



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Montmorenci, Indiana	Accident Number:	CEN24LA157
Date & Time:	April 11, 2024, 20:21 Local	Registration:	N564PU
Aircraft:	Piper PA-28-161	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:	Security/criminal event	Injuries:	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot departed on a local night flight, conducted four traffic pattern landings, and then climbed to about 4,000 ft mean sea level. About 10 miles from the airport, ADS-B data showed the airplane made numerous turns before data ended. The airplane was located the next day in an agricultural field; it was destroyed by impact forces.

Postaccident examination of the wreckage did not identify any anomalies that would have prevented normal operation of the airplane. The pilot left behind two notes suggesting that he was going to commit suicide. Following a death investigation, the county coroner classified the manner of death as a suicide.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:

The pilot’s intentional flight into terrain as an act of suicide.

Findings

Personnel issues	Suicide - Pilot
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Factual Information

History of Flight

Enroute-cruise

Security/criminal event (Defining event)

On April 11, 2024, about 2021 eastern daylight time, a Piper PA-28-161 airplane, N564PU, was destroyed when it was involved in an accident near Montmorenci, Indiana. The pilot sustained fatal injuries. The airplane was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 personal flight.

According to ADS-B data, the airplane departed the Purdue University Airport (LAF), Lafayette, Indiana, about 1940, for a local night flight. The airplane departed runway 28, conducted four traffic pattern landings, and then continued northwest climbing to about 4,000 ft mean sea level. About 10 miles from LAF, ADS-B data showed the airplane made numerous turns before data ended about 2021. The airplane was located the next day by local law enforcement about 1400.

The wreckage was located in an agricultural field and distributed on a magnetic heading of about 350°. The initial impact point was located about 70 ft from the main wreckage. The impact point contained the two-bladed propeller, propeller hub, and several separated sections of the lower fuselage. Fragmented sections of the left wing, engine components, and interior were found in the debris between the impact point and the main wreckage. Both wing leading edges were crushed aft to mid chord line. The forward fuselage was crushed aft to mid-cabin. The airplane damage was consistent with a high-angle and high-energy impact with terrain.

Postaccident examination did not identify any preaccident mechanical failures or malfunctions with the airplane that would have precluded normal operation.

An autopsy of the pilot was performed by the First Forensic Medical Laboratories, Lafayette, Indiana. The autopsy report listed the cause of death as multiple blunt force trauma and the manner of death as suicide.

The FAA Forensic Sciences Laboratory performed toxicology testing on specimens from the pilot. The pilot's postmortem toxicology testing detected two metabolites of delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (delta-9 THC): the psychoactive metabolite 11-hydroxy-THC in urine, and the non-psychoactive metabolite carboxy-delta-9-THC in cavity blood and urine. Caffeine and cotinine were detected in cavity blood by screening without secondary confirmation testing.

11-hydroxy-THC is a psychoactive metabolite of delta-9-THC. Carboxy-delta-9-THC is a non-psychoactive metabolite of delta-9-THC. Delta-9-THC (which was not detected in this case) is the primary psychoactive chemical in cannabis, including marijuana and hashish. Delta-9-THC

may be smoked, vaped, or ingested recreationally by users seeking mind-altering effects. It may also be used medicinally to treat symptoms including illness-associated nausea and appetite loss. Psychoactive effects of delta-9-THC vary depending on the user, dose, and route of administration. It may impair motor coordination, reaction time, decision making, problem solving, and vigilance.

Caffeine is a stimulant that is commonly ingested, including in coffee, tea, soft drinks, and chocolate, and is also an ingredient in certain anti-drowsiness medications and headache medications, as well as some illicit stimulant drugs. Cotinine is found in tobacco and is a metabolite of nicotine. Neither caffeine nor cotinine is generally considered impairing.

The pilot left behind two notes. One of the notes was to a family member and the second was a general note, both of which suggested that the pilot was going to commit suicide.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Private	Age:	20, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Unknown
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	Unknown
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane single-engine	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Without waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	January 8, 2021
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:			

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N564PU
Model/Series:	PA-28-161	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	2002	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	2842169
Landing Gear Type:	Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	April 2, 2024 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2440 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	13662 Hrs as of last inspection	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	C91A installed, activated, did not aid in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	O-320-D36
Registered Owner:	PURDUE AVIATION LLC	Rated Power:	160 Horsepower
Operator:	On file	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	Pilot school (141)

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Night
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KLAF, 596 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	7 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	20:54 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	143°
Lowest Cloud Condition:		Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 10000 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	7 knots / None	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	320°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29.54 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	11°C / 7°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	West Lafayette, IN (LAF)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	West Lafayette, IN (LAF)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	19:39 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class E

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:		Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	40.5,-87.033333

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Finne, Andrew
Additional Participating Persons:	Pietras, Aaron; FAA-FSDO; Indianapolis, IN
Original Publish Date:	February 20, 2025
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class 3
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=194087

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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](#).