



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Preliminary Report

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<b>Location:</b>	Farmington, NM	<b>Accident Number:</b>	WPR19FA103
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	03/31/2019, 1439 MDT	<b>Registration:</b>	N173CT
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Cirrus SR22	<b>Injuries:</b>	1 Fatal
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

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On March 31, 2019, about 1439 mountain daylight time, a Cirrus SR-22 airplane, N173CT, collided with terrain near Farmington, New Mexico. The private pilot sustained fatal injuries, and the airplane was destroyed. The airplane was registered to Casey's Aircooled Engine LLC., and operated by the pilot under the provisions of Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 as a personal flight. Marginal visual flight rules (VFR) weather conditions prevailed at the accident site, and a VFR flight plan had been filed. The cross-country flight departed Cal Black Memorial Airport (U96), Halls Crossing, Utah, about 1345 with a planned destination of Big Spring Mc Mahon-Wrinkle Airport (BPG), Big Spring, Texas.

According to the pilot's family, he had flown from his home base in Big Spring on March 29, and had spent the weekend in the Lake Powell, Utah area. He had flown the route at least a dozen times before, and was familiar with the terrain.

Preliminary Federal Aviation Administration radar data for the day of the accident revealed a target that was believed to be the accident airplane departing the Halls Crossing area at 1351, and climbing on an eastbound track. About that time, while the target was climbing out of a transponder-reported altitude of 9,125 ft, the accident pilot made radio contact with Cedar City Flight Service Station to activate his VFR flight plan. During that communication exchange the briefer asked the pilot if he had the Airmen's Meteorological Information (AIRMET) for icing and mountain obscuration for the planned route of flight, to which the pilot reported that he did.

About 1400, the radar target had reached 14,000 ft, and about that same time the pilot made a call to the Denver Air Route Traffic Control Center (ZDV), requesting VFR flight following. The controller accepted the request, and issued the airplane a discrete transponder code. Three minutes later, with the same, previously unidentified radar target about 30 miles southeast of U96, and at 15,000 ft, the target was positively identified as the accident airplane. The controller advised the pilot that he had established radar contact, and provided the pilot with the altimeter setting for Cortez Municipal Airport (CEZ), Cortez, Colorado.

By 1409, the airplane had reached its highest altitude of 17,300 ft, and was about 50 nautical miles southeast of U96. A few minutes later, the target turned left, and began to track east. For

the next 7 minutes its track began to slowly transition back to the southeast, after which the pilot was provided and acknowledged a frequency change by the ZDV controller.

At 1428 the airplane was about 24 miles southwest of Farmington Airport (FMN), and the controller provided the pilot with the FMN altimeter setting. About that time, the airplane began descending, until at 1435, it had progressed another 24 miles, and descended to 9,300 ft.

The controller then provided the pilot with the frequency for Albuquerque Air Route Traffic Control Center (ZAB), and the pilot read it back correctly. No other radio transmissions were received by controllers from either ZAB or ZDV, and at 1438:10, the airplane had descended to 8,575 ft, and began a descending right turn. The radius of the turn was about 3,200 ft, and the last recorded radar return from the airplane occurred 16 seconds later, with the airplane at 6,850 ft, and on a southbound track.

Controllers from both ZDV and ZAB attempted to establish communications with the pilot. No responses were received, and an Alert Notice (ALNOT) was issued at 1512.

A search and rescue mission was conducted by the Civil Air Patrol and the New Mexico State Police, and the airplane wreckage was discovered about 1700.

The wreckage was located in flat high desert terrain, at an elevation of about 6,185 ft, 450ft southwest of the last recorded radar target, and 30 miles south of FMN.

The first identified point of impact was a 4-ft-deep by 10-ft-wide crater which contained the nose landing gear assembly, two propeller blades, and fragmented engine and airframe components. Two matching linear impact marks, the total length of which corresponded to the airplane's wingspan, emanated from the crater on a north-south heading. The right wingtip and green navigation lens fragments were found at the tip of the northern mark, and red navigation lens fragments were located at the tip of the southern mark.

The debris field was 450 ft long, on a heading of about 210° true (See Figure 1). The engine came to rest about 30 ft beyond the crater, and the remainder of the debris was composed of fragmented pieces of composite main cabin and wing structure, fanned out to a width of about 100 ft. The aluminum ailerons, elevators, and flaps were crushed and distributed throughout the debris field, and the farthest components were the left forward seat and a wing fuel cap.

The rocket-powered airframe parachute was located in the center of the debris field. The harness cables remained attached to their respective airframe fittings, and the top of the parachute canopy remained folded evenly along its pleats, and had not unfurled. Although the canopy lines had extended to their full length, the solid-fuel rocket motor remained attached to the parachute assembly and had not been expended. These findings were consistent with the parachute system not having been activated in flight.

Officers from the New Mexico State Police observed a storm passing through the high desert area south of Farmington on the afternoon of the accident. A Bureau of Land Management Law Enforcement officer who responded to the accident site that day, stated that upon his arrival

skies were clear, but the ground was wet with rain from a shower that had passed through the area a few hours prior.



Figure 1 – Accident Site Viewed to the West

### Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Cirrus	Registration:	N173CT
Model/Series:	SR22 Undesignat	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:	
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KFMN, 5502 ft msl	Observation Time:	2053 UTC
Distance from Accident Site:	33 Nautical Miles	Temperature/Dew Point:	9°C / -3°C
Lowest Cloud Condition:		Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	6 knots / , 50°
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 4000 ft agl	Visibility:	10 Miles
Altimeter Setting:	30.12 inches Hg	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	VFR
Departure Point:	Halls Crossing, UT (U96)	Destination:	Big Spring, TX (BPG)

## Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	36.218333, -108.016389

## Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Eliott Simpson
Additional Participating Persons:	Vernon Rockett; Federal Aviation Administration FSDO; Albuquerque, NM Michael H Council; Continental Motors; Mobile, AL Brannon Mayer; Cirrus Aircraft; Duluth, MN
Note:	The NTSB traveled to the scene of this accident.