



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	CANTWELL, Alaska	Accident Number:	ANC98LA105
Date & Time:	August 1, 1998, 13:40 Local	Registration:	N2350T
Aircraft:	Piper PA-28-140	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The non-instrument rated pilot transmitted that he was lost in the clouds and requested help. He began to transmit his position and heading, and then no further transmissions were overheard. The airplane was located at 7,200 feet msl in steep, mountainous terrain extending upwards to 10,000 feet msl. Pilots flying in the area reported VFR weather with cloud bases at 5,000 feet msl, and cloud tops at 9,000 feet msl. These pilots stated that most of the mountain was in the clear, and that they were able to pick their way around the clouds. The airplane and pilot could not be recovered due to hazardous terrain and inclement weather.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's intentional continued VFR flight into IMC. Factors were the scattered to broken clouds, and the mountainous terrain.

Findings

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

Findings

1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - CLOUDS
2. (C) VFR FLIGHT INTO IMC - INTENTIONAL - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: CRUISE

Findings

3. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - MOUNTAINOUS/HILLY

Factual Information

On August 1, 1998, about 1340 Alaska daylight time, a Piper PA-28-140 airplane, N2350T, was destroyed when it collided with rising terrain, about 37 miles southwest of Cantwell, Alaska, at position 63 degrees 14.54 minutes North latitude, 150 degrees 11.95 minutes West longitude. The solo private pilot sustained fatal injuries. The flight was conducted under 14 CFR Part 91. The flight departed Merrill Field, Anchorage, Alaska, at 1238, destined for Fairbanks, Alaska. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed along the proposed route of flight at the time of the accident, and a VFR flight plan was filed. The pilot did not hold an instrument rating.

About 1335, an air taxi pilot inbound for Talkeetna, Alaska, overheard a radio transmission on 123.6 MHz from the accident pilot calling Talkeetna Radio. The accident pilot stated his full aircraft call sign, and said he was lost in the clouds and wanted help. The Talkeetna Flight Service Station did not receive the transmission, but two airborne air taxi pilots did. Both air taxi pilots told the NTSB investigator-in-charge (IIC) during telephone interviews on August 4, that the pilot sounded stressed and frantic. They reported to the IIC that the pilot began to give his position, and then stated he was tracking 235. No other transmissions were received.

An Emergency Locator Transmitter signal was received from the south side of Mount McKinley at 1440.

The airplane was located about 2100 in mountainous terrain by an Alaska Air National Guard helicopter. Terrain within 10 miles of the accident site extends up to 10,000 feet msl. The wreckage was situated approximately 7,200 feet msl, about 300 feet below a ridge.

Two Alaska Air National Guard Pararescuemen (PJs) climbed to the accident site after being landed by helicopter on the ridge above, and confirmed the pilot was deceased. These two PJs informed the NTSB IIC on August 2 that the airplane had impacted a 45 degree snow slope in a level attitude. They described the front half of the airplane buried in the snow, and the tail sticking out. The cabin was full of camping gear. The airplane was described as unstable, with the possibility of sliding down a several thousand feet long snow slope. No photographs were taken by the PJs.

Due to unfavorable weather, nearly continuous snowfall, avalanche danger, and steep terrain, the airplane and pilot were not recovered.

The reported clouds at Cantwell, 27 miles northeast of the accident site, at the time of the accident were scattered clouds at 7,000 feet msl. Three air taxi pilots interviewed by the IIC related that after overhearing the pilot's distress call, they looked to the north and observed a layer of scattered to broken clouds and cumulus buildups along the eastern flank of the McKinley massif. All the pilots interviewed indicated the bases of the clouds were about 5,000

feet msl, and that it was clear above 9,000 feet. They each stated that most of the mountain range was in the clear, and that they were able to pick their way around the clouds.

The pilot's brother was interviewed by the IIC on August 3. He indicated that the pilot departed California on July 11, and did not intend to return until the end of August. He had purchased a new GPS for the trip. The airplane and pilot logs were in the airplane. The pilot's family completed the NTSB Pilot/Operator report.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	38,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
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 1 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	January 1, 1997
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	900 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N2350T
Model/Series:	PA-28-140 PA-28-140	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	28-7225054
Landing Gear Type:	Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2050 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, activated, aided in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	O-320
Registered Owner:	CALVIN J. SIPPOLA	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:	Instrument (IMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	PAT ,2190 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	37 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	14:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	30°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 7000 ft AGL	Visibility	20 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 25000 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	10 knots / None	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	200°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	22°C / 11°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	ANCHORAGE (MRI)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	VFR
Destination:	FAIRBANKS (FAI)	Type of Clearance:	VFR
Departure Time:	12:38 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:	Unknown
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	Unknown
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	63.010036,-149.399291(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Thomas, Matthew
Additional Participating Persons:	GERALD A MARTELLI; ANCHORAGE , AK KRIS WETHERELL; MONROE , WA
Original Publish Date:	July 2, 1999
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=45159

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