



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	SULPHUR SPRINGS, Texas	Accident Number:	FTW96LA141
Date & Time:	March 4, 1996, 17:50 Local	Registration:	N40273
Aircraft:	Piper PA-23-250	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

Following a partial right engine power loss in cruise flight, the pilot decided to make a precautionary landing at a nearby airport. While maneuvering to the airport, he noted the gear down indicator lights did not illuminate when he placed the gear handle down. After manually extending the landing gear, the pilot realized he 'didn't have enough altitude to reach [the] airfield.' A witness observed the airplane impact the surface of a lake and, subsequently, sink.

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 terrain clearance. A factor was his diverted attention to the performance of the manual gear extension procedure.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER
Phase of Operation: CRUISE

- Findings
- 1 ENGINE
 - REASON FOR OCCURRENCE UNDETERMINED
 - PRECAUTIONARY LANDING - ATTEMPTED - PILOT IN COMMAND
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Occurrence #2: AIRFRAME/COMPONENT/SYSTEM FAILURE/MALFUNCTION

Phase of Operation: APPROACH

Findings

4. LANDING GEAR,NORMAL RETRACTION/EXTENSION ASSEMBLY - UNDETERMINED
5. LANDING GEAR,NORMAL RETRACTION/EXTENSION ASSEMBLY - INOPERATIVE
6. GEAR EXTENSION - PERFORMED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: APPROACH

Findings

7. TERRAIN CONDITION - WATER
8. (C) CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
9. (F) DIVERTED ATTENTION - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

On March 4, 1996, at 1750 central standard time, a Piper PA-23-250, N40273, operated by a private owner under Title 14 CFR Part 91, impacted water during approach to the Sulphur Springs Municipal Airport near Sulphur Springs, Texas. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and a flight plan was not filed. The airplane sustained substantial damage and the private pilot sustained minor injuries. The flight originated from Tulsa, Oklahoma, at 1615 and the intended destination was Tyler, Texas.

The pilot reported that a partial loss of right engine power occurred during cruise flight about 20 miles north of Sulphur Springs. He further reported that "it felt like the turbo was out." Subsequently, the pilot made a decision to divert to Sulphur Springs and, while maneuvering to the airport, noted that the gear down indicator lights did not illuminate when he placed the gear handle down. After manually extending the landing gear, the pilot realized that he "didn't have enough altitude to reach [the] airfield." A witness saw the airplane "flying very low" over Lake Sulphur Springs and reported the airplane's "right wing hit water and the plane abruptly went nose first into the water."

After the airplane was pulled from the lake by local authorities, it was examined by an FAA inspector. The inspector reported that the outboard right wing was separated from the airframe, and the fuselage and left wing sustained structural damage.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	42, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	September 26, 1994
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	2267 hours (Total, all aircraft), 7 hours (Total, this make and model), 2100 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 7 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N40273
Model/Series:	PA-23-250 PA-23-250	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	27-7305088
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	6
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	February 1, 1996 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	5200 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	2 Hrs	Engines:	2 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	3360 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	T10-540-C1A
Registered Owner:	CRAIG POOL INTERESTS, INC.	Rated Power:	250 Horsepower
Operator:		Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Does Business As:		Operator Designator Code:	

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:		Distance from Accident Site:	
Observation Time:		Direction from Accident Site:	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 4000 ft AGL	Visibility	5 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	25 knots / 30 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	180°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:		Temperature/Dew Point:	24°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	TULSA , OK (TUL)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	(SLR)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	16:15 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:		Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:		Runway Surface Condition:	
Runway Used:	0	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	Precautionary landing

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Minor	Latitude, Longitude:	

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Snyder, Georgia
Additional Participating Persons:	THOMAS J TUCKER; DALLAS , TX
Original Publish Date:	June 22, 1996
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=19779

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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](#).