



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	TALLAHASSEE, Florida	Accident Number:	ATL99FA066
Date & Time:	April 1, 1999, 15:48 Local	Registration:	N15478
Aircraft:	Piper PA-34-200	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot of another airplane, while taxiing for takeoff, observed the accident airplane during the initial climb out. The airplane was observed in a right 45-degree bank, the nose of the airplane was up about 30 degrees and the airplane appeared to have stalled. At approximately the same time, the pilot radioed and reported that he was having a problem and wanted to return; the pilot never stated the problem. The airplane suddenly started losing altitude and just before colliding with the ground, the airplane was last observed in a 20 to 30 degree right bank, and a 50 to 60 degree nose-down attitude. Seconds later, a fireball was observed in the vicinity where the airplane was last seen. The fuselage assembly received heavy fire damage. The center section of the airframe and the cockpit area was fire damaged. The subsequent examination of the engine and airframe assemblies failed to reveal a mechanical problem or component failure.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's failure to maintain flying speed during initial climb which resulted in a stall and uncontrolled collision with terrain.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF - INITIAL CLIMB

Findings

1. (C) AIRSPEED - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (C) STALL - INADVERTENT - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Factual Information

HISTORY OF FLIGHT

On April 1, 1999, at 1548 eastern standard time, a Piper PA-34-200, N15478, collided with the ground during takeoff from runway 27 at the Tallahassee International Airport in Tallahassee, Florida. The personal flight was operated by the pilot under the provisions of Title 14 CFR Part 91 with a visual flight rules (VFR) flight plan filed. Visual weather conditions prevailed at the time of the accident. The airplane was destroyed and there was a post-impact fire. The pilot was fatally injured. The accident occurred during the takeoff from Tallahassee, Florida; the flight was en route to Memphis, Tennessee.

At 1401, a man who identified himself as the pilot of N15478 telephoned Gainesville, Florida Federal Aviation Administration Flight Service Station (AFSS). The pilot closed his flight plan from Memphis, Tennessee to Tallahassee, and requested a weather briefing from Tallahassee to Memphis. The pilot reported that he would be departing Tallahassee within an hour. According to the fixed base operator at Tallahassee, after landing the airplane was serviced with 60 gallons of aviation fuel. The pilot had flown from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and was enroute to Memphis.

At 1501, the pilot of N15478 telephoned Gainesville AFSS and requested a standard briefing from Tallahassee to Memphis. The briefer recalled that the pilot was given a standard briefing followed by the pilot filed a flight plan. At 1526, the pilot of N15478 radioed Tallahassee Ground Control and requested taxi instructions. The flight was cleared to runway 27, and the pilot was given a radio frequency for departure control and a transponder code. At 1546, Tallahassee Tower cleared N15478 for takeoff.

The flight was cleared for a visual departure from runway 27. However, the pilot of another airplane taxiing for takeoff observed N15478 during the initial climb out. The pilot of the other airplane reported that as N15478 continued the climb, it was observed in a right 45-degree bank, and turning through a 360-degree magnetic heading. At this point, the nose of N15478 was up about 30 degrees and the airplane appeared to have stalled.

At approximately the same time, the pilot of N15478 radioed Tallahassee Tower and reported that he was having a problem and wanted to return; the pilot never stated the problem. The airplane suddenly started losing altitude and appeared to have stalled a second time. The pilot of the other airplane further stated that the "stabulator" assembly appeared to be "full pitch up." Both propellers appeared to be turning throughout the entire sequence of flight gyrations. Just before colliding with the ground, N15478 was last observed in a 20 to 30 degree right bank, and a 50 to 60 degree nose-down attitude. Seconds later, a fireball was observed in the vicinity where N15478 was last seen.

AIRCRAFT INFORMATION

Information on the airplane is included in this report on page 2 of the factual report under the data field labeled "Aircraft Information". A review of the fire damaged airplane maintenance logs disclosed that the airplane had been issued a special flight permit (ferry permit) for the flight from St. Vincent, West Indies, to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, only.

PERSONNEL INFORMATION

Information about the First Pilot is included in this report on page 3 of the factual report under the data field labeled "First Pilot Information".

METEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION

Visual weather conditions prevailed at the time of the accident. Weather information is contained in this report on page 3 of the factual report under the data field labeled "Weather Information".

WRECKAGE AND IMPACT INFORMATION

Examination of the accident site disclosed that wreckage debris was scattered over an area 210 feet long and 90 feet wide. The wreckage path was oriented on a 070-degree magnetic heading. The vegetation and the wreckage debris in the immediate vicinity of the fuselage were burned. The center and nose sections of the fuselage sustained heavy fire damage. The accessory sections of both engines were also fire damaged.

Examination of the left wing assembly showed that the wing remained attached to the fuselage and sustained extensive fire damage throughout the entire structure. The nacelle area of the left wing along with the cowl assembly also sustained fire damage. Both fuel tanks were fire damaged. The left wing flight control surfaces were recovered at the accident site. The flight control cables, connecting rods, bell cranks and attach fittings were also located at the accident site.

A four-foot section of the right wing assembly was located about 30 feet from the main wreckage. Both right wing fuel tanks sustained fire damage and they were destroyed. Examination of the right main landing gear hydraulic cylinder assembly was in the extended position.

The fuselage assembly received heavy fire damage. The center section of the airframe and the cockpit area was fire damaged. All flight control surfaces and related assemblies were located in the immediate vicinity of the main wreckage. The subsequent examination of the horizontal stabilator and the rudder control failed to disclose a mechanical problem with control cables, pulley assemblies and control surface attach fittings.

The subsequent examination of the engine assemblies failed to reveal a mechanical problem or component failure. No mechanical problems were discovered during the examination of the airframe wreckage.

MEDICAL AND PATHOLOGICAL INFORMATION

On April 2, 1999, the postmortem examination on the pilot was conducted by Dr. Stewart at the Office of the State Medical Examiner in Tallahassee, Florida. The toxicological examinations were negative for alcohol and other drugs.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On April 2, 1999, at about 2100, the hangar where the airframe wreckage was secured for the accident investigation was forcibly entered. None of the wreckage or associated components were missing after break-in. The Tallahassee Police Department conducted a criminal investigation of the break-in (see attached police report).

The aircraft wreckage was released to Mr. Harry Brooks (insurance adjuster) Atlanta, Georgia.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Airline transport	Age:	43, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane multi-engine; Airplane single-engine	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 1 Valid Medical-w/ waivers/lim	Last FAA Medical Exam:	February 10, 1999
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	2000 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N15478
Model/Series:	PA-34-200 PA-34-200	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	347350067
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	6
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	December 17, 2009 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	4200 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	2 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	2650 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	IO-360-C1E6
Registered Owner:	CARLOS G. BOCOCK	Rated Power:	200 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:	TLH ,82 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	1 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	14:52 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	90°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 2200 ft AGL	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 8500 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	11 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	190°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	-3°C / -7°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	(TLH)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	VFR
Destination:	MEMPHIS , TN	Type of Clearance:	IFR
Departure Time:	09:46 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class C;Demo area

Airport Information

Airport:	TALLAHASSEE TLH	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	82 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	27	IFR Approach:	
Runway Length/Width:	8001 ft / 150 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	None

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	On-ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	30.390703,-84.510124(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Powell, Phillip
Additional Participating Persons:	LINDA NEVIN; TAMPA , FL
Original Publish Date:	January 18, 2001
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=46022

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](#).