



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	Vicksburg, MI	Accident Number:	CEN17LA135
Date & Time:	03/20/2017, 1644 CDT	Registration:	N2007B
Aircraft:	LUSCOMBE 8F	Aircraft Damage:	None
Defining Event:	AC/prop/rotor contact w person	Injuries:	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The commercial pilot was found lying on the ground under the nose of the airplane with a fatal head injury from a propeller strike. Normal engine start for this airplane required hand propping the engine. The airplane was found with the left wheel chocked, and the magneto, throttle control, primer, and fuel tank selector settings as expected for an engine start. It is likely that, during hand propping, the pilot inadvertently entered the path of the propeller. The Federal Aviation Administration advises pilots that hand propping should only be attempted with two properly trained people, and the pilot was alone when he was fatally injured.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

The pilot's inadvertent contact with the propeller while hand propping the engine, which resulted in a fatal injury.

Findings

Personnel issues	Incorrect action performance - Pilot (Cause) Task allocation - Pilot (Factor)
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Factual Information

On March 20, 2017, about 1644 central daylight time, the pilot of a Luscombe 8F, N2007B, was struck by the airplane's propeller as he attempted an engine start at Thrall Lake Airport (7MI3), Vicksburg, Michigan. The commercial pilot was fatally injured, and the airplane did not sustain damage. The airplane was registered to a private individual and operated by the pilot under the provisions of Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 as a personal flight. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed for the flight that was originating when the accident occurred, and no flight plan was filed.

According to the local police report, on the afternoon of the day of the accident, the pilot's wife called a friend of the pilot to inquire about the whereabouts of her husband. After attempting to contact the missing pilot, the friend drove to the airport where he observed the pilot lying on the grass under the nose of the airplane with a fatal head injury. The friend reported the accident to the police about 1844.

The airport owner responded to the airport at the request of the police; he thought the pilot was attempting to start the airplane by hand propping it when he was injured. The magneto switch was in the "Both" position; the throttle was at idle; the primer was in the unlocked position; and the fuel tank selector "was in the 'ON' position." Additionally, the owner stated that it appeared that the pilot was intending to fly the airplane given that the airplane was refueled, and the left tire was chocked as the pilot always did when preparing for a flight. According to the airport owner, the accident occurred after his employees left the airport about 1600.

The owner of the airplane stated that the pilot had been flying the airplane for about 15 years. He believed that the pilot "had extensive knowledge of the use and precautionary measures needed" to hand prop the engine, which was the normal starting procedure for the airplane. According to the owner, there were no known malfunctions or failures with the propeller, airframe, or engine that would have precluded normal operation.

The Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) *Airplane Flying Handbook* states that hand propping an airplane "is a critical procedure never [to] be attempted alone. And propping should only be attempted when two properly trained people, both familiar and experienced with the airplane and hand propping techniques, are available to perform the procedure." The handbook describes the recommended procedure and communication/commands to be used when hand propping.

The Department of Pathology, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, performed an autopsy of the pilot and determined that the cause of death was craniocerebral injuries. The FAA Bioaeronautical Sciences Research Laboratory, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, performed toxicology testing on specimens from the pilot. The toxicology results were negative for ethanol and drugs.

History of Flight

Prior to flight AC/prop/rotor contact w person (Defining event)

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	52
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine Land	Seat Occupied:	None
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Balloon	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 3 With Waivers/Limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	05/20/2009
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	1180 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	LUSCOMBE	Registration:	N2007B
Model/Series:	8F E	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	1948	Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	6434
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:		Certified Max Gross Wt.:	3086 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Continental
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	C-90-18F
Registered Owner:	VAN LINDER RICHARD A	Rated Power:	
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:	KAZO, 868 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	7 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	1953 UTC	Direction from Accident Site:	348°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 2600 ft agl	Visibility	10 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:		Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	6 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/ None
Wind Direction:	140°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/ N/A
Altimeter Setting:	30.3 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	7°C / -1°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Vicksburg, MI (7MI3)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	EDT	Type of Airspace:	

Airport Information

Airport:	THRALL LAKE (7MI3)	Runway Surface Type:	N/A
Airport Elevation:	850 ft	Runway Surface Condition:	
Runway Used:	N/A	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	None

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	None
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	42.116667, -85.516667 (est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Courtney Liedler	Report Date:	10/01/2018
Additional Participating Persons:	Steven Betzer; FAA; Grand Rapids, MI		
Publish Date:	10/01/2018		
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.		
Investigation Docket:	http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/search/dockList.cfm?mKey=94894		

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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](#).