



Aviation Investigation Factual Report

Location:	Crescent City, Florida	Accident Number:	ANC04LA022
Date & Time:	February 14, 2004, 11:30 Local	Registration:	N98WB
Aircraft:	Bertrand/Warner Thorp T-18	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Factual Information

On February 14, 2004, about 1130 Eastern standard time, a wheel-equipped experimental/homebuilt, Bertrand/Warner Thorp T-18 airplane, N98WB, was destroyed during an in-flight collision with water, about 1 mile southeast of Crescent City, Florida. The airplane was being operated as a visual flight rules (VFR) cross-country personal flight under Title 14, CFR Part 91, when the accident occurred. The solo private certificated pilot received fatal injuries. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the airplane's point of departure, and no flight plan was filed. The flight originated at the New Smyrna Beach Municipal Airport, New Smyrna Beach, Florida, about 1100, and was en route to the Pomona Landing Airport, Pomona Park, Florida.

During a telephone conversation with the National Transportation Safety Board investigator-in-charge on February 14, a friend of the pilot said that the accident pilot was en route to the Pomona Landing Airport to attend a fly-in for homebuilt aircraft owners/builders. He said that the accident pilot had attempted the same flight earlier in the day, but was unable to reach the airport due to low clouds and fog.

Several residents of Crescent City reported low clouds, fog, and reduced visibility in the area at the time of the accident. According to a responding Florida Highway Patrol Officer, witnesses reported hearing what sounded like a low flying airplane to the east of Crescent City, and over Crescent Lake. The witnesses said that as the airplane's engine sound increased, they heard a sudden impact, and the engine noise stopped abruptly. The witnesses consistently reported that they were not able to see the airplane due to very low visibility in mist and fog, and that the accident airplane's engine appeared to be producing full power prior to striking the water.

Search and rescue personnel conducted an extensive search of Crescent Lake for survivors. About 1300, divers located the submerged airplane wreckage, and discovered the pilot's body inside, still restrained within the pilot's seat.

The closest official weather observation station is located in Saint Augustine, Florida, about 30 miles northeast of the accident site. On February 14, at 1135, an Aviation Routine Weather Report (METAR) for Saint Augustine stated in part: Wind, 010 degrees (true) at 5 knots; visibility, 1/2 statute miles with mist; clouds, 100 feet overcast; temperature, 55 degrees F; dew point, 55 degrees F; altimeter, 30.00 inHg.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	73, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Front
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Valid Medical-w/ waivers/lim	Last FAA Medical Exam:	June 26, 2002
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	3300 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Bertrand/Warner	Registration:	N98WB
Model/Series:	Thorp T-18	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	Yes
Airworthiness Certificate:	Experimental (Special)	Serial Number:	524
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:		Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1700 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	O-320
Registered Owner:	William F. Bertrand	Rated Power:	150 Horsepower
Operator:		Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Instrument (IMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KSGJ,9 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	30 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	11:35 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	240°
Lowest Cloud Condition:		Visibility	0.5 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast / 100 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	5 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	100°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	13°C / 13°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	N/A - None - Fog		
Departure Point:	New Smyrna , FL (KEVB)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Pomona , FL (78FL)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	11:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class E

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	29.501943,-81.57833

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Johnson, Clinton
Additional Participating Persons:	Michael J Cichanowski ; Federal Aviation Administration; Orlando, FL
Report Date:	September 2, 2004
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=58760

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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](#).