



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Data Summary

Location:	Benton, PA	Accident Number:	ERA11LA104
Date & Time:	01/02/2011, 1917 EST	Registration:	N42997
Aircraft:	PIPER PA-28-161	Injuries:	1 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Instructional		

Analysis

The instrument-rated pilot was on the return leg of a three-leg cross country flight at night when he encountered clouds in his path. He considered climbing above the clouds, but he was concerned that he would not be able to descend back down through them. He elected to descend below the clouds, and misjudged the distance between the clouds and the ground. The airplane collided with trees and terrain at an elevation of about 2,200 feet in a remote, wooded area. The airplane sustained substantial damage by impact forces and post-crash fire. The pilot reported he did not see the trees or the terrain prior to the collision. Additionally, he stated that there were no mechanical issues with the airplane during the flight.

Flight Events

Enroute-cruise - VFR encounter with IMC
Enroute-cruise - 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 failure to maintain clearance from terrain during the night flight.

Findings

Personnel issues-Action/decision-Action-Incorrect action selection-Pilot - C
Environmental issues-Conditions/weather/phenomena-Ceiling/visibility/precip-Clouds-Contributed to outcome - F

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	22
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine Land	Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Instructor Rating(s):	None
Flight Time:	170 hours (Total, all aircraft), 170 hours (Total, this make and model)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Manufacturer:	PIPER	Registration:	N42997
Model/Series:	PA-28-161	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Operator:	Tech Aviation Flight School	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
Air Carrier Operating Certificate:	None	Engine Model/Series:	O-320 SER
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Instructional		

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Observation Facility, Elevation:	AVP, 962 ft msl	Weather Information Source:	Weather Observation Facility
Conditions at Accident Site:	Instrument Conditions	Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 2600 ft agl
Condition of Light:	Night	Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	7 knots, 340°
Temperature:	2°C / -3°C	Visibility	10 Miles
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Williamsport, PA (IPT)	Destination:	Wilkes-Barre, PA (AVP)

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Serious	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	On-Ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Ralph E Hicks	Adopted Date:	07/12/2011
Investigation Docket:	http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/search/dockList.cfm?mKey=78084		

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