



Aviation Investigation Final Report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Location: | DEATH VALLEY, California | Accident Number: | LAX85LA190 |
| Date & Time: | March 28, 1985, 16:00 Local | Registration: | N802Y |
| Aircraft: | PIPER PA-30 | Aircraft Damage: | Substantial |
| Defining Event: | | Injuries: | 1 None |
| Flight Conducted Under: | Part 91: General aviation | | |

Analysis

DURING A FLT FROM RENO, NV TO PHOENIX, AZ, THERE WAS A PARTIAL POWER LOSS IN THE LEFT ENG AS THE ACFT WAS CLIMBING THRU 15,000 FT WITH AN OUTSIDE AIR TEMP OF -15 DEG. THE FUEL SELECTORS COULD NOT BE MOVED, SO THE PLT RETARDED THE RIGHT ENG POWER & DESCENDED. THE LEFT ENG CONTINUED TO RUN ROUGH, SO HE DIVERTED & LANDED AT THE DEATH VALLEY ARPT. ABOUT 1/2 HR AFTER LANDING, THE FUEL SELECTOR COULD BE MOVED. THE PLT SAID HE DRAINED THE FUEL TANKS UNTIL THE ENGS RAN SMOOTHLY. HE THEN LOADED HIS PASSENGERS & STARTED BOTH ENGS. WHILE TAXIING TO TAKEOFF, THE LEFT ENG LOST POWER & WOULD NOT RESTART. THE PASSENGERS DEPLANED & THEN THE PLT MADE A SINGLE ENG TAKEOFF. AFTER THE ACFT BECAME AIRBORNE, IT CLIMBED BRIEFLY, THEN BEGAN TURNING TO THE LEFT. AFTER TURNING ABOUT 130 DEG, THE ACFT IMPACTED THE GROUND BETWEEN 2 SAND DUNES. WATER WAS FOUND IN THE LEFT ENG SERVO & RIGHT MAIN FUEL SUMP. A SMALL AMOUNT OF WATER WAS FOUND MIXED WITH FUEL IN THE MAIN TANKS.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF - INITIAL CLIMB

Findings

1. (C) JUDGMENT - POOR - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (F) OVERCONFIDENCE IN AIRCRAFT'S ABILITY - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (F) ENGINE ASSEMBLY, OTHER - INOPERATIVE
4. (C) OPERATION WITH KNOWN DEFICIENCIES IN EQUIPMENT - INTENTIONAL - PILOT IN COMMAND
5. (C) AIRCRAFT HANDLING - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF

Factual Information

Pilot Information

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|----------------------------------|--|--|-----------------|
| Certificate: | Private | Age: | 58, 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--w/ waivers/lim | Last FAA Medical Exam: | August 17, 1984 |
| Occupational Pilot: | No | Last Flight Review or Equivalent: | |
| Flight Time: | 3039 hours (Total, all aircraft), 2418 hours (Total, this make and model), 2707 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 27 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 2 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft) | | |

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

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|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Aircraft Make: | PIPER | Registration: | N802Y |
| Model/Series: | PA-30 PA-30 | Aircraft Category: | Airplane |
| Year of Manufacture: | | Amateur Built: | |
| Airworthiness Certificate: | Normal | Serial Number: | 30-784 |
| Landing Gear Type: | Retractable - Tricycle | Seats: | 4 |
| Date/Type of Last Inspection: | August 20, 1984 Annual | Certified Max Gross Wt.: | 3600 lbs |
| Time Since Last Inspection: | | Engines: | 2 Reciprocating |
| Airframe Total Time: | 3563 Hrs | Engine Manufacturer: | LYCOMING |
| ELT: | Installed, not activated | Engine Model/Series: | IO-320-B1A |
| Registered Owner: | ADELBERT C. UNDERWOOD | Rated Power: | 160 Horsepower |
| Operator: | UNDERWOOD ASSOC. INC. | Operating Certificate(s) Held: | None |
| Operator Does Business As: | | Operator Designator Code: | |

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

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|---|----------------------------------|---|----------|
| 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 / 10000 ft AGL | Visibility | 15 miles |
| Lowest Ceiling: | None | Visibility (RVR): | |
| Wind Speed/Gusts: | 10 knots / 15 knots | Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Wind Direction: | 180° | Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Altimeter Setting: | | Temperature/Dew Point: | 18°C |
| Precipitation and Obscuration: | No Obscuration; No Precipitation | | |
| Departure Point: | DEATH VALLEY , CA (L06) | Type of Flight Plan Filed: | None |
| Destination: | | Type of Clearance: | None |
| Departure Time: | 16:00 Local | Type of Airspace: | Class G |

Airport Information

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|-----------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|---------|
| Airport: | DEATH VALLEY L06 | Runway Surface Type: | Asphalt |
| Airport Elevation: | 211 ft msl | Runway Surface Condition: | Dry |
| Runway Used: | 15 | IFR Approach: | None |
| Runway Length/Width: | 3040 ft / 70 ft | VFR Approach/Landing: | None |

Wreckage and Impact Information

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|----------------------------|--------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Crew Injuries: | 1 None | Aircraft Damage: | Substantial |
| Passenger Injuries: | | Aircraft Fire: | None |
| Ground Injuries: | N/A | Aircraft Explosion: | None |
| Total Injuries: | 1 None | Latitude, Longitude: | 36.60078,-116.830795(est) |

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Wall, James

Additional Participating Persons: JAMES J SHIELDS; LAX VEGAS , NV

Original Publish Date:

Last Revision Date:

Investigation Class: [Class](#)

Note:

Investigation Docket: <https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=24686>

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant events in other modes of transportation—railroad, transit, highway, marine, pipeline, and commercial space. We determine the probable causes of the accidents and events we investigate, and issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future occurrences. In addition, we conduct transportation safety research studies and offer information and other assistance to family members and survivors for each accident or event we investigate. We also serve as the appellate authority for enforcement actions involving aviation and mariner certificates issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and US Coast Guard, and we adjudicate appeals of civil penalty actions taken by the FAA.

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](#).