



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	SOMERS, New York	Accident Number:	NYC95LA225
Date & Time:	September 24, 1995, 14:36 Local	Registration:	N27920
Aircraft:	SNYDED PITTS S1E	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	2 Fatal, 2 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

THE PILOT STATED, 'WHILE I WAS FLYING OVER WESTCHESTER, I SAW THE WATER AND WENT DOWN TO GET A CLOSER LOOK....I HEARD A LOUD BANG, LIKE A HAMMER. I LOOKED OVER AT MY WING AND NOTICED DAMAGE....I PUT THE PLANE DOWN ON THE WATER....I EXPERIENCED NO MECHANICAL PROBLEMS WHILE I WAS FLYING, AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT HIT THE PLANE.' THE PILOT FURTHER STATED, 'DURING A DESCENT THE AIRCRAFT STRUCK AN OBJECT, SUBSEQUENTLY CONFIRMED TO BE A POWER LINE.' ADDITIONALLY, AT THE ACCIDENT SCENE, A 46000 VOLT, 3/4 INCH DIAMETER POWER LINE HAD SEPARATED AND HAD DROPPED IN A RESERVOIR. AS A RESULT OF THE POWER LINE STRIKING THE WATER, THREE PERSONS WERE EJECTED FROM THEIR BOAT. TWO OF THE PERSONS DID NOT SURVIVE. THE SURVIVOR, WHO SWAM ASHORE, REPORTED HE FELT ELECTRICAL SHOCKS THROUGHOUT HIS BODY WHILE HE WAS IN THE WATER. ACCORDING TO THE SURVIVOR, HE NOTICED THE NON-SURVIVORS SWIMMING TOWARD HIM WITH 'WAVES OF BLUE ELECTRICITY IN THE WATER.' POSTACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REVEALED NO PREIMPACT ANOMALIES WITH THE AIRPLANE.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: THE PILOT'S INADEQUATE VISUAL LOOKOUT, WHICH RESULTED HIS FAILURE TO SEE-AND-AVOID THE POWER LINE.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT

Phase of Operation: DESCENT

Findings

1. (C) VISUAL LOOKOUT - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. OBJECT - WIRE,STATIC

Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING

Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY DESCENT/LANDING

Occurrence #3: DITCHING

Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY LANDING

Findings

3. TERRAIN CONDITION - WATER

Factual Information

On September 24, 1995, about 1436 eastern daylight time, a Snyder Pitts-S1E, N27920, was substantially damaged when it impacted power lines during a descent near Somers, New York. The pilot and one person in a boat received minor injuries. Two occupants of the boat were fatally injured. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed for the flight that departed Danbury, Connecticut about 1430, destined for Morristown, New Jersey. There was no flight plan for the flight that was conducted under 14 CFR Part 91.

In a statement provided to the New York State Police, the pilot stated:

... While I was flying over Westchester, I saw the water and went down to get a closer look, I took the plane down to about 500 to 1000 feet. While flying at that altitude, which is an estimate, I wasn't looking at the altimeter, I heard a loud bang, like a hammer. I looked over at my wing and noticed damage. At that point I thought that I might be able to keep [the airplane] up, however, I soon noticed that the plane wasn't responding. I decided that I would have to put the plane down. I put the plane down on the water....I experienced no mechanical problems while I was flying, and I don't know what hit the plane.

In the NTSB form 6120.1/2, the pilot further stated:

...During a descent the aircraft struck an object, subsequently confirmed to be a power line. Damage was immediately noted to the top right wing and the aircraft tried to roll to the right. I compensated for the roll and felt the aircraft shudder. I made an emergency landing in a body of water....

Postaccident examination by the National Transportation Safety Board Investigator and Federal Aviation Administration Inspector revealed that the right upper wing was separated from the main fuselage attachment point at the leading edge. Approximately 3 feet outboard from the main attachment point, the right upper wing had scrape marks that extended outboard and aft about 6 inches. Approximately 3 feet outboard from the main attachment point, the right upper wing fabric was torn about 1 foot in a chordwise direction. The two bladed propeller had gouges on each blade that were symmetrical. No preimpact anomalies were found with the airframe or engine.

Additionally, at the accident scene, a 46000 volt, 3/4 inch diameter power line was found separated in a reservoir.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Flight instructor	Age:	48, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Front
Other Aircraft Rating(s):		Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane multi-engine; Airplane single-engine; Instrument airplane	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	July 7, 1995
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	4700 hours (Total, all aircraft), 400 hours (Total, this make and model), 4450 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 50 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 18 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 3 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	SNYDED	Registration:	N27920
Model/Series:	PITTS S1E PITTS S1E	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	Yes
Airworthiness Certificate:	Experimental (Special)	Serial Number:	001
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	1
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	September 12, 1995 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1100 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	4 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	500 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	LYCOMING
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	IO-360
Registered Owner:	JOHN A. MILLER	Rated Power:	180 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:	HPN ,439 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	7 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	14:45 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	360°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Unknown	Visibility	20 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 4500 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	10 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	110°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	16°C / 6°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	DANBURY , CT (DXR)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	MORRISTOWN , NJ (MMU)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	14:30 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:	Forced landing

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	2 Fatal, 1 Minor	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 Fatal, 2 Minor	Latitude, Longitude:	41.330131,-73.690643(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Pearce, Robert

Additional Participating Persons: RAY LLERAS; FARMINGDALE , NY

Original Publish Date: February 27, 1996

Last Revision Date:

Investigation Class: [Class](#)

Note:

Investigation Docket: <https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=39052>

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](#).