



Aviation Investigation Factual Report

Location:	LYTLE CREEK, California	Accident Number:	LAX98FA189
Date & Time:	June 7, 1998, 18:05 Local	Registration:	N16344
Aircraft:	Piper PA-28R-200	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	4 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Factual Information

HISTORY OF FLIGHT

On June 7, 1998, about 1805 hours, Pacific daylight time, a Piper PA-28R-200, N16344, was destroyed after colliding with mountainous terrain in the Cajon Pass area near Lytle Creek, California. The pilot and the three passengers all received fatal injuries. The aircraft, owned and operated by Air Desert Pacific, La Verne, California, was operating under the provisions of 14 CFR Part 91. Instrument meteorological conditions prevailed in the area at the time of the accident and no flight plan was filed. The flight originated at Las Vegas, Nevada, on the day of the accident at 1634.

The rented aircraft was returning to Pomona, California, after a personal cross-country flight to Las Vegas that originated on June 6, 1998. The pilot obtained a preflight weather briefing from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reno, Nevada, Automated Flight Service Station at 1206 for the Las Vegas to Pomona route.

En route at 1843, the pilot contacted High Desert Tracon (Joshua Approach) 27 miles southwest of Daggett at 8,600 feet for VFR advisories to Pomona. The pilot was issued a transponder code of 4610. The flight was handed off to SOCAL Tracon while over Victorville, California. The pilot contacted SOCAL over Hesperia, California, and requested a VFR descent from 8,500 feet msl. The request was approved.

A call to SOCAL from the aircraft requesting "verify 23 miles from Pomona" was made by a voice other than the pilot. The controller said "I did not quite understand that sir, but you can continue your own navigation and descend at pilot's discretion for the airport."

Subsequently, the controller asked the pilot to contact SOCAL on 125.5 (sector change) and the pilot did so. After the second call, separated by other traffic, the controller acknowledged. The pilot reported 17 miles northwest of Pomona descending VFR out of 5,300 feet msl. The controller requested the destination, and the pilot responded "Pomona." The controller responded "your VFR descent's approved sir." The pilot did not acknowledge. The controller made several calls to the aircraft with no response.

Radio and radar contact was lost at 6,500 feet msl. The emergency locator beacon (ELT) did not work. On June 9, 1998, the aircraft was located 17 nautical miles northeast of Pomona in mountainous terrain at 5,250 feet msl.

PERSONNEL INFORMATION

According to FAA records, the pilot was issued a private pilot's certificate on February 28,

1996, and was rated for airplane single engine land. The pilot's logbook was recovered at the accident site. At the time of the accident the logbook documented about 200 total flight hours, including the accident flight. The logbook also indicated about 47 hours in the make and model of the accident aircraft, and 18.6 hours simulated and 3.8 hours actual instrument time.

PILOT RATED PASSENGER INFORMATION

The pilot rated passenger occupied the right front seat. According to FAA records, he was issued a private pilot's certificate on December 12, 1997. He was rated for airplane single engine land. According to FAA records, he had accumulated 57 total flight hours at the time of certification.

AIRCRAFT INFORMATION

At the time of the accident the aircraft had accumulated about 8,564 total flight hours, including 70 hours since the last 100-hour inspection. The annual inspection was due in November 1998.

According to the operator's inoperative equipment report for the aircraft, the automatic direction finder (ADF), wing leveler autopilot, and distance measuring equipment (DME) were placarded inoperative in accordance with FAR 91.213 (d) at the time of the accident.

According to the maintenance records the engine was at 4,281 hours since major overhaul. The engine manufacturer recommends 2,000 hours between major overhauls.

METEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION

During the preflight weather briefing at Las Vegas, the pilot was advised of moderate turbulence below 14,000 feet msl and mountain obscuration west of Daggett.

At 1845, Brackett Field (POC) was reporting: winds 250 degrees at 5 knots; visibility 40 miles; scattered clouds at 2,400 feet agl; overcast at 2,900 feet agl; and the altimeter was 30.01 inHg.

At 1753, Ontario, 10 miles south of the accident site, was reporting: winds 220 degrees at 6 knots; visibility 10 miles; few clouds at 3,200 feet agl; ceiling 4,800 feet broken, 14,800 broken; temperature 63 degrees Fahrenheit; dew point 46 degrees Fahrenheit; and the altimeter was 30.00 inHg.

A pilot report at 1735 indicated that the Cajon Pass looked obscured with clouds to ground over Interstate 15. Another pilot reported that VFR was not recommended through the Cajon Pass.

WRECKAGE AND IMPACT INFORMATION

Due to continued cloud cover and an inoperative ELT, the wreckage was not located until June 9, 1998, in the San Bernardino National Forest near San Sevaine Flats about 5,250 feet msl. The nose of the airplane was oriented on a 250-degree magnetic bearing.

The aircraft had collided with mountainous terrain and dense brush. No significant wreckage path was found prior to the airframe. The airframe had remained intact with wing leading edge crushing and fuel tank hydraulicing signatures. The landing gear was found in the retracted position and the wing flaps were up.

The rear seat belt attach points had failed. The engine firewall had been crushed by the engine and forced aft into the cockpit area. The propeller was found vertical. The 12 o'clock blade was mildly bent aft. The 6 o'clock blade was significantly bent aft with leading edge damage.

The recording tachometer was found indicating 1,800 rpm and 6,710.1 hours. The Hobbs hour meter was indicating 2,140.7 hours. The altimeter was indicating 35,420 feet and 29:97 inHg.

On June 29, 1998, a postaccident examination of the wreckage was conducted with representatives from Textron Lycoming and The New Piper Aircraft Company.

The entire airframe structure was accounted for at the accident site and after recovery. The structural components were examined for control continuity and attachment. The stabilator trim was found about neutral. The fuel selector was positioned on the right main fuel tank with the handle broken from the selector shaft. The directional gyro was heading 240 degrees. The engine driven vacuum pump was intact; the pump was examined internally revealing good carbon vanes and block, and, the drive coupling was intact.

The engine was examined. Both magnetos were hand sparked to each lead. All cylinders supported a finger compression test. The spark plugs, fuel, and oil screens were found normal. Valve and gear train continuity was established. The engine oil filter was cut open for examination. Nonferrous metal particles were found in the filter folds. According to the engine representative, it was an above normal amount of particle material. The No. 2 and 4 cylinders were removed for an internal examination. The No. 4 cylinder revealed a broken top compression ring and corresponding piston ring lands damage.

MEDICAL AND PATHOLOGICAL INFORMATION

On June 9, 1998, the San Bernardino County Coroner performed an autopsy on the pilot. The cause of death was attributed to multiple blunt force trauma.

During the course of the examination samples were obtained from the pilot for toxicological analysis by the FAA Civil Aeromedical Institute in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The results of the analysis were negative for volatiles and drugs. No other tests were performed due lack of suitable samples.

TEST AND RESEARCH INFORMATION

The No. 1) radio, a King KX-155 Com/Nav was removed from the aircraft wreckage and taken to an FAA approved avionics shop. The unit was powered up to recover the frequencies in use at the time of the accident. The communication frequency was 125.5 (SOCAL approach) and the navigation frequency was 110.4 (POC). The King KI209 vor/loc omni bearing selector was found to be 230 degrees at the accident site.

The No. 2) radio, a King KX-125 was also removed and powered up. The unit drew excessive voltage and was turned off. Subsequently, after repairs to the unit it was again powered up. The communication frequency indicated was 120.95, and standby 120.00. The navigation frequency was 110.00 and standby of 110.00. Due to the damage and required repairs all indicated frequencies were considered default and/or unreliable.

The Narco altitude reporting encoder was removed and taken to the radio shop for examination and functional testing. The unit met all required test parameters of a bench test.

The Artex emergency locator beacon (ELT 110) was sent to the manufacturer for examination. Prior to shipping the battery voltage was measured to be 9.5 volts. According to the battery placard, the battery expiration date was December 1998. According to Artex the battery voltage was good, but the "G" switch was stuck. A x-ray examination of the "G" switch revealed that a spring in the switch capsule had twisted and wedged between the ball and the ball chamber.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On July 6, 1998, the wreckage was released to a representative of the owner.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	28,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	June 5, 1998
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	200 hours (Total, all aircraft), 47 hours (Total, this make and model), 10 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 8 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N16344
Model/Series:	PA-28R-200 PA-28R-200	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	28R-7335131
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	May 18, 1998 100 hour	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2650 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	70 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	8564 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	IO-360-C1C
Registered Owner:	LAPIN, ARI DAVID	Rated Power:	200 Horsepower
Operator:	AIR DESERT PACIFIC	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Does Business As:		Operator Designator Code:	

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Instrument (IMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	POC ,1000 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	17 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	18:45 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	226°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 2400 ft AGL	Visibility	40 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast / 2900 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/ None	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	0°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	LAS VEGAS (LAS)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	LA VERNE (POC)	Type of Clearance:	VFR
Departure Time:	00:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class E

Airport Information

Airport:		Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:		Runway Surface Condition:	
Runway Used:	0	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	None

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	3 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	4 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	34.249843,-117.540771(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Petterson, George

Additional Participating Persons: ERIC JACKSON; RIVERSIDE , CA
CHARLES LITTLE; VERO BEACH , FL
MARK PLATT; WILLIAMSPORT , PA

Report Date: October 4, 1999

Last Revision Date:

Investigation Class: [Class](#)

Note:

Investigation Docket: <https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=29954>

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The NTSB does not assign fault or blame for an accident or incident; rather, as specified by NTSB regulation, “accident/incident investigations are fact-finding proceedings with no formal issues and no adverse parties ... and are not conducted for the purpose of determining the rights or liabilities of any person” (Title 49 *Code of Federal Regulations* section 831.4). Assignment of fault or legal liability is not relevant to the NTSB’s statutory mission to improve transportation safety by investigating accidents and incidents and issuing safety recommendations. In addition, statutory language prohibits the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report (Title 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b)). A factual report that may be admissible under 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b) is available [here](#).