Aviation Investigation Preliminary Report

Location:	Claxton, GA	**Accident Number:**	ERA23FA274
Date & Time:	June 25, 2023, 12:32 Local	**Registration:**	N7240Y
Aircraft:	Piper PA-30	**Injuries:**	3 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Instructional		

On June 25, 2023, at 1232 eastern daylight time, a Piper PA-30, N7240Y, was substantially damaged when it was involved in an accident near Claxton, Georgia. The pilot, flight instructor, and pilot-rated passenger were fatally injured. The airplane was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)* Part 91 instructional flight.

According to preliminary automatic dependent surveillance – broadcast (ADS-B) data provided by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the airplane departed Swinton Smith Field - Reidsville Municipal Airport (RVJ), Reidsville, Georgia about 1140, and was destined for Claxton - Evans County Airport (CWV), Claxton, Georgia. The airplane landed at CWV about 1151.

Review of data provided by the Civil Air Patrol National Radar Analysis Team, revealed that the airplane departed CWV about 1231 and the last target was recorded about 1 minute later. Further examination of the data indicated that after takeoff, the airplane's maximum altitude reached was 125 ft above ground level (agl).

Later that day, when the airplane had not returned to RVJ, family members became concerned and contacted the FAA.

After a search of the area by the Evans County Sheriff's Office, the wreckage of the airplane was found about 0457 on the following day, in a wooded area on a magnetic bearing of 102°, 0.34 nautical miles from the departure end of runway 10.

The purpose of the flight was for the flight instructor to prepare the pilot (who was the chief pilot and owner of a flight school) for a 14 *CFR* Part 141 proficiency check with an FAA examiner that was scheduled on the following day. The pilot-rated passenger owned the airplane and was onboard to observe and familiarize himself with the airplane.

According to the flight school's assistant chief pilot, activity planned for the flight included practice standard twin engine maneuvers to include a single engine minimum control speed (Vmc) demonstration and an instrument approach with a simulated engine failure.

On the day of the accident, fuel was not available at RVJ as the fuel pumps were not operative, and the pilot planned to get fuel at CWV. During the refueling process at CWV, the motor for the airport's fuel pump failed and only about 3/4 of a gallon of fuel could be dispensed.

Examination of the accident site and wreckage revealed that the airplane impacted the ground in a nose down, left wing low attitude. The left wingtip was located at the initial ground impact location, which was about 30 ft from the main wreckage. There was no evidence of fire or impact with the surrounding trees.

The airplane came to rest upright with the fuselage aligned on a magnetic heading of approximately 013°.

Significant compression damage was visible to the nose and cockpit floor along with the top of the fuselage above the baggage door location. The left side of the aft fuselage was buckled. The empennage revealed little damage. Both engine nacelles sustained compression damage on their respective top surfaces and were bent upward.

The leading edge of the left wing was compressed and torn. The left wingtip was separated at the point of initial ground impact. The left wing exhibited compression damage along the entire leading edge. The left aileron was separated at the outboard attach hinge and remained attached at the inboard hinge. The outboard end of the left wing was torn at a position even with the inboard end of the aileron.

The right wing was bent upward outboard of the flap/aileron juncture and buckling was noted on the top surface of the wing. The right aileron was also bent upward. The right wingtip was lodged against a pine tree deforming the tip.

The wing flaps were in the retracted position.

Flight control continuity was established from the ailerons, stabilator, and rudder to the base of the control column and rudder bar. The rudder trim actuator was found with 5 threads exposed, which corresponded to a nose right setting, with 0 threads being full nose right and 7-8 threads being neutral. The stabilator trim actuator was found with an exposed dimension of 0.35 inches, which corresponded to a slight nose down setting.

The left propeller displayed blade polishing and S-bending. The right propeller did not display any signatures consistent with engine power.

Examination of the instrument panel revealed that the engine rpm indicator displayed approximately 3,100 rpm for the left engine and 890 rpm for the right engine. The exhaust gas temperature gauge indicated about 200° for the left engine, and off scale low for the right engine.

The fuel quantity indicator displayed below empty for the right wing tanks and slightly below 1/4 full for the left wing tanks.

Both throttle levers were approximately in the full throttle position, both propeller levers were full forward, and both mixture control levers were just lean of full rich.

The landing gear handle was found in the neutral position and damage to all three landing gear was consistent with the landing extended at the time of the accident.

The left fuel selector was found selected to MAIN and was in the detent. The right fuel selector was found between the AUX and OFF position and was not in a detent.

Approximately 4.5 inches of fuel remained in the right auxiliary fuel tank as measured using a dipstick. No fuel was present in the right main tank. No fuel was visible in the left main or left aux tanks; however, when the wreckage was moved for access to the underside of the fuselage, a small amount of fuel was observed to flow out from the front of the wing. Both fuel selector valves were disassembled for examination. Fuel was present in the left fuel selector valve. Fuel was not present in the right fuel selector valve. The screens of both fuel selector valves appeared clean except for a small amount of debris on the right screen. The fuel present in the left fuel selector valve appeared clear and was consistent with aviation gasoline. Both main tank in-line finger screens were clear and free of any obstructions. Both auxiliary fuel tank in-line finger screens were clear and free of any obstructions.

Examination of the left engine revealed that a couple ounces of fuel were contained in the engine driven fuel pump. Fuel was also found in the fuel distribution manifold and in the fuel servo. The fuel servo screen was clean. Thumb compression was attained on all cylinders, the magnetos produced spark, oil was present in the engine, and drive train continuity was established. The examination of the left engine did not reveal any preimpact failures or mechanical anomalies.

Examination of the right engine revealed that only a few drops of fuel were present in the engine driven fuel pump. No fuel was found in the fuel distribution manifold. About 1 tablespoon of fuel was found in the fuel servo. The fuel servo was clean. Thumb compression was attained on all cylinders, the magnetos produced spark, oil was present in the engine, and drive train continuity was established. The examination of the right engine did not reveal any preimpact failures or mechanical anomalies.

The wreckage was retained for further examination.

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	**Registration:**	N7240Y
Model/Series:	PA-30	**Aircraft Category:**	Airplane
Amateur Built:			
Operator:	Midcoast Aviation Services	**Operating Certificate(s) Held:**	Pilot school (141)
Operator Designator Code:	2MVS		

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	VMC	**Condition of Light:**	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KCWV,112 ft msl	**Observation Time:**	12:35 Local
Distance from Accident Site:	1 Nautical Miles	**Temperature/Dew Point:**	32°C /18°C
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	**Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:**	4 knots / , 310°
Lowest Ceiling:	None	**Visibility:**	7 miles
Altimeter Setting:	29.98 inches Hg	**Type of Flight Plan Filed:**	None
Departure Point:	Claxton, GA (CMV)	**Destination:**	

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	2 Fatal	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	1 Fatal	**Aircraft Fire:**	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Explosion:**	None
Total Injuries:	3 Fatal	**Latitude, Longitude:**	32.194017,-81.854217

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Gunther, Todd
Additional Participating Persons:	Rodney Hood; FAA / FSDO; Atlanta, GA Kris Wetherell; Piper Aircraft; Vero Beach, FL James Childers; Lycoming Engines; Williamsport, PA
Investigation Class:	Class 3
Note:	