



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	LEE VINING, California	Accident Number:	LAX91LA154
Date & Time:	April 1, 1991, 21:00 Local	Registration:	N1941Y
Aircraft:	MOONEY M-20E	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

THE CERTIFICATED PRIVATE PILOT WAS ON A CROSS COUNTRY FLIGHT THAT BEGAN AT ABOUT 0830 HOURS AND WAS PLANNED TO COVER ABOUT 1,300 NAUTICAL MILES. THE PILOT DEPARTED HIS LAST FUEL STOP AT ABOUT 2000 HOURS WHERE A WITNESS REPORTED THAT THE PILOT APPEARED FATIGUED. THE ROUTE OF FLIGHT WAS OVER HIGH MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN THAT HAD A MINIMUM FLIGHT ELEVATION OF 13,500 FEET. AN EMERGENCY LOCATOR TRANSMITTER SIGNAL WAS RECEIVED AT 0024 HOURS, LOCATED 105 MILES WEST OF THE LAST DEPARTURE AIRPORT. THE AIRPLANE WAS LOCATED BY SEARCH PERSONNEL AT 11,000 FEET AND HAD IMPACTED A MOUNTAIN SIDE IN A REMOTE AREA OF DEEP SNOW. AT THE ACCIDENT LOCATION, THE AIRPLANE WAS ABOUT 1,000 FEET BELOW THE MOUNTAIN RIDGE LINE. THE TIME AND LOCATION OF THE ACCIDENT PLACED THE AIRPLANE IN AN AREA THAT DID NOT HAVE ANY GROUND OR MOON ILLUMINATION.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: THE FAILURE OF THE PILOT TO MAINTAIN ADEQUATE ALTITUDE TO CLEAR MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN. CONTRIBUTING TO THE ACCIDENT WAS PILOT FATIGUE DUE TO A LENGTHY CROSS COUNTRY FLIGHT.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: CRUISE - NORMAL

Findings

1. TERRAIN CONDITION - SNOW COVERED
2. (C) PROPER ALTITUDE - NOT ATTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (F) VISUAL LOOKOUT - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (F) FATIGUE(FLIGHT SCHEDULE) - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	46, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	December 11, 1991
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	303 hours (Total, all aircraft), 154 hours (Total, this make and model), 175 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 44 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 21 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	MOONEY	Registration:	N1941Y
Model/Series:	M-20E M-20E	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	248
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	January 2, 2000 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2575 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	LYCOMING
ELT:	Installed, activated, aided in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	IO-360-AIA
Registered Owner:	ALAN D. MC DONALD	Rated Power:	200 Horsepower
Operator:	ALAN D. MC DONALD	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:	Night/dark
Observation Facility, Elevation:	MCE ,153 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	70 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	20:46 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	220°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	20 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	0°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	11°C / 8°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	TONOPAH , NV (THP)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	STOCKTON , CA (SCK)	Type of Clearance:	VFR
Departure Time:	20:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	Special

Airport Information

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

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	37.990936,-119.109428(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Erickson, Scott

Additional Participating Persons: GEORGE EICHER; RENO , NV

Original Publish Date: May 27, 1993

Last Revision Date:

Investigation Class: [Class](#)

Note:

Investigation Docket: <https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=27156>

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](#).