



# Aviation Investigation Final Report

<b>Location:</b>	MADRAS, Oregon	<b>Accident Number:</b>	SEA97LA059
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	February 6, 1997, 16:30 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N5618J
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Cessna 172N	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	2 Serious, 1 Minor
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

## Analysis

The pilot had been en route in visual meteorological conditions, but came to a point where it appeared low-level clouds stretched many miles ahead toward his destination. He therefore elected to attempt to fly underneath the overcast through the mountainous/hilly terrain that was between his location and his destination. While flying through a narrow canyon under the lowering ceiling, he encountered an area of fog and low clouds, and therefore elected to reverse course. During the reversal, the pilot inadvertently entered instrument meteorological conditions, and immediately initiated a climb. While attempting to climb out of the conditions, he saw an area of terrain that he thought he should try to crash land on. As he maneuvered to execute the crash landing, the aircraft impacted a tree, and the left wing separated from the fuselage.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's inadvertent visual flight rules (VFR) flight into instrument meteorological conditions (IMC). Factors include the pilot's improper decision to fly under a low ceiling while in mountainous/hilly terrain, and his encounter with fog and low clouds while maneuvering in a narrow canyon.

## Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT  
Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

#### Findings

1. (C) VFR FLIGHT INTO IMC - INADVERTENT - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. OBJECT - TREE(S)
3. (F) IN-FLIGHT PLANNING/DECISION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - CLOUDS
5. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - FOG
6. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - MOUNTAINOUS/HILLY
7. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - LOW CEILING

## Factual Information

On February 6, 1997, approximately 1630 Pacific standard time, a Cessna 172N, N5618J, collided with trees about 25 miles northwest of Madras, Oregon. The private pilot and one of his passengers received serious injuries, one passenger received minor injuries, and the aircraft sustained substantial damage. The personal pleasure flight, which departed Klamath Falls, Oregon about two hours and twenty minutes earlier, was en route to The Dalles, Oregon. The flight, which was intended to be conducted entirely under visual flight rules, was in instrument meteorological conditions (IMC) at the time of the accident. No flight plan had been filed, and the ELT, which was activated by the impact, was the primary means of locating the wreckage.

According to the pilot, he had been flying in visual meteorological conditions while en route to The Dalles, but he encountered an area of low-level clouds shortly after passing Madras, Oregon. He said that it appeared that the clouds stretched "many miles ahead," so he elected to attempt to fly under them. At first, the ceiling was about 3,000 feet above the ground level (AGL), but as he continued on toward The Dalles, the ceiling began to lower. While flying through a narrow canyon under the lowering ceiling, the pilot entered an area of low clouds and fog, and elected to reverse course. While making the course reversal, the pilot inadvertently entered IMC and immediately started to climb. While attempting to climb out of the IMC, the pilot saw an area of relatively open terrain through an opening in the clouds, and decided he should make a "controlled" crash landing on that terrain. While maneuvering toward the spot he had elected to crash land on, the aircraft impacted trees, and its left wing separated from the fuselage.

### Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	63, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Single-engine land	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Left
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	No
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 3 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	August 16, 1996
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	UNK	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	356 hours (Total, all aircraft), 212 hours (Total, this make and model), 245 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 11 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Cessna	<b>Registration:</b>	N5618J
<b>Model/Series:</b>	172N 172N	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Airplane
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Normal	<b>Serial Number:</b>	17272823
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Tricycle	<b>Seats:</b>	4
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	Annual	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	2300 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>		<b>Engines:</b>	1 Reciprocating
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>		<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	Lycoming
<b>ELT:</b>	Installed, activated, aided in locating accident	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	O-320-H2AD
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	TORRES, C. & ORRANTE, R.	<b>Rated Power:</b>	160 Horsepower
<b>Operator:</b>		<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None
<b>Operator Does Business As:</b>		<b>Operator Designator Code:</b>	

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Instrument (IMC)	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Day
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>		<b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>	
<b>Observation Time:</b>		<b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>	
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>	Unknown	<b>Visibility</b>	0.5 miles
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	100 ft AGL	<b>Visibility (RVR):</b>	
<b>Wind Speed/Gusts:</b>	/	<b>Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Wind Direction:</b>	0°	<b>Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Altimeter Setting:</b>		<b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>	18°C
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>	N/A - None - Fog		
<b>Departure Point:</b>	KLAMATH FALLS , OR (LMT )	<b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>	None
<b>Destination:</b>	THE DALLLES , OR (DLS )	<b>Type of Clearance:</b>	None
<b>Departure Time:</b>	14:10 Local	<b>Type of Airspace:</b>	Class G

## Airport Information

<b>Airport:</b>		<b>Runway Surface Type:</b>	
<b>Airport Elevation:</b>		<b>Runway Surface Condition:</b>	
<b>Runway Used:</b>	0	<b>IFR Approach:</b>	None
<b>Runway Length/Width:</b>		<b>VFR Approach/Landing:</b>	None

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	1 Serious	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>	1 Serious, 1 Minor	<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	None
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Total Injuries:</b>	2 Serious, 1 Minor	<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	44.600353,-121.050346(est)

## Administrative Information

<b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>	Anderson, Orrin
<b>Additional Participating Persons:</b>	KEITH CRIMMIN; HILLSBORO , OR
<b>Original Publish Date:</b>	October 14, 1997
<b>Last Revision Date:</b>	
<b>Investigation Class:</b>	<a href="#">Class</a>
<b>Note:</b>	
<b>Investigation Docket:</b>	<a href="https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=42562">https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=42562</a>

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