



# Aviation Investigation Final Report

<b>Location:</b>	ELK GROVE, California	<b>Accident Number:</b>	LAX96FA120
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	February 22, 1996, 14:05 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N75772
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Piper J3C-65	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	2 Fatal
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

## Analysis

The airplane struck one of three 340-foot-high radio transmission towers about 37 feet from the top. The airplane had departed the pilot's private ranch airstrip located about 1.28 nautical miles southeast of the tower minutes before the accident. The towers are depicted on the aeronautical sectional chart, and were marked as an obstruction to air navigation with alternate sections of aviation orange and aviation white paint.

## 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 obstruction.

## Findings

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

### Findings

1. (C) VISUAL LOOKOUT - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. OBJECT - TOWER(MARKED)

## Factual Information

### History of Flight

On February 22, 1996, at 1405 hours Pacific standard time, a Piper J3C-65, N75772, collided with a radio tower near Elk Grove, California. The airplane was destroyed and the pilot and passenger received fatal injuries. The airplane was being operated as a personal flight under 14 CFR Part 91 when the accident occurred. The airplane departed a private ranch airstrip located about 1.28 nautical miles southeast of the tower minutes before the accident. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time.

Witnesses reported the airplane struck the KSTE radio tower and knocked it down. The tower was painted with alternate bands of aviation orange and white and is depicted on the San Francisco Aeronautical Sectional Chart.

Other damage included a small building and a security fence.

### Pilot Information

The pilot held a private pilot certificate which was issued on December 20, 1987, with ratings for single and multiengine airplanes.

The most recent third-class medical certificate was issued to the pilot on April 6, 1996, and contained no limitations.

No personal flight records were located for the pilot, and the aeronautical experience listed in this report was obtained from a review of the airmen FAA records. The pilot reported a total time of 2,780 hours during his last medical exam. There was no evidence found of the pilot having completed a flight review since receiving a multiengine airplane rating on December 20, 1987.

### Aircraft Information

The airplane was manufactured in 1945. According to the family, the pilot purchased the airplane in 1986 or 1987. The pilot failed to register the airplane after the purchase. Examination of the maintenance records provided to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) by the pilot's family revealed that the last annual inspection for the airframe and the engine was accomplished on May 17, 1986.

### Wreckage and Impact Information

The airplane struck one of three 340-foot-high radio transmission towers about 37 feet from the top. The towers were located about 1.28 nautical miles northwest of the pilot's private ranch strip. The towers were marked as an obstruction to air navigation.

After the collision with the tower, the airplane's left wing and left landing gear separated. The airplane descended uncontrolled impacting a guy wire from the tower, and then the ground in a nose-down attitude. The guy wire entangled in the tail and remained attached to the airframe.

One of the left wing struts also separated and had leading edge crushing and buckling. The damaged area of the wing strut also had an aviation orange paint transfer.

Control continuity was established for all flight controls. The wooden propeller was splintered in a direction opposite to rotation.

The engine was buried in the ground. The oil sump assembly, the exhaust manifold, the intake tubes, and the carburetor were damaged from the impact with the ground. The propeller flange on the crankshaft was also bent.

The crankshaft was rotated and continuity of the engine gear train, valve train, and drive train was established. Fuel was found in the engine. It had an aroma consistent with that of automotive gasoline.

There was no evidence of mechanical failure or malfunction found during the examination of the airplane's wreckage.

#### Medical and Pathological Information

Post mortem examinations were conducted by the Sacramento County Coroner's Office with specimens retained for toxicological examination.

Blood samples obtained from the pilot were toxicologically tested by the FAA Civil Aeromedical Institute (CAMI). The blood tested negative for a drug screen which included ethanol, carbon monoxide, and cyanide, and a drug screen on the urine sample tested negative. A copy of the CAMI Report is attached.

Blood samples and urine obtained from the passenger were also toxicologically tested. The specimens tested negative for the drug screen.

#### Additional Information

The airplane was retrieved and released to Plains Parts by the Safety Board on April 3, 1996, pending the FAA's determination of aircraft ownership.

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	44, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea; Multi-engine land	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Rear
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	Yes
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 3 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	April 6, 1995
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	No	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	2780 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Piper	<b>Registration:</b>	N75772
<b>Model/Series:</b>	J3C-65 J3C-65	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Airplane
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Normal	<b>Serial Number:</b>	13561
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Tailwheel	<b>Seats:</b>	2
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	May 17, 1996 Annual	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	1220 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>		<b>Engines:</b>	1 Reciprocating
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>		<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	Continental
<b>ELT:</b>	Not installed	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	A65
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	PERHAM, JEFFREY E.	<b>Rated Power:</b>	65 Horsepower
<b>Operator:</b>		<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None
<b>Operator Does Business As:</b>		<b>Operator Designator Code:</b>	

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Visual (VMC)	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Day
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>	SAC ,21 ft msl	<b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>	10 Nautical Miles
<b>Observation Time:</b>	13:51 Local	<b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>	265°
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>	Scattered / 5000 ft AGL	<b>Visibility</b>	60 miles
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	None	<b>Visibility (RVR):</b>	
<b>Wind Speed/Gusts:</b>	4 knots /	<b>Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Wind Direction:</b>	310°	<b>Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Altimeter Setting:</b>	30 inches Hg	<b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>	12°C / 1°C
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
<b>Departure Point:</b>	, CA	<b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>	None
<b>Destination:</b>		<b>Type of Clearance:</b>	None
<b>Departure Time:</b>	14:00 Local	<b>Type of Airspace:</b>	Class G

## Airport Information

<b>Airport:</b>	PRIVATE	<b>Runway Surface Type:</b>	Asphalt
<b>Airport Elevation:</b>		<b>Runway Surface Condition:</b>	Dry
<b>Runway Used:</b>	30	<b>IFR Approach:</b>	None
<b>Runway Length/Width:</b>	1850 ft / 50 ft	<b>VFR Approach/Landing:</b>	None

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	1 Fatal	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>	1 Fatal	<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	None
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Total Injuries:</b>	2 Fatal	<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	38.439445,-121.300552(est)

## Administrative Information

<b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>	Wilcox, Thomas
<b>Additional Participating Persons:</b>	JOHN L HANCOCK; SACRAMENTO , CA CHARLES R LITTLE; VERO BEACH , FL
<b>Original Publish Date:</b>	November 25, 1996
<b>Last Revision Date:</b>	
<b>Investigation Class:</b>	<a href="#">Class</a>
<b>Note:</b>	
<b>Investigation Docket:</b>	<a href="https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=29263">https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=29263</a>

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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](#).