ft / 150 ft		

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

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Elliott Simpson

Adopted Date: 03/03/2010

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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