



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	DUNSMUIR, California	Accident Number:	LAX97LA303
Date & Time:	November 14, 1996, 05:05 Local	Registration:	N77DF
Aircraft:	FLEMING III	GLASSAIR	Aircraft Damage: Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The noninstrument-rated pilot departed before daylight in mountainous terrain under an overcast sky. The pilot did not file a flight plan nor obtain a formal weather briefing. When he failed to arrive at his destination a search was initiated. The aircraft was located 9 months later, about 4.5 miles south of the departure point in mountainous terrain. According to a sheriff's investigator, the engine was buried below the ground surface and the airplane was very fragmented.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: was the pilot's intentional flight into marginal meteorological conditions in mountainous terrain during dark nighttime conditions.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT ENCOUNTER WITH WEATHER
Phase of Operation: CLIMB

Findings

1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - CLOUDS
2. (F) LIGHT CONDITION - DARK NIGHT
3. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - MOUNTAINOUS/HILLY
4. (C) VFR FLIGHT INTO IMC - INITIATED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Factual Information

On November 14, 1996, about 0505 hours Pacific standard time, an experimental Fleming Glassair III, N77DF, was destroyed after colliding with terrain near Dunsmuir, California. The pilot received fatal injuries. While the meteorological conditions at the time of the accident are unknown, patchy early morning fog was forecast for the general area. The pilot did not file a flight plan for the personal cross-country flight. According to the resident Dunsmuir-Mott airport manager, the flight originated at Dunsmuir-Mott Airport about 0500 on the morning of the accident and was destined for Palm Springs, California.

When the aircraft failed to arrive at Palm Springs, a ground and air search was initiated with negative results. On August 25, 1997, the aircraft wreckage was located at latitude 41 degrees 12 minutes 14 seconds north, and longitude 122 degrees 14 minutes 20 seconds west in mountainous terrain about 3,500 feet msl and 4.5 miles south of the Dunsmuir-Mott Airport. According to a sheriff's investigator, the engine was buried below the surface of the ground and the airplane was fragmented into many pieces.

The pilot had been issued a private pilot certificate on June 8, 1995. The pilot's flight logbook was recovered at the accident site. According to the readable portions of the logbook, at the last documented log entry dated November 11, 1996, he had about 339 flight hours.

The nearest weather reporting facility for the accident site was Mount Shasta. An automated weather observation recorded at 0456 was: wind variable at 4 knots; visibility 10 miles; sky overcast at 4,400 feet agl; temperature 33 degrees Fahrenheit; dew point 32 degrees Fahrenheit; and the altimeter was 30.10 inHg.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	43, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Unknown
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--no waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	April 1, 1997
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	399 hours (Total, all aircraft), 10 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 7 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	FLEMING	Registration:	N77DF
Model/Series:	GLASSAIR III GLASSAIR I	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	Yes
Airworthiness Certificate:	Experimental (Special)	Serial Number:	3202
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	June 22, 1996 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	O-320
Registered Owner:	STEVE R. WILLIAMS	Rated Power:	150 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:	KMH ,3587 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	10 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	04:56 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	315°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Unknown	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast / 4400 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	4 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	0°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	1°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	DUNSMUIR-MOTT , CA (106)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	PALM SPRINGS , CA (PSP)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	05:00 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:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	41.310482,-122.319808(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Petterson, George
Additional Participating Persons:	NANCY LEIPPE; SACRAMENTO , CA
Original Publish Date:	March 31, 1998
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=29885

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