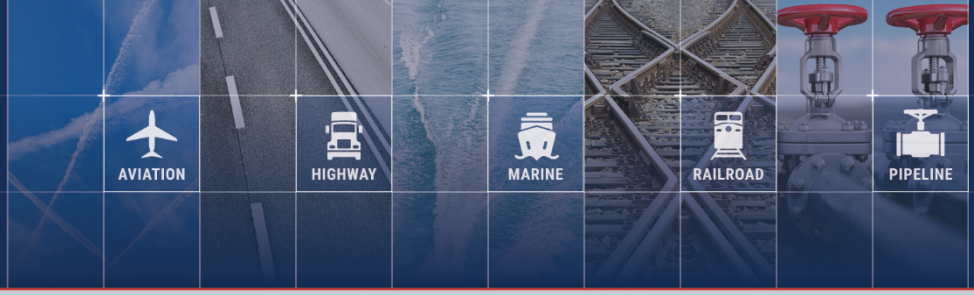

Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Perma, Montana	**Accident Number:**	WPR23LA001
Date & Time:	October 2, 2022, 09:00 Local	**Registration:**	N892SP
Aircraft:	SCODA AERONAUTICA LTDA SUPER PETREL LS	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Defining Event:	Low altitude operation/event	**Injuries:**	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The accident airplane was the lead airplane in a flight of two and while flying about 50 ft over a river, the airplane struck a power line. The airplane abruptly pitched up, descended to the right, and impacted the water, which resulted in substantial damage to the fuselage and wings.

According to a witness, the pilot had prior experience flying at low level over the river close to the accident site. The trailing pilot reported that the accident pilot did not report any mechanical failures or anomalies before the impact with a powerline. The trailing pilot was not aware of the powerline placement, and it is likely that the pilot also did not see the powerline's placement across the river as it was unmarked.

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 the powerline.

Findings

Personnel issues	Identification/recognition - Pilot
Environmental issues	Wire - Effect on equipment

Factual Information

History of Flight

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

On October 2, 2022, about 0900 central daylight time, a Scoda Aeronautica LTDA, Super Petrel LS, N892SP, was substantially damaged when it was involved in an accident near Perma, Montana. The pilot sustained serious injuries and later in the day succumbed to those injuries. The airplane was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 personal flight.

According to the trailing pilot, he was following the accident pilot on an impromptu low-level flight over a river. Without incident, they departed Polson Airport, Polson, MT, about 0800, as a flight of two. He reported that about an hour later, while trailing the accident airplane and flying westbound about 50 feet above the river, he saw the lead airplane abruptly pitch up, descend to the right, and impact the water. A still image from a video captured by the trailing pilot showed that the accident airplane was about the height of the powerline poles shortly before the airplane pitched up (see Figure 1).

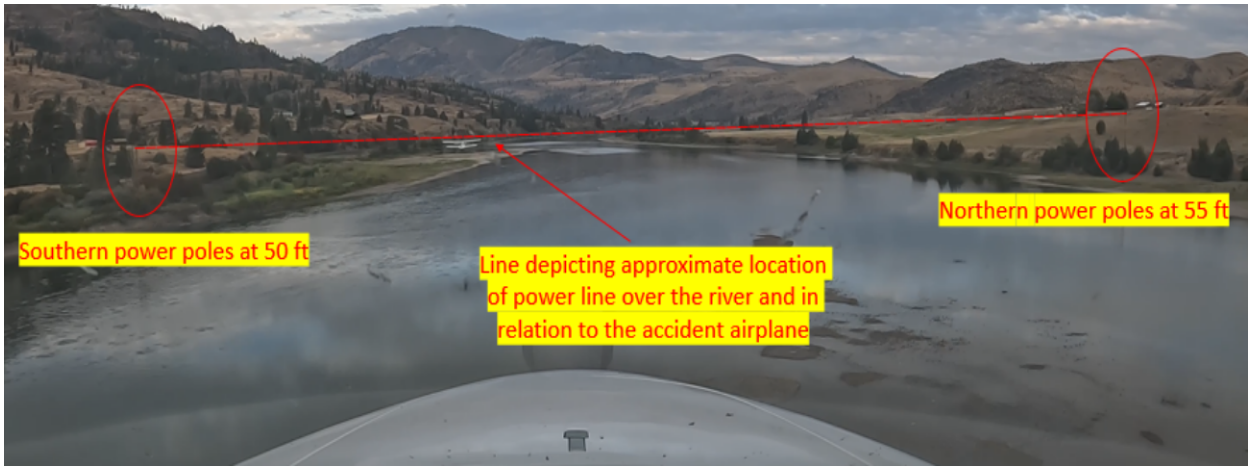

Figure 1. Photo of power pole and line in relation to accident airplane before impact, with added depiction of the powerline over the river (courtesy of witness)

The trailing pilot added that he did not see the powerline before the accident airplane impacted the wire.

A witness who responded to the accident site reported that the pilot stated to him that he had flown over the river near the accident area before, but forgot about the powerline during the accident flight.

Figure 2. Map depiction of wreckage site in relation to powerlines

According to the power company, the “H” configured 2-pole structure on the north side of the river is about 50 ft above the ground (agl) and the structure on the south side of the river is about 55 ft agl, with a lineal span of 1026 ft. They estimated that the distribution powerline spanned above the water between 40 and 80 ft agl and that the line was not marked at the time of the accident.

The airplane came to rest upright on a gravel bar that was about 4 ft below the water level and about 540 feet southwest of the northern power pole structure (see Figure 2). The engine and cabin were submerged with the wings and aft fuselage being above water. The tailcone was partially separated midspan; the empennage was inverted and partially submerged in the water. The airplane sustained substantial damage to the fuselage and both wings.

The trailing pilot stated that the pilot did not report any mechanical anomalies concerning the airplane or engine during the accident flight. The auditioned video was consistent with the airplane and engine operating without any anomalies.

Sanders County Medical Examiner & Coroner’s Office performed the pilot’s autopsy and reported his cause of death as multiple blunt force injuries. The autopsy identified moderate-to-severe and severe aortic atherosclerosis, with no other significant natural disease.

The FAA Bioaeronautical Sciences Research Laboratory, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, performed toxicological testing of specimens from the pilot, which were negative for performance-impairing drugs or alcohol.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private; Sport Pilot	**Age:**	68,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea	**Seat Occupied:**	Unknown
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	**Restraint Used:**	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	**Second Pilot Present:**	
Instructor Rating(s):	None	**Toxicology Performed:**	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 3 With waivers/limitations	**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	September 1, 2016
Occupational Pilot:	No	**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	
Flight Time:	(Estimated)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	SCODA AERONAUTICA LTDA	**Registration:**	N892SP
Model/Series:	SUPER PETREL LS	**Aircraft Category:**	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	2015	**Amateur Built:**	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Experimental light sport (Special)	**Serial Number:**	S0344
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle; Amphibian	**Seats:**	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	**Certified Max Gross Wt.:**	1430 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		**Engines:**	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		**Engine Manufacturer:**	ROTAX
ELT:	Installed	**Engine Model/Series:**	912ULS2
Registered Owner:	STAPLETON RICK	**Rated Power:**	100 Horsepower
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,3189 ft msl	**Distance from Accident Site:**	32 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	08:53 Local	**Direction from Accident Site:**	145°
Lowest Cloud Condition:		**Visibility**	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast / 1400 ft AGL	**Visibility (RVR):**	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	3 knots /	**Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:**	None / None
Wind Direction:	130°	**Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:**	N/A / N/A
Altimeter Setting:	30.11 inches Hg	**Temperature/Dew Point:**	10°C / 9°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Polson, MT (8S1)	**Type of Flight Plan Filed:**	None
Destination:	Perma, MT	**Type of Clearance:**	None
Departure Time:	08:00 Local	**Type of Airspace:**	Class G

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		**Aircraft Fire:**	None
Ground Injuries:		**Aircraft Explosion:**	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	**Latitude, Longitude:**	47.35957,-114.54778

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Nepomuceno, Eleazar
Additional Participating Persons:	John Cosenza; FAA; Misoulla, MT
Original Publish Date:	October 3, 2024
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class 3
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=106040