



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	Beluga, AK	Accident Number:	GAA19CA521
Date & Time:	09/01/2019, 1620 AKD	Registration:	N655HE
Aircraft:	PIPER PA18	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot of the tailwheel- and tundra tire-equipped airplane reported that, during takeoff from an off-airport field, the airplane climbed to about 15 to 20 ft above ground level but then began to descend. He reported that a wind gust "pushed" the airplane down. He then verified that the engine was at full power and attempted to climb, but the left wheel struck the ground, and the airplane then veered left and came to rest in a ditch.

The airplane sustained substantial damage to the fuselage and both wings.

The pilot reported that there were no preaccident mechanical failures or malfunctions with the airplane that would have precluded normal operation.

The pilot reported that the wind was light and variable, gusting to between 8 and 10 knots.

The pilot added that, when the airplane encountered the wind gust, the notch of flaps he was using "dropped out." After verifying that the engine was at full power, he attempted to "grab [the] notch of flaps but [he] wasn't fast enough."

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 an adequate climb rate during takeoff in gusting wind conditions, which resulted in an uncontrolled descent.

Findings

Aircraft	Climb rate - Not attained/maintained (Cause)
Personnel issues	Aircraft control - Pilot (Cause)
Environmental issues	Gusts - Effect on operation

Factual Information

History of Flight

Takeoff	Other weather encounter
Uncontrolled descent	Attempted remediation/recovery Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	30, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine Land	Seat Occupied:	Center
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 1 Without Waivers/Limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	03/02/2018
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	01/26/2019
Flight Time:	(Estimated) 227 hours (Total, all aircraft), 227 hours (Total, this make and model), 186 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 64 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 33 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	PIPER	Registration:	N655HE
Model/Series:	PA18 AS125	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	1952	Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	18-1740
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	12/27/2018, Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2000 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	4619.6 Hours as of last inspection	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, activated, aided in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	O-320-A2D
Registered Owner:	On file	Rated Power:	150 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:		Distance from Accident Site:	
Observation Time:		Direction from Accident Site:	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered	Visibility	7 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:		Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	Light and Variable / 10 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	None / None
Wind Direction:		Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	N/A / N/A
Altimeter Setting:	29.6 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	56 °C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Palmer, AK (4AK6)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Tyonek, AK	Type of Clearance:	VFR
Departure Time:	0700 AKD	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	61.229444, -151.769167 (est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Kathryn R Benhoff	Report Date:	02/11/2020
Additional Participating Persons:	Brad Sapp; FAA; Anchorage, AK		
Publish Date:	02/11/2020		
Note:	This accident report documents the factual circumstances of this accident as described to the NTSB.		
Investigation Docket:	http://dms.ntsb.gov/pubdms/search/dockList.cfm?mKey=100187		

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