



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	PLACERVILLE, California	Accident Number:	LAX96LA040
Date & Time:	November 4, 1995, 09:58 Local	Registration:	N3358D
Aircraft:	Cessna 180	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	2 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The airplane approached an open field at tree-top level and struck a 34-foot utility pole about 6 feet from its top, then it burst into flames and crashed in the field. A friend of the pilot who was operating a tractor in the field saw the airplane at low altitude. He stated that the pilot had buzzed him in the past, and he thought that the pilot intended to buzz him again. A representative from the aircraft manufacturer flew over the same route, under similar weather conditions, and at about the same altitude and time of day. He reported (to the investigator) that he had difficulty seeing the lines and poles due to sun glare and similar color terrain, although he knew their location. Also, ground witnesses noted that the tractor was generating dust near the pole at the time of the accident. Toxicology tests of the pilot's blood showed 0.027 mcg/ml Temazepam (a short-term sleep aid), and a low level of Temazepam was detected in his urine. Also, a low level of Oxazepam (a metabolite of Temazepam) was detected in the pilot's blood and urine. Previous studies of Temazepam blood levels suggest that at least 24 hours had elapsed since the pilot had last utilized the drug; thus, the drug was unlikely to have affected the pilot's performance.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: the pilot's intentional buzzing, his failure to identify an obstruction (inadequate visual lookout), and his failure to maintain adequate altitude/clearance from the obstruction (utility pole). Factors relating to the accident were: dust generated by farm machinery and sun glare, which reduced the pilot's ability to visually detect the obstruction.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT

Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

Findings

1. (C) BUZZING - INTENTIONAL - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (F) LIGHT CONDITION - SUNGLARE
3. (C) VISUAL LOOKOUT - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (F) VISUAL/AURAL DETECTION - PILOT IN COMMAND
5. OBJECT - UTILITY POLE
6. (C) ALTITUDE/CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Factual Information

On November 4, 1995, about 0958 hours Pacific standard time, a Cessna 180, N3358D, collided with a utility pole while maneuvering at Placerville, California. The aircraft was destroyed and the certificated commercial pilot/flight instructor and his passenger/pilot both received fatal injuries. The aircraft was being operated as a personal flight by the passenger/pilot when the accident occurred. The flight originated in Placerville about 0800 with a stopover in Auburn, California. The aircraft departed Auburn about 0935. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time and no flight plan had been filed.

A witness reported seeing the aircraft approaching from the north. It continued in a northerly direction at tree top level until it was over an open field. As the aircraft crossed the field, its flight path was obstructed by utility lines which traversed the field along a generally east-to-west path. The lines were supported by a series of single 40-foot wooden poles which extended about 34 feet above ground level. Debris from the right wing, a corresponding semicircular indentation on the leading edge, and a matching paint smear about 6 feet from the top of the pole were evidence of the initial impact. After initial impact, witnesses stated the aircraft yawed right and burst into flames before crashing in plowed terrain. After ground impact, the aircraft nosed over and continued to burn.

The accident site was located in a plowed field at latitude 38 degrees 45 minutes north and longitude 120 degrees 54 minutes west (5600 Gold Hill Road), with an elevation of 1,595 feet msl according to the property owner. The accident occurred within 30 yards of the property owner who is a retired airline captain.

The property owner, who was operating a Catapillar tractor in the same field, owns a private dirt landing strip located adjacent to the field. He stated to the manufacturer's representative that he was a friend of the pilot and that the pilot had buzzed him in the past. He speculated that he may have intended to buzz him again. (Witness statements and the El Dorado County Sheriff's report are appended to this report.)

The pilot was an active commercial airline captain and a long-time friend of the passenger. His airline flight duties were as line captain in a Boeing 747-400. In addition, he was a check pilot in a Ford Tri-Motor and a certificated flight instructor. In the past, he had given the passenger flight instruction in Cessna 170B and 180 aircraft.

Based on a review of the passenger's two pilot logbooks, he had logged his first flight on May 13, 1982. His last solo endorsement was on August 31, 1990, in a Cessna 180. His last dual flight with the pilot, also in a Cessna 180, was on September 30, 1990. No other instructor's endorsements appeared in his logbooks. His last solo flight was on September 30, 1990, for a total of 278 flight hours with 22 hours in a Cessna 180.

After retrieval, the aircraft was inspected by FAA airworthiness inspectors, along with the aircraft manufacturer's representative. No preimpact airframe or flight control anomalies were identified with the dual controlled aircraft. None of the aircraft or engine logbooks were located after the accident. The inspectors estimated the aircraft weight and balance and performance capabilities at the time of the crash to have been within the aircraft's designed capabilities. One of the FAA inspectors interviewed an A&P mechanic, with inspection authorization, who stated that he had performed an annual inspection on the aircraft within 12 months preceding the accident. At that time, he had found the aircraft to be airworthy.

Autopsies were performed by the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department. Toxicological samples were submitted to the Civil Aero Medical Institute (CAMI) for screening. CAMI reported that Temazepam and Oxazepam were found in the blood and urine of the instructor pilot. According to Patient Drug Facts, Temazepam is a central nervous system depressant and short-term sleep aid. Possible side effects on the central nervous system include drowsiness, dizziness, headache, anxiety, depression, decreased mobility, weakness, disorientation, incoherence, amnesia, nervousness, euphoria, and vertigo. On the senses, side effects may include blurred vision. Oxazepam is an agent to relieve nervousness and tension and is sometimes called a minor tranquilizer. Possible side effects on the central nervous system include confusion, depression, nervousness, behavior changes, memory loss, drowsiness, fatigue, decreased activity, dizziness, vertigo, lethargy, apathy, euphoria, delirium, disorientation, incoordination, headache, seizures, weakness and unsteadiness. On the senses, possible side effects may include visual disturbances, double vision, decreased hearing and hearing disturbances.

The FAA Western-Pacific Regional Flight Surgeon reported that any amount of Temazepam or Oxazepam is a medically grounding condition.

CAMI also reported that Salicylate was found in the urine of the passenger. Salicylate is an aspirin, fever reducer, and anti-inflammatory agent. According to medical records, the passenger had previously been directed to include daily doses of aspirin as part of his coronary rehabilitation program.

The passenger had been a certificated student pilot, but according to FAA records, had not renewed his medical certificate since it expired on August 31, 1992. There was no record of a current attempt to have his medical certificate renewed, nor a report of a currently disqualifying medical condition which would have prevented him from doing so. He had last been granted a special issuance of a third-class medical based on a reevaluation of his medical progress on August 14, 1990. A previous myocardial infarction and coronary artery disease had required angioplasty and coronary bypass surgery.

The representative of the aircraft manufacturer stated that, while at the accident site, he flew with the witness who had been on the Catapillar tractor. They flew along what the witness described as the pilot's route of flight under similar weather conditions near the same altitude

and about the same time of day. As they approached the utility lines from north, the representative reported having difficulty in making visual contact with the lines or poles even though he knew their location. He noted the color of the poles was about the same color as the plowed field, and the glare from the sun also contributed to making visual identification difficult. The ground witness reported that the dust that had been generated by the tractor had drifted toward the utility lines which, he felt, further compounded the difficulty to see and avoid the lines.

The aircraft was retrieved by Plain Parts and secured at their storage facility in Pleasant Grove, California.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Airline transport; Commercial; Flight engineer; Flight instructor	Age:	59, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Glider	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane multi-engine; Airplane single-engine; Glider; Instrument airplane	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 1 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	May 17, 1995
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	30000 hours (Total, all aircraft), 3600 hours (Total, this make and model)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Cessna	Registration:	N3358D
Model/Series:	180 180	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	32156
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2550 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Continental
ELT:	Installed	Engine Model/Series:	O-470-K
Registered Owner:	DANIEL WALTER HARTWIG	Rated Power:	230 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:	MCC ,75 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	28 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	11:55 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	62°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Thin Overcast / 25000 ft AGL	Visibility	8 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	7 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	160°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	16°C / 3°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	AUBURN , CA (AUN)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	(PVF)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	09:35 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 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	In-flight
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	38.729621,-120.799308(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Crispin, Robert

Additional Participating Persons: ROY HUTTO; SACRAMENTO , CA
STEVEN T WILSON; WICHITA , KS

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Last Revision Date:

Investigation Class: [Class](#)

Note:

Investigation Docket: <https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=29334>

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