



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	SAN LUIS OBISPO, California	Accident Number:	LAX99LA159
Date & Time:	April 20, 1999, 18:34 Local	Registration:	N7317X
Aircraft:	Cessna R182	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot reported that he was about 6 miles northwest of the airport, returning to the airport for landing, the engine abruptly and completely ceased delivering power. The aircraft descended through a stratus cloud layer and broke out beneath a 900-foot ceiling. The pilot determined that the aircraft would not glide to the airport and made an emergency landing in an open field beside a highway. The right wing struck a sign during the landing. FAA inspectors reported that the engine fuel sump contained a clear fluid resembling water, and that the right-hand fuel tank sump drain had a threaded plug installed which precluded routine sampling of the tank for water.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The inadequate preflight inspection of the aircraft by the pilot-in-command which resulted in a loss of engine power due to water contamination in the fuel system. A factor in the accident was an improper maintenance alteration which disabled a fuel sump drain.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER(TOTAL) - NONMECHANICAL
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - NORMAL

Findings

1. (C) FUEL SYSTEM - CONTAMINATION, WATER

2. FUEL SYSTEM, DRAIN - DISABLED
3. (F) MAINTENANCE - IMPROPER - UNKNOWN
4. (C) AIRCRAFT PREFLIGHT - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - EMERGENCY

Occurrence #3: ON GROUND/WATER COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: LANDING - ROLL

Findings

5. OBJECT - SIGN

Factual Information

On April 20, 1999, at 1834 hours Pacific daylight time, a Cessna R182, N7317X, was substantially damaged when the right wing collided with a sign during an off-airport emergency landing following loss of engine power near San Luis Obispo, California. The commercial pilot was not injured. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and no flight plan was filed. The personal flight, operated by the owner under 14 CFR Part 91, departed from San Luis Obispo at 1800.

The pilot reported that he was returning for landing when the engine stopped abruptly about 6 miles northwest of the airport. The aircraft descended through a stratus cloud layer and broke out beneath a 900-foot ceiling. The pilot determined that the aircraft would not glide to the airport and made an emergency landing in an open field alongside a highway.

In his report to the Safety Board, the pilot reported there were no mechanical malfunctions with the aircraft, and that water was found in the carburetor at the emergency landing site. He reported that he drained both fuel tank sumps (left and right), as well as the firewall gascolator as part of his preflight inspection.

Inspectors from the San Jose Flight Standards District Office reported that the engine fuel sump contained a clear fluid resembling water, and that the right-hand fuel tank sump drain had a threaded plug installed which precluded routine sampling of the tank for water.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Flight instructor	Age:	77, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	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 2 Valid Medical-w/ waivers/lim	Last FAA Medical Exam:	September 13, 1998
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	2429 hours (Total, all aircraft), 508 hours (Total, this make and model), 2360 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 2 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Cessna	Registration:	N7317X
Model/Series:	R182 R182	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	R18200073
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	February 3, 1998 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	3112 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	12 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	1607 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, activated, did not aid in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	O-540-J3C5D
Registered Owner:	LYNN D. MAHIN	Rated Power:	235 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:	Dusk
Observation Facility, Elevation:	SBP ,209 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	6 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	18:56 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	135°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 1300 ft AGL	Visibility	15 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 20000 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	19 knots / 27 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	310°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	13°C / 9°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	, CA (SBP)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	18:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:		Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:		Runway Surface Condition:	
Runway Used:	0	IFR Approach:	
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	Forced landing

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	35.290298,-120.809814(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Parker, Richard
Additional Participating Persons:	WILBERT J ROBINSON, JR.; SAN JOSE , CA
Original Publish Date:	June 23, 2000
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=46143

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](#).