



Aviation Investigation Final Report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Location: | HONSDALE, Pennsylvania | Accident Number: | NYC96LA013 |
| Date & Time: | October 16, 1995, 11:30 Local | Registration: | N39964 |
| Aircraft: | Piper PA-32 | Aircraft Damage: | Substantial |
| Defining Event: | | Injuries: | 2 None |
| Flight Conducted Under: | Part 91: General aviation - Personal | | |

Analysis

The pilot obtained a weather briefing and filed an IFR flight plan with an Automated Flight Service Station (AFSS). After takeoff, he climbed to his cruising altitude of 8,000 feet, which was above the clouds. En route he encountered strong headwinds, and requested a descent to 6,000 feet. ATC issued the pilot an initial descent to 7,000 feet. During the descent, he encountered severe turbulence and icing. After descending below the clouds, the pilot could not maintain altitude and made a forced landing downwind to a nearby airport. During landing, the airplane was blown off of the runway into the runway lights. The reported winds were 250 degrees at 14 knots gusting to 24 knots. During the weather briefing with the AFSS, the pilot was issued an AIRMET for light to moderate mixed/rime icing, in the clouds and precipitation, from the freezing level to 10,000 feet, and isolated severe icing in the clouds. He was given the freezing level along his route to be between 2,000 and 4,000 feet. The briefer also gave the pilot the forecast for 'strong westerly winds,' which included winds at 9,000 feet, from 280 degrees at 38 knots. The airplane was not equipped with anti-icing, or deicing equipment, except for a heated pitot tube.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: the pilot's improper evaluation of the weather briefing, and his decision to fly into known forecasted moderate to severe icing conditions. Factors in the accident were the adverse weather conditions encountered during the flight and landing.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT ENCOUNTER WITH WEATHER

Phase of Operation: DESCENT - NORMAL

Findings

1. (C) WEATHER EVALUATION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - ICING CONDITIONS
3. (C) FLIGHT INTO KNOWN ADVERSE WEATHER - INTENTIONAL - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING

Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY LANDING

Occurrence #3: ON GROUND/WATER COLLISION WITH OBJECT

Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY LANDING

Findings

4. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - TAILWIND
5. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - GUSTS
6. OBJECT - RUNWAY LIGHT

Factual Information

On October 16, 1995, at 1130 eastern daylight time, a Piper PA-32-260, N39964, was substantially damaged during a forced landing to the Cherry Ridge Airport, Honesdale, Pennsylvania. The private pilot and passenger were not injured. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed, for the personal flight that originated at Windsor Locks, Connecticut, at 1030. An IFR flight plan had been filed for the flight conducted under 14 CFR Part 91.

The pilot obtained a weather briefing, and filed an IFR flight plan to Columbus, Ohio, with the Burlington Automated Flight Service Station (AFSS). After takeoff from Windsor Locks, he climbed to his cruising altitude of 8,000 feet, which was above the clouds. Near Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, he encountered 30 to 40 knot head winds, and requested a descent to 6,000 feet. The Air Traffic Control facility advised the pilot of turbulence at 6,000 feet, and issued the pilot an initial descent to 7,000 feet.

In the NTSB Form 6120.1/2, the pilot stated:

In the descent I encountered severe turbulence with severe icing...I had previously put on the pitot heat, but in spite of it...the main gear dropped because of icing...below the clouds at 5,500, I was unable to maintain altitude, problem of trim control, I was able to retract [the landing] gear. ATC gave me the direction to nearest airport...and I made a forced landing downwind and crosswind on [runway] 17. I was blown off to the left of the runway onto the grass where I made contact with runway lights.

A review of the audio tape of the pilot's AFSS weather briefing, revealed that the AFSS briefer issued the pilot AIRMET Zulu. The AIRMET was for light to moderate mixed/rime icing, in the clouds and precipitation, from the freezing level to 10,000 feet, and isolated severe icing in the clouds. The briefer stated that the area covered the pilot's route of flight from western Pennsylvania, to Columbus, Ohio. The briefer stated that the freezing level near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was between 2,000 and 4,000 feet. The briefer also gave the pilot the forecast for "strong westerly winds," which included specific winds at 9,000 feet, from 280 degrees at 38 knots, near Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

The airplane, N39964, was not equipped with anti-icing, or deicing equipment, except for a heated pitot tube.

Pilot Information

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|----------------------------------|--|--|--------------|
| Certificate: | Private | Age: | 71, Male |
| Airplane Rating(s): | Single-engine land | Seat Occupied: | Left |
| Other Aircraft Rating(s): | None | Restraint Used: | |
| Instrument Rating(s): | Airplane | 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 2, 1995 |
| Occupational Pilot: | No | Last Flight Review or Equivalent: | |
| Flight Time: | 1271 hours (Total, all aircraft), 785 hours (Total, this make and model), 1129 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 56 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 13 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft) | | |

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

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|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Aircraft Make: | Piper | Registration: | N39964 |
| Model/Series: | PA-32 PA-32 | Aircraft Category: | Airplane |
| Year of Manufacture: | | Amateur Built: | |
| Airworthiness Certificate: | Normal | Serial Number: | 32R-7885245 |
| Landing Gear Type: | Retractable - Tricycle | Seats: | 6 |
| Date/Type of Last Inspection: | April 1, 1995 Annual | Certified Max Gross Wt.: | 3600 lbs |
| Time Since Last Inspection: | | Engines: | 1 Reciprocating |
| Airframe Total Time: | | Engine Manufacturer: | LYCOMING |
| ELT: | Installed, not activated | Engine Model/Series: | IO-540-K1G5D |
| Registered Owner: | CENTURY FLYERS INC. | Rated Power: | 300 Horsepower |
| Operator: | | Operating Certificate(s) Held: | None |
| Operator Does Business As: | | Operator Designator Code: | |

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

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|---|----------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| Conditions at Accident Site: | Visual (VMC) | Condition of Light: | Day |
| Observation Facility, Elevation: | AVP ,963 ft msl | Distance from Accident Site: | 22 Nautical Miles |
| Observation Time: | 15:50 Local | Direction from Accident Site: | 250° |
| Lowest Cloud Condition: | Scattered / 6000 ft AGL | Visibility | 20 miles |
| Lowest Ceiling: | Broken / 8000 ft AGL | Visibility (RVR): | |
| Wind Speed/Gusts: | 14 knots / 24 knots | Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Wind Direction: | 250° | Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Altimeter Setting: | 29 inches Hg | Temperature/Dew Point: | 11°C |
| Precipitation and Obscuration: | No Obscuration; No Precipitation | | |
| Departure Point: | WINDSOR LOCKS (BDL) | Type of Flight Plan Filed: | IFR |
| Destination: | COLUMBUS (CMH) | Type of Clearance: | IFR |
| Departure Time: | 10:30 Local | Type of Airspace: | Class E |

Airport Information

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|-----------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| Airport: | CHERRY RIDGE N30 | Runway Surface Type: | Asphalt |
| Airport Elevation: | 1357 ft msl | Runway Surface Condition: | Dry |
| Runway Used: | 17 | IFR Approach: | Visual |
| Runway Length/Width: | 2420 ft / 50 ft | VFR Approach/Landing: | Forced landing |

Wreckage and Impact Information

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|----------------------------|--------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 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: | 41.570175,-75.250854(est) |

Administrative Information

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| Investigator In Charge (IIC): | Pearce, Robert |
| Additional Participating Persons: | THOMAS J LAHOVSKI; ALLENTOWN , PA |
| Original Publish Date: | June 7, 1996 |
| Last Revision Date: | |
| Investigation Class: | Class |
| Note: | |
| Investigation Docket: | https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=39114 |

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](#).