



Aviation Investigation Preliminary Report

Location:	Knoxville, TN	Accident Number:	ERA24FA176
Date & Time:	April 12, 2024, 16:33 Local	Registration:	N9236J
Aircraft:	Piper PA-32R-301	Injuries:	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

On April 12, 2024, about 1633 eastern daylight time, a Piper PA-32R-301, N9236J, was substantially damaged when it was involved in an accident near Knoxville, Tennessee. The commercial pilot was fatally injured. The flight was operated under Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 as a personal flight.

According to the pilot’s spouse, the pilot was returning to home on the day of the accident. Preliminary flight track data obtained from the Federal Aviation Administration showed that the airplane departed from St. Petersburg, Florida, about 1130 and landed at Mc Ghee Tyson Airport (TYS), Knoxville, Tennessee, about 1530. The airplane was refueled and subsequently departed at 1617, on an instrument flight rules (IFR) flight plan with a planned destination of Gerald R Ford International Airport (GRR), Grand Rapids, Michigan.

After departure from runway 23L at TYS, air traffic control cleared the pilot to climb to 10,000 ft. The airplane turned right to a northwest heading and began climbing on course. During the climb, the pilot reported that the airplane was accumulating “moisture.” Shortly thereafter, the pilot declared a “MAYDAY” as the airplane began to descend from an altitude of 8,500 ft. Flight track data indicated an abrupt left turn of about 90°, followed by a clockwise spiraling descent. The airplane’s ground speed increased rapidly until track data was lost about 1634, approximately 15 nautical miles from TYS.

A witness reported that he was outside his residence when he heard what initially sounded like a propeller-driven airplane, but then resembled a “car over-revving.” He looked up and observed an airplane “falling out of the sky, twirling” and descending below the clouds until he lost sight of it. Subsequently, he heard “parts hitting the ground” nearby. He then located what was later identified as the airplane’s vertical stabilizer and rudder.

The wreckage site was dispersed over a 2-mile area. The main fuselage came to rest in a heavily wooded area at the base of a tree. The fuselage consisted of the engine, cockpit, cabin

section, and tailcone. Parts of the right wing were still attached to the fuselage at the main spar. The right wing was fragmented along the main spar, but the aileron, flap, and flight control cables were present at the accident site. The left wing was separated from the fuselage at the wing root and located about 1 mile from the main wreckage. The flap was separated from the wing and the aileron remained attached. The leading edge was torn revealing both the fuel bladder and a portion of the inboard fuel tank. The flight control cables were twisted and exhibited breaks consistent with overload.

The stabilator was broken in two pieces and located about 1.5 miles from the main fuselage in a heavily wooded area. The trim tab remained connected to the stabilator but was broken into two pieces. The stabilator and trim tab were impact damaged and buckled. The vertical stabilizer, with the rudder attached, was located 2 miles about from the fuselage and showed impact and buckling damage.

The airplane was retained for further examination.

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N9236J
Model/Series:	PA-32R-301 NO SERIES	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Amateur Built:			
Operator:	On file	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Designator Code:			

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	IMC	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	TYS,986 ft msl	Observation Time:	14:53 Local
Distance from Accident Site:	11 Nautical Miles	Temperature/Dew Point:	14°C /3°C
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Few / 5500 ft AGL	Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	19 knots / 28 knots, 240°
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 25000 ft AGL	Visibility:	9 miles
Altimeter Setting:	29.95 inches Hg	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	IFR
Departure Point:	Knoxville, TN (TYS)	Destination:	Grand Rapids, MI (GRR)

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	36,-84 (est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Alleyne, Eric

Additional Participating Persons: David Clouse; FAA/FSDO; Nashville, TN
Russel Gait; Lycoming Engines; Williamsport, PA
Jonathon Hirsh; Piper; Vero Beach, FL

Investigation Class: [Class 3](#)

Note: