



AVIATION



HIGHWAY



MARINE



RAILROAD



PIPELINE

Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Van Nuys, California	Accident Number:	WPR20LA303
Date & Time:	September 11, 2020, 15:00 Local	Registration:	N37C
Aircraft:	Navion B	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:	Loss of control in flight	Injuries:	2 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

Air Traffic control reported that, at the time of the accident, the traffic volume at the airport was moderate, but not complex. The pilot contacted the tower and reported that he was ready for takeoff. The controller replied that he was cleared for takeoff from 16R without delay. The airplane took off uneventfully; shortly thereafter the controller started to instruct the pilot to turn on a right crosswind but stopped and asked the pilot if he was ok. There was no response from the pilot. Witnesses reported that the airplane took off to the south and was flying lower than normal. In addition, the airplane started a right turn much earlier than most airplanes. As the airplane started its turn, they heard a “pop,” and the airplane made a “hard right” turn. The airplane then descended nose down with the wings at a slight angle as it went out of sight. Shortly thereafter, a plume of smoke was observed.

The airplane impacted nose low in a narrow parking lot about ½ mile west of the runway surface. The airplane wreckage was contained to a small area in between two rows of vehicles. A post-crash fire ensued, and a large portion of the fuselage and aft fuselage were consumed by fire. Postaccident examination of the engine and remaining airframe did not reveal any anomalies that would have precluded normal operation. Given the abrupt climbing right turn it is likely the airplane stalled at a low altitude. It could not be determined if the moderate traffic at VNY was enough to cause the pilot to rush the turn to crosswind.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

The pilot’s failure to maintain control of the airplane during an abrupt turn after takeoff at a low altitude, which resulted in an aerodynamic stall.

Findings

Personnel issues	Aircraft control - Pilot
Aircraft	Airspeed - Not attained/maintained
Aircraft	Angle of attack - Not attained/maintained

Factual Information

History of Flight

Initial climb	Loss of control in flight (Defining event)
Initial climb	Aerodynamic stall/spin
Initial climb	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

On September 11, 2020, at 1501 Pacific daylight time, a Navion B, N37C, was destroyed when it was involved in an accident near the Van Nuys Airport (VNY), Van Nuys, California. The pilot and passenger were fatally injured. The airplane was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)* Part 91 personal flight.

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Witnesses reported that the airplane took off to the south and was flying lower than normal. In addition, the airplane started a right turn much earlier than most airplanes. As the airplane started its turn, they heard a “pop,” and the airplane made a “hard right” turn. The airplane then descended nose down with the wings at a slight angle as it went out of sight. Shortly thereafter, a plume of smoke was observed.

The airplane impacted nose low in a narrow parking lot about ½ mile west of the runway surface. The airplane wreckage was contained to a small area in between two rows of vehicles. A post crash fire ensued; a large portion of the fuselage and aft fuselage were consumed by fire. The engine, cabin area, and wings were heavily accorded and exhibited thermal damage. The empennage was present but exhibited extensive thermal damage. The fuel selector was located and was found in the “MAIN” position. Flight control continuity was established throughout the airframe.

The engine exhibited heavy impact related damage; the crankcase had a large crack perpendicular to the split line. The cylinder valve covers were removed and exhibited normal operating signatures except for the number 5-cylinder intake valve assembly, which was fracture separated from the engine. The upper spark plugs were removed and exhibited normal operating wear signatures. The cylinders were borescoped; the valve heads were undamaged and normal combustion deposits were found on the piston head surfaces. The combustion chambers revealed normal operating signatures.

Both magnetos exhibited thermal discoloration and impact related damage. The ignition leads were cut near the distributor cap. The magnetos were rotated by hand, and spark was obtained at each ignition lead end. The fuel manifold valve was disassembled, and fuel was noted in the valve chamber; the screen was clear of debris. The fuel control valve was disassembled with no anomalies noted.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Bioaeronautical Sciences Research Laboratory, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, performed forensic toxicology on specimens from the pilot with positive results for Rosuvastatin. Rosuvastatin is a prescription medication that is acceptable for FAA medical certification.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Flight instructor	Age:	62, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	Unknown
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane single-engine; Instrument airplane	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 3 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	June 16, 2020
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	(Estimated) 19001 hours (Total, all aircraft), 14 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Navion	Registration:	N37C
Model/Series:	B	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	1950	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	NAV-4-2184-B
Landing Gear Type:	Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Continental Motors
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	IO-550G
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:	VNY, 802 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	0 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	15:14 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	6 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	6 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	None / None
Wind Direction:	120°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	N/A / N/A
Altimeter Setting:	29.92 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	33°C / 1°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	Moderate - None - Smoke		
Departure Point:	Van Nuys, CA	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Santa Ynez, CA (IZA)	Type of Clearance:	VFR
Departure Time:		Type of Airspace:	Unknown

Airport Information

Airport:	Van Nuys Airport VNY	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	802 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	16R	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	8001 ft / 150 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	None

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	On-ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	34.191944,-118.48916

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Link, Samantha
Additional Participating Persons:	Kurt Gibson; Continental Motors; Mobile, AL Steve Cirigliano ; Federal Aviation Administration; Van Nuys, CA
Original Publish Date:	June 7, 2022
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class 3
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=101953

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](#).