



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	NAKNEK, Alaska	Accident Number:	ANC97LA044
Date & Time:	March 31, 1997, 20:30 Local	Registration:	N9261B
Aircraft:	Cessna 175	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	2 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot reported that he returned to his departure airport due to deteriorating weather conditions. He departed in daylight conditions, but returned to the unattended field at nightfall. He flew over the runway several times, and attempted to turn on the runway lights by tuning his radio to the published frequency to activate the lights, and clicking his microphone key several times. The lights did not come on, and while in the traffic pattern, the airplane's engine lost all power due to fuel exhaustion. The pilot said he was unable to glide to the runway, and landed in a vacant lot, causing substantial damage to the airplane. A review of the notices to airmen disclosed that the runway lights had been out of service for the preceding two months.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's failure to refuel the airplane prior to fuel exhaustion. Factors associated with the accident were the pilot's inadequate preflight preparation and planning by failing to obtain information about the out of service runway lighting, and the rough and uneven terrain at the forced landing site.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER(TOTAL) - NONMECHANICAL
Phase of Operation: APPROACH - VFR PATTERN - DOWNWIND

Findings

1. (F) AIRPORT FACILITIES,RUNWAY EDGE LIGHTS - INOPERATIVE
2. (F) PREFLIGHT PLANNING/PREPARATION - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (C) FLUID,FUEL - EXHAUSTION
4. (C) REFUELING - NOT PERFORMED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY LANDING

Occurrence #3: ON GROUND/WATER ENCOUNTER WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY LANDING

Findings

5. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - ROUGH/UNEVEN

Factual Information

On March 31, 1997, about 2030 Alaska standard time, a wheel equipped Cessna 175 airplane, N9261B, sustained substantial damage during a forced landing at the Naknek Airport, Naknek, Alaska. The private pilot and one passenger aboard were not injured. The 14 CFR Part 91 flight operated in visual meteorological conditions without a flight plan. The flight was returning to Naknek after an aborted flight to Anchorage, Alaska.

During a telephone conversation with the NTSB investigator-in-charge on April 2, the pilot stated he and a friend were returning to Naknek after turning around due to poor weather conditions on a flight to Anchorage. The pilot said by the time they reached Naknek, it was nearly dark, and he attempted to turn the runway lights on by tuning his airplane's radio to 122.8 MHz. and depressing the microphone transmit key five times. He said he made several passes over the field, each time trying to activate the runway lights by depressing the transmit key. On the last attempt, he said he was on a left downwind for runway 32, about abeam the approach end, when the engine lost all power. He said he was unable to reach the runway, and landed on rough terrain near the approach end of runway 32.

Postaccident inspection of the airplane by two Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspectors who were in the area, discovered there was slightly less than one-half gallon of gasoline remaining in the right fuel tank, and none in the left. They found the cockpit fuel selector on the "BOTH" position.

The FAA inspectors also checked the runway lights to see if they would function after tuning an aircraft radio to 122.8 MHz. and clicking the transmission key five times. The runway lights would not illuminate. A call was placed to the FAA Kenai Flight Service Station, and it was disclosed that the runway lights were placed out of service in January 1997 via a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM).

The pilot indicated in his written report to the NTSB that there was no preaccident mechanical anomalies with the airplane, and that the cause of the accident was "fuel starvation."

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	70, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Valid Medical-w/ waivers/lim	Last FAA Medical Exam:	August 30, 1995
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	3600 hours (Total, all aircraft), 300 hours (Total, this make and model), 3500 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 20 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 20 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 4 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Cessna	Registration:	N9261B
Model/Series:	175 175	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	55061
Landing Gear Type:	Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	March 10, 1997 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2350 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	12 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	3409 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	Continental
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	GO-300
Registered Owner:	DONALD K. STABENOW	Rated Power:	175 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:	Night/dark
Observation Facility, Elevation:		Distance from Accident Site:	
Observation Time:		Direction from Accident Site:	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	50 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	25 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	360°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:		Temperature/Dew Point:	-9°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	(5NK)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	ANCHORAGE , AK (MRI)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	16:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	NAKNEK 5NK	Runway Surface Type:	Gravel
Airport Elevation:	70 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	
Runway Used:	32	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	1850 ft / 45 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Forced landing;Traffic pattern

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 None	Latitude, Longitude:	58.800148,-156.900146(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Labelle, James

Additional Participating Persons: TERRY BATEMAN; ANCHORAGE , AK

Original Publish Date: May 4, 1998

Last Revision Date:

Investigation Class: [Class](#)

Note:

Investigation Docket: <https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=2979>

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](#).