



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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<b>Location:</b>	Pascagoula, MS	<b>Accident Number:</b>	ERA16LA028
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	10/26/2015, 1237 CDT	<b>Registration:</b>	N817PR
<b>Aircraft:</b>	SCHUMACHER Lancair Super ES	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Defining Event:</b>	Windshear or thunderstorm	<b>Injuries:</b>	3 Fatal
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General Aviation - Business		

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## Analysis

The pilot of the experimental, amateur-built airplane departed on a visual flight rules cross-county flight toward an area of convective activity and instrument meteorological conditions. There was no record that the pilot obtained an official weather briefing for the flight. However, the wife of one of the passengers reported that, before takeoff, the pilot told her husband that he intended to fly along the coast to avoid "the worst of the weather," indicating that the pilot had at least some knowledge of the en route weather conditions. Overlaying the airplane's radar flight path on a weather surveillance radar image showed that the airplane flew along the leading edge of light intensity echoes and was approaching an area of heavy intensity echoes when radar contact was lost. The airplane's radar targets ended over the ocean.

Fragmented debris from the airplane was subsequently recovered from the water and surrounding beaches. Given the limited amount of wreckage and its severely fragmented condition, no useful information pertaining to the preimpact mechanical condition of the airplane could be obtained from the recovered wreckage. However, the fragmentation of the wreckage is consistent with the airplane impacting the water in an uncontrolled descent, and, based on the flight track and weather data, it is likely that the pilot lost control of the airplane after encountering convective shower activity.

Review of the pilot's personal medical records revealed a history of medical conditions and prescribed medications, some of which were potentially impairing, that were not reported to the Federal Aviation Administration during his most recent third-class medical certificate examination. However, because the pilot's body was not recovered, no autopsy or toxicology testing were performed, and it could not be determined whether the pilot's medical conditions or his use of impairing medications contributed to the accident.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:

The pilot's failure to maintain airplane control after encountering convective shower activity. Contributing to the accident was the pilot's decision to continue flight into an area of known adverse weather.

## Findings

<b>Aircraft</b>	Performance/control parameters - Not attained/maintained (Cause)
<b>Personnel issues</b>	Decision making/judgment - Pilot (Factor) Aircraft control - Pilot (Cause)
<b>Environmental issues</b>	Thunderstorm - Effect on operation (Cause)

## Factual Information

On October 26, 2015, about 1237 central daylight time, an experimental, amateur-built Lancair Super ES, N817PR, was destroyed when it impacted the Gulf Coast waters of the Mississippi Sound near Pascagoula, Mississippi. The bodies of the commercial pilot and two passengers were not recovered and are presumed fatally injured. The airplane was owned and operated by the pilot under the provisions of Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91. The airplane departed from Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport (GPT), Gulfport, Mississippi, about 1220, and was destined for Summerville Airport (DYB), Summerville, South Carolina. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the departure airport, and no flight plan had been filed.

According to information obtained from a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspector and witnesses, the airplane was based at Monroe Regional Airport (MLU), Monroe, Louisiana. In addition, the pilot rented a hangar for the airplane at South Arkansas Regional Airport, El Dorado, Arkansas. Earlier on the day of the accident, the pilot flew to Ruston, Louisiana (RSN) to pick up one passenger and then to GPT to pick up the second passenger. According to the wife of one of the passengers, the pilot was flying the passengers to South Carolina to attend a business meeting. Before departure from GPT, the pilot stated to air traffic controllers that he intended to take some pictures in the local area and then continue to "Daytona Beach." The controller subsequently stated "D-Y-B is that where you're going?" and the pilot replied "affirmative." The airplane departed from runway 14 at GPT, made a left turn to the northeast at the Gulfport shoreline, and climbed to an altitude of 2,000 ft mean sea level (msl). About 1226, the pilot requested and was approved to terminate air traffic control flight following. There were no further communications between the pilot and air traffic control.

After the pilot terminated flight following, the airplane's transponder code changed to 1200, and the pilot made a right turn to the southeast. The last recorded radar target with an associated altitude was at 1234:37, at an altitude of 2,800 ft msl. Additional primary radar targets consistent with the airplane continued to about 1237; they showed the airplane turn to the northeast and ended with the airplane located over the Mississippi Sound, about 10 miles south of the Trent Lott International Airport (PQL), Pascagoula, Mississippi. The airplane's estimated groundspeed over the last 45 seconds of the primary target data was about 160 knots.

Fragmented debris associated with the airplane was subsequently found on a beach located about 9 miles northwest of the last radar target and along additional coastal areas. The debris included the rudder and a substantial portion of the vertical stabilizer. A section of the empennage was located in the water about 3 miles northwest of the last radar target.

The recovered wreckage was severely fragmented, and significant portions of the airplane, including the engine and propeller were not recovered (see figure 1). The recovered debris was examined by an FAA inspector; however, given the limited wreckage and its condition, the inspector was not able to determine the preimpact mechanical condition of the airplane.



Figure 1. Airplane Wreckage in Hangar.

The registration number N817PR was visible on the recovered wreckage. A search of the FAA aircraft registry database revealed that the registration number N817PR was not assigned to any airplane. A pilot operating handbook with the registration number N808PX was located among the recovered debris. A representative from the pilot's family confirmed that the airplane had been previously registered as N808PX. FAA records revealed that N808PX was issued a special airworthiness certificate in the experimental category on October 9, 2003, and it was purchased by the pilot through a limited liability company in August 2006.

The four-seat, fixed-landing gear, composite airplane was equipped with a 310-horsepower Continental IO-550 engine. According to maintenance records, the airplane's most recent condition inspection was performed on March 17, 2015. At that time, the airplane had been operated for about 640 hours.

The weather reported at PQL at 1237 included wind from 110° at 15 knots with 25-knot gusts, visibility 4 statute miles in light rain and mist, scattered clouds at 800 ft above ground level (agl), ceiling broken at 1,200 ft agl, overcast at 2,100 ft agl, temperature 23°C, dew point 22°C, and an altimeter setting of 29.73 inches of mercury.

There were active weather advisories for convective activity and instrument meteorological conditions for the area around the airplane's last known position. The wife of one of the passengers reported that she spoke with her husband while the airplane was on the ground at GPT, and he told her that the pilot intended to fly along the coast to avoid "the worst of the weather."

Overlaying the airplane's flight track on a photograph of the Mobile, Alabama, weather surveillance radar at 1235 (see figure 2) shows that the airplane flew along the leading edge of echoes of 5 to 15 dBZ (light intensity echoes) and was approaching an area of echoes from 40 to 50 dBZ (heavy intensity echoes) when radar contact was lost.

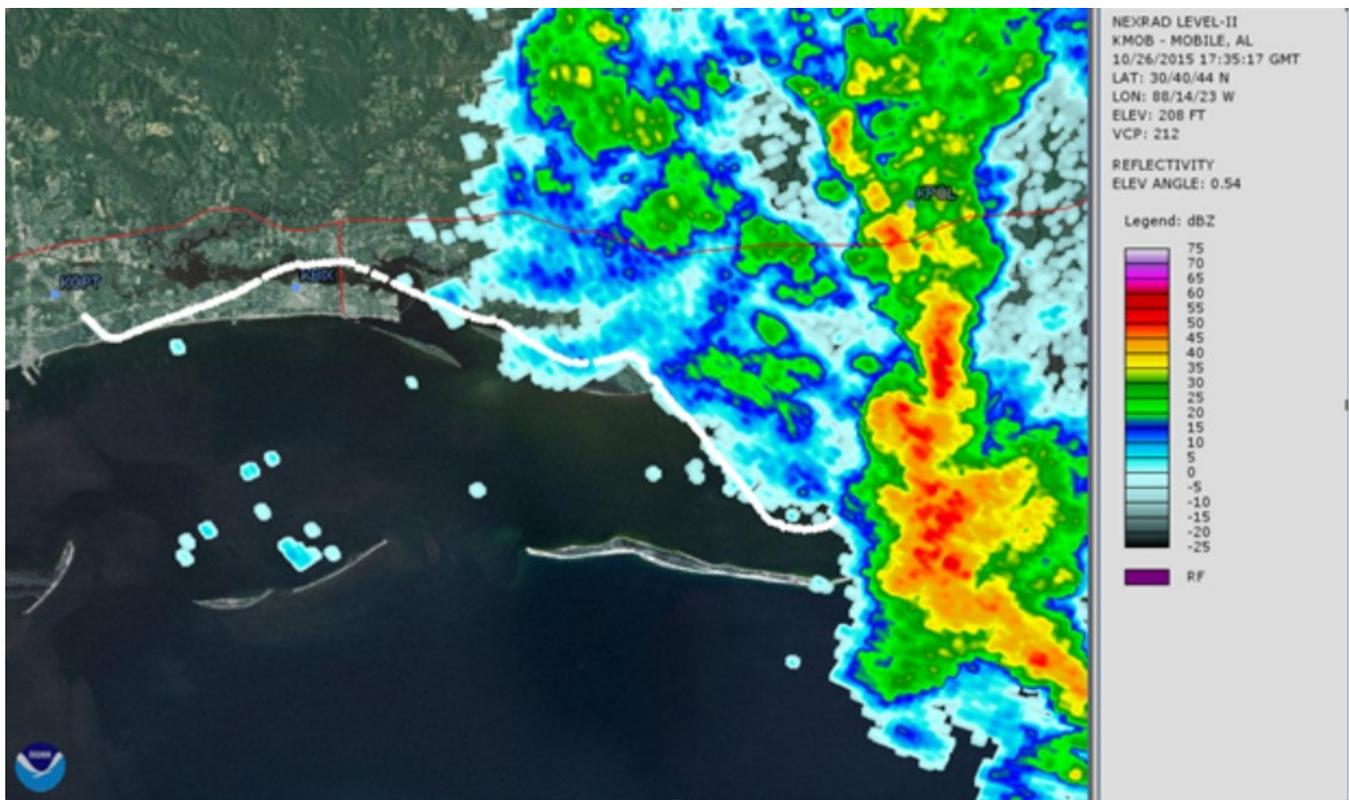


Figure 2. Weather Surveillance Radar with Radar Flight Track Overlay.

There was no record that the pilot obtained an official weather briefing for the accident flight. It could not be determined if the pilot obtained weather information from any additional sources.

The pilot held a commercial pilot certificate with ratings for airplane single-engine land and instrument airplane. The pilot's logbook was not located. An airplane flight log was recovered from a seatback that was found on a beach. Several of the pages were water damaged, and the most recent page showed 13 flights recorded by the pilot between June 28, 2015, and September 16, 2015, which totaled 57.3 flight hours. The pilot reported 4,441 hours of total flight experience on his most recent application for an FAA third-class medical certificate, which was issued on September 26, 2014. He reported no chronic medical conditions and no recent medications to the FAA at that time.

Review of personal medical records for the pilot revealed a history of rheumatoid arthritis, hypertension, high cholesterol, and a mood disorder. In 2013, he had a diagnosis of severe coronary artery disease that required stents to reopen the left anterior descending coronary artery. He had a narrowing of the opening to that vessel that was not amenable to stenting and had persistent angina. In addition, he had heartburn and bleeding in his gastrointestinal tract diagnosed in January 2015. At the time of the accident, his prescribed medications that are not generally considered impairing were miralax, naproxen, prednisone, ranexa, esomeprazole, losartan, metoprolol, isosorbide, atorvastatin, donepezil, lamotrigine, and leflunomide. Prescribed medications that are potentially impairing were carbamazepine, cyclobenzaprine,

tizanidine, clonazepam, and alprazolam. No autopsy or toxicology testing was performed as the pilot's body was not recovered.

## History of Flight

Prior to flight	Preflight or dispatch event
Enroute	Windshear or thunderstorm (Defining event) Loss of control in flight
Uncontrolled descent	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

## Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	68, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine Land	Seat Occupied:	Unknown
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	Unknown
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Without Waivers/Limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	09/26/2014
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	4441 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	SCHUMACHER	Registration:	N817PR
Model/Series:	Lancair Super ES	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	2003	Amateur Built:	Yes
Airworthiness Certificate:	Experimental	Serial Number:	ES106
Landing Gear Type:	Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	03/17/2015, Condition	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	3200 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	640 Hours as of last inspection	Engine Manufacturer:	Continental
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	IO-550-N10
Registered Owner:	Roofmasters LLC.	Rated Power:	310 hp
Operator:	On file	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Instrument Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	PQL, 17 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	9 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	1237 CDT	Direction from Accident Site:	0°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 800 ft agl	Visibility	4 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 1200 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	15 knots / 25 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/ Convective
Wind Direction:	110°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/ N/A
Altimeter Setting:	29.73 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	23° C / 22° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	Light - Mist; Light - Rain		
Departure Point:	Gulfport, MS (GPT)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	SUMMERVILLE, SC (DYB)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	1220 CDT	Type of Airspace:	Class G

## Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	2 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	3 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	30.305833, -88.530556 (est)

## Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Luke Schiada	Report Date:	06/12/2018
Additional Participating Persons:	Albert McCray; FAA FSDO; Pearl, MS		
Publish Date:	06/12/2018		
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.		
Investigation Docket:	<a href="http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/search/dockList.cfm?mKey=92242">http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/search/dockList.cfm?mKey=92242</a>		

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The Independent Safety Board Act, as codified at 49 U.S.C. Section 1154(b), precludes the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an incident or accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report. A factual report that may be admissible under 49 U.S.C. § 1154(b) is available [here](#).