



# Aviation Investigation Final Report

<b>Location:</b>	SAN MARTIN, California	<b>Accident Number:</b>	LAX99LA208
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	June 4, 1999, 16:13 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N44549
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Culver V	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	1 None
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

## Analysis

The pilot noticed obscured ridges en route to his destination and said he spent too much time looking for a clear area to cross before he decided to divert to another airport. The pilot realized he would not have enough fuel to reach the diversion airport, so he maneuvered for a forced landing 4 miles short of the runway when he ran out of fuel. The aircraft encountered soft soil and ground obstructions during the landing roll. The pilot did not refuel the aircraft prior to departure from his last stop.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: Fuel exhaustion due to the pilot's inadequate in-flight planning and failure to refuel the aircraft during an en route stop.

## Findings

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

### Findings

1. (C) FLUID,FUEL - EXHAUSTION
2. (C) IN-FLIGHT PLANNING/DECISION - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (C) REFUELING - NOT PERFORMED - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. FLIGHT TO NEW DESTINATION - DELAYED - PILOT IN COMMAND

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

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Occurrence #3: ON GROUND/WATER ENCOUNTER WITH TERRAIN/WATER  
Phase of Operation: LANDING - ROLL

Findings

- 5. TERRAIN CONDITION - OPEN FIELD
- 6. TERRAIN CONDITION - SOFT

## Factual Information

On June 4, 1999, at 1613 hours Pacific daylight time, a Culver V, N44549, force landed in a vacant field north of South County Airport, San Martin, California, and encountered soft soil and ground obstructions. The aircraft, owned and operated by the pilot under 14 CFR Part 91, sustained substantial damage. The private pilot, the sole occupant, was not injured. The flight originated from Watsonville, California, at 0940, and made an en route stop at Auburn, California. Visual meteorological conditions existed, and no flight plan was filed.

A Federal Aviation Administration inspector from the San Jose, California, Flight Standards District Office, interviewed the pilot. The pilot stated to the inspector that he ran out of fuel while nearing his destination. He reported that he refueled in Watsonville and departed for the South County Airport with a planned stop in Auburn. The pilot did not refuel his aircraft in Auburn. According to the pilot, he was airborne for 5 hours after departing Watsonville when the engine lost power. The pilot said that when he realized he would not have enough fuel to make it to his destination, he maneuvered to make an off field landing in a vacant field.

In a written statement from the pilot, he stated that he departed Watsonville airport with the intent to land at the Quincy airport. As he approached a summit just west of Quincy, he found the ridges to be obscured. He proceeded to land in Auburn, for a short stop, and then departed for a flight back to Watsonville. He noted a slight headwind, and as he crossed the Santa Clara Valley, he found the ridges north of Watsonville to be obscured. He stated, "I spent too much time looking for a way to cross." The pilot altered his course for South County Airport, but ran out of gas 4 miles short of the airport.

### Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	66, 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-w/ waivers/lim	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	February 4, 1999
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	UNK	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	1415 hours (Total, all aircraft), 70 hours (Total, this make and model), 1341 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 24 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 9 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Culver	<b>Registration:</b>	N44549
<b>Model/Series:</b>	V V	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Airplane
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Normal	<b>Serial Number:</b>	V42
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Tricycle	<b>Seats:</b>	2
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	February 14, 1999 Annual	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	1600 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>	30 Hrs	<b>Engines:</b>	1 Reciprocating
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>	690 Hrs	<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	Continental
<b>ELT:</b>	Installed	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	C-85-FHJ
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	DONALD L. THOMAS	<b>Rated Power:</b>	85 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>	Visual (VMC)	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Day
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>	SJC ,58 ft msl	<b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>	25 Nautical Miles
<b>Observation Time:</b>	15:53 Local	<b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>	340°
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>	Scattered / 5000 ft AGL	<b>Visibility</b>	10 miles
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	Overcast / 25000 ft AGL	<b>Visibility (RVR):</b>	
<b>Wind Speed/Gusts:</b>	11 knots /	<b>Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Wind Direction:</b>	270°	<b>Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Altimeter Setting:</b>	30 inches Hg	<b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>	14°C / 8°C
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
<b>Departure Point:</b>	AUBURN , CA (AUN )	<b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>	None
<b>Destination:</b>	WATSONVILLE , CA (WVI )	<b>Type of Clearance:</b>	None
<b>Departure Time:</b>	14:15 Local	<b>Type of Airspace:</b>	Class E

## 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>	Forced landing

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	1 None	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>		<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	None
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Total Injuries:</b>	1 None	<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	37.099044,-121.599403(est)

## Administrative Information

<b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>	Rich, Jeff
<b>Additional Participating Persons:</b>	BILL DIME; SAN JOSE , CA
<b>Original Publish Date:</b>	November 22, 2000
<b>Last Revision Date:</b>	
<b>Investigation Class:</b>	<a href="#">Class</a>
<b>Note:</b>	
<b>Investigation Docket:</b>	<a href="https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=46498">https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=46498</a>

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