



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	New Smyrna Beach, FL	Accident Number:	ERA17CA068
Date & Time:	12/12/2016, 1530 EST	Registration:	N776WM
Aircraft:	BEECH A36	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Loss of control in flight	Injuries:	1 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Analysis

Passengers reported that, during a winter flight, cold air was entering the airplane from the left side of the passenger cabin. Afterward, the pilot examined the area and discovered that there was a small gap under the emergency exit window that was allowing air to enter the cabin from outside the airplane. He opened the window and examined the rubber seal, which was intact. However, he could not tell if it was compressed or thinner than normal. He then closed and latched the window and inspected the latch with a flashlight to make sure it was latched. Because he was going to fly back to his home airport in similar winter conditions on the next flight, he took several rolled-up paper towels and placed them between the trim and the window to try and keep the cold air out and placed a strip of blue painter's tape on the outside of the lower portion of the window to further reduce the entry of cold air. He decided to fly the airplane once around the traffic pattern before fueling up for his return flight. After takeoff and while on the downwind leg of the traffic pattern at 800 ft, he suddenly heard a "whoosh" behind his seat. Instead of landing and checking to see what happened, he checked for other traffic, turned on the autopilot, in heading and altitude mode, then reached around behind him to shut and latch the window, which had opened 2 to 3 inches. Seconds later, after turning back around to his normal seated position, he heard a loud "pop" and turned around and saw that the window had opened completely. Given that he was afraid it would come off the airplane and strike the tail, he reached back again and pulled the window down. The pilot reported that he must have "bumped" the autopilot off while he was doing this, because when he looked forward to check for traffic, he noticed that the airplane was approaching the ground. He then banked left and right to determine his location and spot any obstacles, raised the nose, and added power to climb. He then noticed that there were power lines slightly higher than his altitude directly in front of him, and rather than risk a possible stall close to the ground by pulling back suddenly, he lowered the nose and "put" the airplane on the ground. The airplane then struck trees, and a fire ensued, which resulted in substantial damage to the airframe. Examination of the emergency exit window by a Federal Aviation Administration inspector revealed that the paper towels the pilot inserted in the gap between the window and the airframe were interfering with the window's latching mechanism.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

The pilot's inappropriate response to an emergency exit window opening in flight, which resulted in a loss of control, precautionary off-airport landing, and subsequent impact with trees. Contributing to the accident was the pilot's improper repair of the emergency exit window before the flight.

Findings

Aircraft	Emergency exit - Incorrect service/maintenance (Factor) Altitude - Not attained/maintained
Personnel issues	Incorrect action performance - Pilot (Cause) Use of equip/system - Pilot (Cause) Aircraft control - Pilot (Cause) Repair - Pilot (Factor)
Environmental issues	Tree(s) - Contributed to outcome

Factual Information

History of Flight

Prior to flight	Miscellaneous/other
Approach-VFR pattern downwind	Miscellaneous/other Loss of control in flight (Defining event)
Emergency descent	Off-field or emergency landing
Landing	Off-field or emergency landing
Landing-landing roll	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)
Post-impact	Fire/smoke (post-impact)

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Airline Transport; Commercial	Age:	61, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane Multi-engine; Airplane Single-engine; Instrument Airplane	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 1 With Waivers/Limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	11/10/2016
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	11/04/2016
Flight Time:	15881 hours (Total, all aircraft), 173 hours (Total, this make and model), 13000 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 116 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 30 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	BEECH	Registration:	N776WM
Model/Series:	A36 UNDESIGNAT	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	1983	Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Utility	Serial Number:	E-2088
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	6
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	02/17/2016, Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	4003 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	130 Hours	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	3451 Hours at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	Continental
ELT:	C126 installed, activated, did not aid in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	IO-550-B
Registered Owner:	On file	Rated Power:	300 hp
Operator:	On file	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	EVV, 10 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	5 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	1550 EST	Direction from Accident Site:	90°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 2500 ft agl	Visibility	10 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	10 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/ None
Wind Direction:	270°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/ N/A
Altimeter Setting:	30.06 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	26° C / 19° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	New Smyrna Beach, FL (7FL6)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	New Smyrna Beach, FL (7FL6)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	1520 EST	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	SPRUCE CREEK (7FL6)	Runway Surface Type:	N/A
Airport Elevation:	23 ft	Runway Surface Condition:	Unknown
Runway Used:	N/A	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	None

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	On-Ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Minor	Latitude, Longitude:	29.051944, -81.035278 (est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Todd G Gunther	Report Date:	08/22/2017
Additional Participating Persons:	Keith Owens; FAA/FSDO; Orlando, FL		
Publish Date:	08/22/2017		
Note:	This accident report documents the factual circumstances of this accident as described to the NTSB.		
Investigation Docket:	http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/search/dockList.cfm?mKey=94497		

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