



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Palmer, Alaska	Accident Number:	ANC20CA049
Date & Time:	May 5, 2020, 19:00 Local	Registration:	N185SZ
Aircraft:	Cessna 185	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Low altitude operation/event	Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot reported that at the time of the accident he was practicing a “water ski” maneuver on the open waters of a remote river in his tailwheel-equipped airplane. The water ski maneuver involves the airplane's main wheels touching the surface of the water while maintaining flying speed. The pilot added that while maintaining about 90 knots indicated airspeed, with the main landing gear wheels “water-skiing” across the surface of the water, he recognized that there was additional drag being placed on the wheels, and the airspeed began to decay. In response, he added engine power, but the airspeed continued to rapidly decay, and the main wheels subsequently settled into the water, and the airplane nosed over, sustaining substantial damage to the wings and engine mounts. The pilot reported no mechanical problems with the airplane that would have precluded normal operations.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

The pilot’s decision to attempt to " water ski" atop a remote river in a wheel-equipped airplane, resulting in a loss of control and a nose over.

Findings

Personnel issues	Decision making/judgment - Pilot
Aircraft	(general) - Not attained/maintained
Personnel issues	Aircraft control - Pilot

Factual Information

History of Flight

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

Certificate:	Private	Age:	39, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	4-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	BasicMed Without waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	May 9, 2019
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	May 2, 2020
Flight Time:	555 hours (Total, all aircraft), 244 hours (Total, this make and model), 496 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 10 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 5 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Cessna	Registration:	N185SZ
Model/Series:	185	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	1969	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	185-1589
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	April 30, 2020 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	
Time Since Last Inspection:	3 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	4013.9 Hrs at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	Continental
ELT:	C126 installed, activated, did not aid in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	IO-550
Registered Owner:	On file	Rated Power:	300
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:	PAAQ,248 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	9 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	18:30 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	115°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	10 knots / 15 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	90°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:		Temperature/Dew Point:	15.6°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	Chugiak, AK (AK24)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Palmer, AK	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	18:30 Local	Type of Airspace:	

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:		Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	61.620338,-148.98068(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Johnson, Clinton

Additional Participating Persons:

Original Publish Date: August 31, 2021

Last Revision Date:

Investigation Class: [Class 4](#)

Note: This accident report documents the factual circumstances of this accident as described to the NTSB.

Investigation Docket: <https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=101303>

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