



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	SUSANVILLE, California	Accident Number:	LAX97LA236
Date & Time:	July 9, 1997, 12:40 Local	Registration:	N28299
Aircraft:	Grumman American AA-5B	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot flew over the airport to check the wind, which he said favored Runway 16. He noted there was a little ripple on a lake adjacent to the runway, but no waves or white caps. He determined that the wind was probably 170 to 180 degrees at 6 to 7 knots, with the windsock about 1/2 way out. The landing approach was normal. During the landing flare, a gust of wind caused the right wing to rise unexpectedly to approximately a 45-degree angle, almost forcing the left wing on to the runway surface. The pilot reported that he attempted to go around; however, the wind was blowing the aircraft to the left, and the aircraft was 'behind the power curve.' The pilot also stated that 'I think I touched [down] but am not sure.' The aircraft ultimately crashed through a barbed wire perimeter fence before coming to rest in a lake. Rescue personnel reported that near the time the accident, the winds were 'kicking from the west' with short gusts of approximately 20 to 30 mph. Also, they noted that in the general area of the accident, 'gusts come out of nowhere on a moments notice.' Density altitude was computed to be 8,000 feet msl.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: the pilot's inadvertent encounter with unfavorable weather conditions during the landing, and his failure to maintain runway alignment. The sudden onset of crosswind gusts beyond the capability of the aircraft was a related factor.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT ENCOUNTER WITH WEATHER

Phase of Operation: LANDING - FLARE/TOUCHDOWN

Findings

1. (C) WEATHER CONDITION - UNFAVORABLE WIND
2. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - CROSSWIND
3. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - GUSTS
4. (C) FLIGHT INTO ADVERSE WEATHER - INADVERTENT - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT

Phase of Operation: LANDING - ABORTED

Findings

5. (C) PROPER ALIGNMENT - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
6. OBJECT - FENCE

Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: LANDING - ABORTED

Findings

7. TERRAIN CONDITION - WATER

Factual Information

On July 9, 1997, at 1240 hours Pacific daylight time, a Grumman American AA-5B, N28299, veered off the runway, collided with an airport perimeter fence, and came to rest in a lake during an aborted landing attempt at Spaulding Airport, Susanville, California. The aircraft was operated by the pilot for the personal cross-country flight. The aircraft was substantially damaged, and the certificated private pilot, the sole occupant, was not injured. The flight originated from the Nervino airport, Beckwourth, California, earlier that same day, and visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time.

According to the pilot's written statement he flew over the airport at 7,000 feet msl and "checked [the] wind, which favored Rwy 16 . . . there was a little ripple on the water but no waves or white caps." He further noted that the wind was "probably 170-180 degrees at 6-7" knots and the "wind sock [was] about 1/2 way out." The landing approach was normal. During the landing flare, a gust of wind caused the right wing to rise unexpectedly to approximately a 45-degree angle, almost forcing the left wing on to the runway surface. The pilot reported that he attempted to go-around, however, the wind was blowing the aircraft to the left and the aircraft was "behind the power curve." The pilot also stated that "I think I touched [down] but am not sure." The aircraft ultimately crashed through a barbed wire fence before coming to rest in Eagle Lake.

Rescue personnel reported that near the time the accident occurred, the winds were "kicking from the west" with short gusts of approximately 20 to 30 mph. Additionally, they noted that in the general area of the accident, "gusts come out of nowhere on a moments notice."

The rescue personnel reported that the temperature was between 85 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit at the time the accident occurred. Based on that temperature and the airport elevation, the density altitude was computed to be 8,000 feet msl.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	51, 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:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Valid Medical-w/ waivers/lim	Last FAA Medical Exam:	June 10, 1996
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	305 hours (Total, all aircraft), 41 hours (Total, this make and model), 246 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 10 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 7 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 3 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Grumman American	Registration:	N28299
Model/Series:	AA-5B AA-5B	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal; Utility	Serial Number:	AA5B0537
Landing Gear Type:	Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2400 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	O-360-A4K
Registered Owner:	CATHERINE S. HAAS	Rated Power:	180 Horsepower
Operator:	JERRY R. ATTAWAY	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:	GRS ,6050 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	8 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	12:47 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	360°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	6 knots / 13 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	213°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:		Temperature/Dew Point:	25°C / -4°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	BECKWOURTH , CA (002)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	(1Q2)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	12:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class E

Airport Information

Airport:	SPAULDING 1Q2	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	5116 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	16	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	4600 ft / 50 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Full stop;Traffic pattern

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	40.570713,-120.610961(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Rich, Jeff
Additional Participating Persons:	JERRY ROBERTS; RENO , NV
Original Publish Date:	December 15, 1997
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=29831

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](#).