



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	South Lyon, Michigan	Accident Number:	CEN24LA113
Date & Time:	February 12, 2024, 11:50 Local	Registration:	N87965
Aircraft:	Piper J3C-65	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Collision during takeoff/land	Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot reported that while on final approach to a private airstrip the airplane drifted left of the runway centerline. Before he could take corrective action, the airplane’s left wing impacted trees adjacent to the airstrip. The airplane came to rest suspended nose down in the trees with substantial damage to the vertical stabilizer, rudder, and the left wing and its wing strut. A postaccident review of available weather data indicated the reported surface wind was calm-to-3 knots and of variable direction at the time of the accident.

The pilot stated that there were no preimpact mechanical malfunctions or failures 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 trees during the landing approach.

Findings

Personnel issues	Monitoring environment - Pilot
Aircraft	Altitude - Not attained/maintained
Environmental issues	Tree(s) - Contributed to outcome

Factual Information

History of Flight

Approach-VFR pattern final	Collision during takeoff/land (Defining event)
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Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	71, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Rear
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:	Class 2 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	July 18, 2022
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	July 15, 2023
Flight Time:	(Estimated) 1817 hours (Total, all aircraft), 517 hours (Total, this make and model), 1583 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 5.4 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N87965
Model/Series:	J3C-65	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	1946	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	15583
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	April 2, 2023 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1440 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	21 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	1952 Hrs as of last inspection	Engine Manufacturer:	Continental
ELT:	C91 installed, activated, aided in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	A-65-8
Registered Owner:	On file	Rated Power:	65 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:	ARB,839 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	13 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	11:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	189°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	Unknown / Unknown
Wind Direction:		Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	Unknown / Unknown
Altimeter Setting:	29.93 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	2°C / -7°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Canton, MI (1D2)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	South Lyon, MI (PVT)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	11:15 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	Private PVT	Runway Surface Type:	Grass/turf
Airport Elevation:	910 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	36	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	2000 ft / 55 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Stop and go;Traffic pattern

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	42.43291,-83.6933(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Fox, Andrew
Additional Participating Persons:	James D. Reif; Federal Aviation Administration - East Michigan FSDO; Detroit, MI
Original Publish Date:	April 30, 2024
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=193779

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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](#).