



Aviation Investigation Factual Report

Location:	Pinecliff, Washington	Accident Number:	SEA07LA249
Date & Time:	May 22, 2007, 12:40 Local	Registration:	N5180J
Aircraft:	Cessna 177	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Factual Information

On May 22, 2007, approximately 1240 Pacific daylight time, a Cessna 177, N5180J, impacted trees in mountainous terrain approximately five miles southwest of Pinecliff, Washington. The private pilot, who was the sole occupant, received fatal injuries, and the aircraft, which was owned and operated by Pro-Flight Aviation, of Renton, Washington, was destroyed. The 14 CFR Part 91 personal pleasure flight, which departed Twin Falls, Idaho at 0952 mountain daylight time, was en route to Renton Municipal Airport, Renton, Washington. The pilot, who was operating in an area of reported instrument meteorological conditions (IMC), had filed and opened a Visual Flight Rules (VFR) flight plan.

On the morning of the flight, the pilot used the Internet to complete three sessions with the Direct User Access Terminal Service (DUATS). During each of the first two sessions he received a Quick Path Low Altitude Weather Brief, and during the third session he filed his VFR flight plan using the Quick Path Be Prompted for Plan program. The pilot departed Twin Falls in VFR conditions, and soon thereafter, contacted Boise Automated Flight Service Station (AFSS) to activate his VFR flight plan. Then, according to data retrieved from an onboard Garmin GPSMAP 496 Global Positioning System (GPS) unit, he climbed to his filed altitude of 10,500 feet mean sea level (MSL), while maintaining a course that would take the aircraft almost directly to Renton Airport. While en route, the pilot requested, and received VFR flight following, initially through Seattle Air Route Traffic Control Center (ARTCC), and then later from Chinook Approach Control. At 1214 Pacific daylight time, after passing Yakima, Washington, and approaching the Cascade Mountain Range, the pilot canceled his flight following services, and continued on en route without further FAA contact.

According to the GPS data, the pilot maintained a direct course to Renton until reaching a point about six miles northeast of Bumping Lake, Washington, whereupon he turned to a course about thirty degrees to the left of what he had been holding. At the time of that course change, the aircraft was approximately 7,600 feet MSL. While continuing to descend, the pilot held that course for a little over one minute, and then turned back to the right, past his original direct course by about forty degrees. He held that course for about thirty seconds, and then initiated a left turn of about 270 degrees, which placed him in a position less than a mile north of State Highway 410. At that time the aircraft was about 5,500 feet MSL. Once he rolled out of that turn, the pilot tracked northeast, parallel to or over Highway 410, until he reached the point where highway 410 makes an abrupt 90 degree right turn toward Yakima (about seven miles northeast of where he rolled out of the turn). At that point, after having descended to an altitude of about 4,000 feet MSL, the pilot turned about 120 degrees to the left, which placed him on a northwest course, paralleling the Little Naches River for about 10 miles. Then, after reaching a point about 10 miles from where he turned northwest, the pilot reversed course, and tracked back southeast at about 4,500 feet MSL, while keeping almost directly over the Little Naches river. When he again reached the location where Highway 410 turns abruptly right

(southeast) toward Yakima, the pilot continued to follow the river (and Highway 410), on a course that ultimately would have taken him back to Yakima if he had continued on in that direction. Instead, after traveling about another eight miles southeast, to a point about one-half mile southeast of Pinecliff, the pilot initiated a right turn of about 120 degrees. This turn, which he initiated at about 3,600 feet MSL, resulted in the aircraft flying along a narrow valley toward up-sloping terrain. The pilot continued in that direction for about another two minutes before colliding with the tops of a number of trees near the top of a ridge about two miles west of State Highway 410.

There were no known emergency transmissions, and no ELT transmission were detected in the general area after the accident. It was approximately three and one-half months later when a hiker came across the wreckage at 46:52.435 North, 121:02.907 West.

The aircraft was recovered and taken to the facilities of AvTech Services, in Maple Valley, Washington, for further examination. That examination did not reveal any evidence of anomalies or malfunctions associated with the aircraft's structure, engine, or systems.

A review of the recorded DUATS information that the pilot received on the morning of the flight revealed that the area forecast included Airman's Meteorological Information (AIRMET) Sierra, which called for mountain obscuration by clouds and mist. In addition, the weather synopsis for the Cascade Mountains called for areas with visibilities between three and five miles, possible isolated light rain and snow showers. It was also determined that the 1219 surface aviation weather observation (METAR) for Stampede Pass (located about 10 miles north of the aircraft's most northerly position) showed winds variable at six knots, visibility one-quarter mile, fog, a 200 foot broken ceiling, a 700 foot overcast, with a temperature of 04 degrees Celsius, and a dew point of 03 degrees Celsius.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	53,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
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 3 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	August 1, 2006
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	60 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Cessna	Registration:	N5180J
Model/Series:	177	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	17701382
Landing Gear Type:	Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	September 1, 2006 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2500 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	80 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	5900 Hrs at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed	Engine Model/Series:	O-360-A1F6
Registered Owner:	Pro-Flight Aviation, Inc.	Rated Power:	180 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:	KSMP, 3800 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	25 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	12:19 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	310°
Lowest Cloud Condition:		Visibility	0.25 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 200 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	6 knots / None	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:		Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.21 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	4°C / 3°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	Twin Falls, ID (KTWF)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	VFR
Destination:	Renton, WA (KRNT)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	09:52 Local	Type of Airspace:	

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:	46.873889,-121.048332

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Anderson, Orrin

Additional Participating Persons: Ellsworth Shewell; Seattle FSDO
Michael Koonce; Cessna Aircraft Company

Report Date: December 10, 2007

Last Revision Date:

Investigation Class: [Class](#)

Note:

Investigation Docket: <https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=66582>

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant events in other modes of transportation—railroad, transit, highway, marine, pipeline, and commercial space. We determine the probable causes of the accidents and events we investigate, and issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future occurrences. In addition, we conduct transportation safety research studies and offer information and other assistance to family members and survivors for each accident or event we investigate. We also serve as the appellate authority for enforcement actions involving aviation and mariner certificates issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and US Coast Guard, and we adjudicate appeals of civil penalty actions taken by the FAA.

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](#).