



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	VISALIA, California	Accident Number:	LAX93LA216
Date & Time:	May 15, 1993, 20:15 Local	Registration:	N9520L
Aircraft:	GRUMMAN AMERICAN AA5	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

THE AIRPLANE COLLIDED WITH TRANSMISSION WIRES OVER A RIVER. WITNESSES REPORTED THAT THE AIRPLANE CAUGHT ON FIRE AFTER COLLIDING WITH THE WIRES. THE PILOT LANDED THE AIRPLANE IN AN OPEN FIELD, AND IT WAS CONSUMED BY THE FIRE. A DEPUTY SHERIFF INVESTIGATING THE ACCIDENT NOTED A HEAVY ODOR OF ALCOHOL ON THE PILOT'S BREATH. THE PILOT WAS GIVEN A FIELD SOBRIETY TEST AT THE SCENE OF THE ACCIDENT AND LATER AT THE JAIL. HE FAILED THESE TESTS, AND THEN REFUSED TO TAKE A CHEMICAL BLOOD ALCOHOL TEST. WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY, BLOOD WAS FORCIBLY TAKEN FROM THE PILOT FOR A TOXICOLOGICAL EXAM. THE BLOOD SAMPLE WAS TAKEN ABOUT 2 HRS 35 MIN AFTER THE ACCIDENT. THE RESULTS OF THE TEST WERE POSITIVE WITH A BLOOD ALCOHOL LEVEL OF 0.12%.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: THE PILOT'S FAILURE TO SEE AND AVOID THE WIRES DUE TO ALCOHOL IMPAIRMENT. A FACTOR WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACCIDENT WAS UNWARRANTED LOW FLYING OVER THE RIVER.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: CRUISE

Findings

1. (C) VISUAL LOOKOUT - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (C) IMPAIRMENT(ALCOHOL) - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (F) ALTITUDE - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. OBJECT - WIRE,TRANSMISSION

Occurrence #2: FIRE

Phase of Operation: CRUISE

Occurrence #3: FORCED LANDING

Phase of Operation: LANDING

Factual Information

On May 15, 1993, about 2015 hours Pacific daylight time, a Grumman American AA5, N9520L, collided with transmission wires while in cruise flight, near Visalia, California. After colliding with the wires, the airplane caught on fire during flight. The pilot landed the airplane in a field and the airplane was consumed by fire. The certificated private pilot was not injured. The airplane was being operated as a personal flight by Steven P. Haworth of Visalia. The flight originated in Tulare, California, about 1930 hours and had an undetermined destination. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and a flight plan was not filed.

In the pilot's completed "Aircraft Accident Report," NTSB Form 6120.1, the pilot stated "...approximately 5 miles northeast of the airport, I began to be aware of what smelled like burning plastic and smoke began to fill the cockpit." He said the engine continued to run "ok," and he set up for an emergency descent into a cotton field. He said he "found out later that apparently at approximately the point at which I flared the aircraft, I may have clipped some utility poles."

The Tulare County Sheriff's Department investigated the accident and provided the NTSB with a copy of their report which is attached to this report as Item 4.

The Sheriff's Deputy contacted and interviewed two witnesses and the pilot. The first witness said that he "saw a small flame come from a low flying airplane." He said he later saw fire coming from a field in the same general area of the airplane. He said he did not see the airplane land.

The second witness interviewed by the Deputy Sheriff said that he saw a small airplane "flying low over the river." He reported that he "saw it clip the power lines at the river and catch on fire." He further reported that he watched it land in a dirt field.

The pilot told the Deputy Sheriff that he "clipped the power lines over the river and lost power." The pilot then said that he made a controlled landing in the field.

The responding Deputy Sheriff said that he "immediately smelled the heavy odor of alcohol on Mr. Haworth's breath and observed that his eyes were red and watery." The Deputy Sheriff said that he administered a field sobriety test to the pilot. He reported that the pilot did not pass any of the functions required of a field sobriety test. The Deputy said he detained the pilot in the back of his patrol car.

The Deputy transported the pilot to the Tulare Jail. According to the Deputy's report, the pilot failed another series of sobriety tests after arriving at the jail. The Deputy's report said the pilot refused to take a chemical blood/alcohol test. The Deputy contacted the District Attorney on

duty and was told to forcibly draw blood from the pilot. The report stated that a laboratory technician drew blood samples from the pilot at about 2250 hours, about two hours and thirty five minutes after the accident.

MEDICAL AND PATHOLOGICAL INFORMATION:

A toxicological examination was performed on the blood specimens from the pilot by Mineral King Laboratory of Tulare. The completed report, dated May 20, 1993, confirmed positive results for alcohol as follows:

"Blood Alcohol 0.12 %"

A copy of the toxicological report is attached to this report as Item 5.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

According to the "Aircraft Accident Report," NTSB Form 6120.1, the accident airplane's last annual inspection was conducted on October 12, 1990. According to the same report, the pilot's last biennial flight review was completed on February 15, 1989.

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:	March 5, 1992
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	900 hours (Total, all aircraft), 800 hours (Total, this make and model), 900 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	GRUMMAN AMERICAN	Registration:	N9520L
Model/Series:	AA5 AA5	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	0520
Landing Gear Type:	Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	October 12, 1990 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2200 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	10 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	1875 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	LYCOMING
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	O-320-E2G
Registered Owner:	STEVEN P. HAWORTH	Rated Power:	150 Horsepower
Operator:	STEVEN P. HAWORTH	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:	Dusk
Observation Facility, Elevation:	VIS ,292 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	5 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	19:55 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	45°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Unknown	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 11000 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	7 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	310°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	26°C / 9°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	TULARE , CA (TLR)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	19:30 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:	None

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	In-flight
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	36.29039,-119.379371(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Childress, Richard
Additional Participating Persons:	GREG MINARIK; FRESNO , CA
Original Publish Date:	September 27, 1994
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=28383

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