



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Preliminary Report

Location:	Westhampton Beach, NY	Accident Number:	ERA19LA012
Date & Time:	10/13/2018, 1100 EDT	Registration:	N593MS
Aircraft:	Piper PA34	Injuries:	3 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Instructional		

On October 13, 2018, about 1100 eastern daylight time, a Piper PA-34-200T airplane, N593MS, was substantially damaged when it experienced an in-flight breakup and impacted the Atlantic Ocean near Westhampton Beach, New York. The flight instructor, the private pilot receiving instruction, and a passenger were fatally injured. The airplane was owned by the instructor and operated under the provisions of Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91. Instrument meteorological conditions (IMC) prevailed along the route of flight, and no flight plan was filed for the instructional flight, which originated from Danbury Municipal Airport (DXR), Danbury, Connecticut, about 1025 and was en route to Charleston Executive Airport (JZI), Charleston, South Carolina.

Preliminary voice communication and radar information from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) revealed that, after contacting New York TRACON shortly after takeoff from DXR, the pilot requested visual flight rules (VFR) flight following and indicated a planned climb to 8,500 ft mean sea level (msl); however, the airplane continued to climb and was transferred to Boston Air Route Traffic Control Center after climbing through 12,900 ft msl. As the airplane climbed through 15,700 ft msl, the controller advised the pilot that other aircraft in the area were reporting IMC and asked the pilot to confirm that he was in visual meteorological conditions (VMC). The pilot responded that they were "trying to maintain VMC" and that the attitude indicator was "unreliable."

The controller declared an emergency on behalf of the airplane, then suggested a heading of 300° toward Westchester County Airport (HPN), which was reporting VFR conditions. The pilot then asked the controller for the height of the cloud tops, and the controller replied that the last reports were at 19,000 ft. The pilot subsequently replied that the airplane would be climbing to 19,000 ft. As the airplane continued on a southeasterly heading, the pilot stated to the controller that the airplane was "VFR on top," and that he would not be able to descend below the clouds. The pilot requested vectors to areas that were reported clear, and the controller instructed the airplane to turn west, though the airplane continued southeast. About 2 minutes later, after the controller repeated the instruction to turn west, the airplane entered a figure-eight turn and began to descend rapidly. Radio and radar contact was lost shortly thereafter.

A witness near the accident site reported seeing the airplane "nose dive" from out of the clouds and into the ocean after hearing the engine "throttle up severely and wind back down" several times. A second witness stated that the airplane sounded "as if it were a stunt plane doing spins (pitch changing)" and then heard a "pop" and saw two large pieces of the airplane descending from the sky.

The instructor held a flight instructor certificate with ratings for airplane single- and multiengine, and instrument airplane. He also held an airline transport pilot certificate with a rating for airplane single engine land, with commercial privileges for airplane multi-engine land and single engine sea. His most recent FAA third-class medical certificate was issued July 18, 2018, at which time he reported 4,000 total hours of flight experience.

The pilot receiving instruction held a private pilot certificate with a rating for airplane single engine land. His most recent FAA third-class medical certificate was issued August 27, 1986, at which time he reported no flight experience.

The airplane came to rest in 20 ft of water on the ocean floor. A portion of the right wing was recovered floating above the airplane about 1/2 mile offshore.

At 1053, the reported weather at DXR included 10 statute miles visibility, light rain, wind from 270° at 5 knots, a broken cloud layer at 4,500 ft, and an overcast layer at 5,500 ft. The temperature was 7°C, the dew point was 6°C, and the altimeter setting was 29.87 inches of mercury. The 1053 reported weather at Francis S Gabreski Airport (FOK), Westhampton Beach, New York, about 3 nautical miles north of the accident site, included 10 statute miles visibility, light rain, wind from 300° at 7 knots, a broken cloud layer at 4,600 ft, and solid overcast at 5,500 ft. The temperature was 9°C, the dew point was 7°C, and the altimeter setting was 29.87 inches of mercury.

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N593MS
Model/Series:	PA34 200T	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Amateur Built:	No		
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:	KFOK, 66 ft msl	Observation Time:	1453 UTC
Distance from Accident Site:	3 Nautical Miles	Temperature/Dew Point:	9° C / 7° C
Lowest Cloud Condition:		Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	7 knots / , 300°
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 4600 ft agl	Visibility:	10 Miles
Altimeter Setting:	29.87 inches Hg	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Departure Point:	Danbury, CT (DXR)	Destination:	Charleston, SC (JZI)

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	2 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	3 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	40.798611, -72.612500 (est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Lynn Spencer
Additional Participating Persons:	Matthew Cady; FAA; Farmingdale, NY
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.