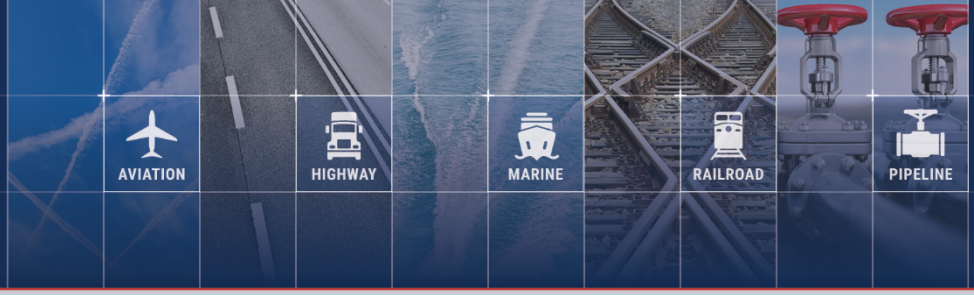

Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	St. Ignatious, Montana	**Accident Number:**	WPR19FA246
Date & Time:	August 29, 2019, 16:00 Local	**Registration:**	N9529Y
Aircraft:	Beech 33	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Defining Event:	Low altitude operation/event	**Injuries:**	3 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot and two passengers departed on a multi-leg cross-country flight. Video from a camera affixed to the airplane's right wing indicated that, as the airplane approached a ranch near the destination airport, the pilot overflew a set of power distribution lines, then descended to a lower altitude to overfly the ranch. The airplane impacted a second set of power lines, severing the left wing, left aileron, and the upper sections of the rudder and vertical stabilizer, then descended to the ground. Multiple witnesses reported hearing the airplane approaching the ranch, then seeing the airplane impact the power distribution lines. One witness stated that the pilot often overflew the ranch to announce his arrival but that he had never seen him fly that low.

Examination of the airplane revealed no evidence of mechanical malfunctions or anomalies that would have precluded normal operation. The circumstances of the accident are consistent with the pilot's decision to fly at low altitude and his failure to maintain clearance from powerlines, which resulted in impact with power lines and, subsequently, terrain.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:

The pilot's decision to maneuver the airplane at a low altitude, which resulted in impact with power lines and terrain.

Findings

Personnel issues	Decision making/judgment - Pilot
Aircraft	Altitude - Not attained/maintained
Personnel issues	Monitoring environment - Pilot
Environmental issues	Wire - Effect on operation

Factual Information

History of Flight

Maneuvering-low-alt flying	Low altitude operation/event (Defining event)

On August 29, 2019, about 1600 mountain daylight time, a Beech BE-33 airplane, N9529Y, was substantially damaged when it was involved in an accident near St. Ignatius, Montana. The pilot and two passengers were fatally injured. The airplane was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 personal flight.

The pilot and passengers departed on a multi-leg cross-country flight with a destination of St. Ignatius Airport (52S), St. Ignatius, Montana. As the flight was nearing its destination, multiple witnesses located on a ranch, reported that they observed the airplane approaching, then saw sparks and a wing come off the airplane as it passed through a set of power distribution lines. One witness stated that the pilot's approach to the area was "as usual," as he often flew over the ranch to notify those there that he would be landing at the airport; but he had "never seen him that low." The pilot's wife stated that he had flown to the destination airport numerous times and that he was going there to help with an electrical problem.

A GoPro video camera was attached to the top of the right wing near the wing root. The camera contained multiple short videos of the first and second leg of the flight. One video recorded the airplane as it overflew a set of power distribution lines and continued to descend as it approached the ranch from the west. After arriving over the ranch, the airplane flew past a second set of power distribution lines that appeared to be at the same altitude as the airplane. After passing the power distribution lines, the video camera instantly pointed up, and the airplane appeared to roll left as it descended to the ground.

The airplane impacted and severed one of three powerlines strung between towers. Another wire was still intact and had a section of airplane sheet metal attached. At their lowest point, the wires were about 53 ft above ground level. The airplane came to rest inverted in a flat hay field. The entire left wing separated from the fuselage in two sections. The inboard section of the wing was found near the main wreckage. The outboard 4-foot section, along with portions of the vertical stabilizer and rudder and were found about 100 ft from the powerlines. The separated portion of the wing displayed striations consistent with the size and diameter of the power transmission lines found nearby.

Examination of the airframe and engine revealed no evidence of mechanical failures or malfunctions that would have precluded normal operation.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	**Age:**	49,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	**Seat Occupied:**	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	**Restraint Used:**	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):	None	**Second Pilot Present:**	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	**Toxicology Performed:**	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 3 With waivers/limitations	**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	April 17, 2018
Occupational Pilot:	No	**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	
Flight Time:	755 hours (Total, all aircraft), 700 hours (Total, this make and model)		

Passenger Information

Certificate:		**Age:**	65,Male
Airplane Rating(s):		**Seat Occupied:**	Rear
Other Aircraft Rating(s):		**Restraint Used:**	Unknown
Instrument Rating(s):		**Second Pilot Present:**	No
Instructor Rating(s):		**Toxicology Performed:**	No
Medical Certification:		**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	
Occupational Pilot:	No	**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	
Flight Time:			

Passenger Information

Certificate:		**Age:**	Male
Airplane Rating(s):		**Seat Occupied:**	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):		**Restraint Used:**	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):		**Second Pilot Present:**	No
Instructor Rating(s):		**Toxicology Performed:**	No
Medical Certification:		**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	
Occupational Pilot:	No	**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	
Flight Time:			

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Beech	**Registration:**	N9529Y
Model/Series:	33 35B33	**Aircraft Category:**	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	1962	**Amateur Built:**	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	**Serial Number:**	CD-555
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	**Seats:**	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	March 11, 2019 Annual	**Certified Max Gross Wt.:**	
Time Since Last Inspection:		**Engines:**	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	887.6 Hrs as of last inspection	**Engine Manufacturer:**	Continental
ELT:	C91 installed, not activated	**Engine Model/Series:**	IO-470-N(1)
Registered Owner:	On file	**Rated Power:**	
Operator:	On file	**Operating Certificate(s) Held:**	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	**Condition of Light:**	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KMSO,3205 ft msl	**Distance from Accident Site:**	25 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	15:53 Local	**Direction from Accident Site:**	356°
Lowest Cloud Condition:		**Visibility**	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 11000 ft AGL	**Visibility (RVR):**	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	7 knots /	**Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:**	None / None
Wind Direction:	300°	**Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:**	N/A / N/A
Altimeter Setting:	30.03 inches Hg	**Temperature/Dew Point:**	23°C / 7°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Valentine, NE (VTN)	**Type of Flight Plan Filed:**	None
Destination:	St. Ignatius, NE (52S)	**Type of Clearance:**	None
Departure Time:	13:00 Local	**Type of Airspace:**	Class G

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	2 Fatal	**Aircraft Fire:**	None
Ground Injuries:		**Aircraft Explosion:**	None
Total Injuries:	3 Fatal	**Latitude, Longitude:**	47.275833,-114.12416(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Salazar, Fabian
Additional Participating Persons:	Jennifer Barclay; Textron Aviation; Wichita, KS Christopher N Lang; Continental Aerospace Technologies; Mobile, AL Casey Stevens; FAA Flight Standards District Office; Helena, MT
Original Publish Date:	October 20, 2021
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class 3
Note:	The NTSB traveled to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=100173