



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	LABELLE, Florida	Accident Number:	ATL97LA087
Date & Time:	June 20, 1997, 15:30 Local	Registration:	N23728
Aircraft:	Air Tractor AT-301A	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 137: Agricultural		

Analysis

After reloading to apply fertilizer to a sugar cane field, the pilot took off and made a swath run. During a turn-around maneuver for the second swath, at about 200 yards away from the field and 50 feet above the ground, the airplane began sinking rapidly. The pilot added full power, and the airplane mushed into the ground. The airplane hit a levee, nosed over, and came to rest about 100 feet into the sugar cane field.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: failure of the pilot to maintain adequate airspeed during a turn-around maneuver, which resulted in an aerodynamic stall/mush and collision with the terrain.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING - AERIAL APPLICATION

- Findings
1. MANEUVER - INITIATED - PILOT IN COMMAND
 2. (C) AIRSPEED - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
 3. (C) STALL/MUSH - INADVERTENT - PILOT IN COMMAND
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Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING - AERIAL APPLICATION

Factual Information

On June 20, 1997, at 1530 eastern daylight time, an Air Tractor AT-301A, N23728, collided with the ground while maneuvering, at Labelle, Florida. The airplane was operated by the pilot under the provisions of Title 14 CFR Part 137 and visual flight rules. The prevailing weather was visual meteorological conditions. There was no flight plan filed for this aerial application flight. The commercial pilot was not injured, and the airplane was substantially damaged. The flight originated about 1525 from a farm road near Labelle.

According to the pilot's report of the accident, he had just completed the first swath turn around and was lining up for the second spray swath of a sugar cane field with dry fertilizer. About 200 yards from the field, at 50 feet above ground level, the airplane "began to sink rapidly". The pilot added full power, however, the airplane continued to mush into the ground. Subsequently, the airplane struck a levee, crossed a canal, and nosed over incurring substantial damage. The airplane came to rest about 100 feet into the sugar cane field.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Flight instructor	Age:	50, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane multi-engine; Airplane single-engine	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Valid Medical-w/ waivers/lim	Last FAA Medical Exam:	May 15, 1997
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	13000 hours (Total, all aircraft), 1000 hours (Total, this make and model), 13000 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 150 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 100 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 4 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Air Tractor	Registration:	N23728
Model/Series:	AT-301A AT-301A	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Restricted (Special)	Serial Number:	301-0424
Landing Gear Type:	Tricycle	Seats:	1
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	May 31, 1997 100 hour	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	5000 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	80 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	4684 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	P&W
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	R-1340
Registered Owner:	STORY AVIATION, INC.	Rated Power:	600 Horsepower
Operator:	LYLES STORY	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	
Operator Does Business As:		Operator Designator Code:	NGFG

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	RSW ,31 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	20 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	15:00 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	220°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	8 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	45°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	34°C / 20°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	, FL (NONE)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	15:25 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 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Hicks, Preston
Additional Participating Persons:	JAY HAMILTON; REGAN H CAMPBELL;
Original Publish Date:	December 15, 1997
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=3861

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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](#).