



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Weidman, Michigan	Accident Number:	CEN21LA123
Date & Time:	February 3, 2021, 15:30 Local	Registration:	N26811
Aircraft:	Piper J3F-50	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Low altitude operation/event	Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot flew a low-altitude approach over a snow-covered runway. During the approach his depth perception was degraded from the bright sunlight that reflected off of the snow. The landing gear hit the snow and the airplane subsequently nosed over, which resulted in substantial damage to the vertical stabilizer. The pilot stated that there were no mechanical anomalies 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 failure to maintain clearance from terrain during a low approach over a snow-covered runway. Contributing to the accident was the loss of depth perception due to the bright sunlight and snow.

Findings

Personnel issues	Monitoring environment - Pilot
Environmental issues	Bright light - Effect on personnel
Personnel issues	Visual illusion/disorientation - Pilot
Aircraft	Altitude - Not attained/maintained
Environmental issues	Snow/slush/ice covered surface - Response/compensation

Factual Information

History of Flight

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

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	72, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Rear
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Class 2 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	May 22, 2020
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	June 2, 2020
Flight Time:	3000 hours (Total, all aircraft), 400 hours (Total, this make and model)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N26811
Model/Series:	J3F-50	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	1940	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	4191
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	April 16, 2020 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1100 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	4152 Hrs as of last inspection	Engine Manufacturer:	Continental
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	A65
Registered Owner:	On file	Rated Power:	65 Horsepower
Operator:	JACOBS JAMES A	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KMOP,755 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	13 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	15:35 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	117°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	4 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	None / None
Wind Direction:	300°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	N/A / N/A
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	3°C / -10°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Mount Pleasant, MI (MOP)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Mount Pleasant, MI (MOP)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	14:45 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class E

Airport Information

Airport:	Ojibwa Airpark D11	Runway Surface Type:	Snow
Airport Elevation:	959 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Snow
Runway Used:	5	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	3600 ft / 125 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Go around

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:	43.720649,-85.002243(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Folkerts, Michael
Additional Participating Persons:	Mike; Matthews; Grand Rapids, MI
Original Publish Date:	September 20, 2021
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class 4
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=102598

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](#).