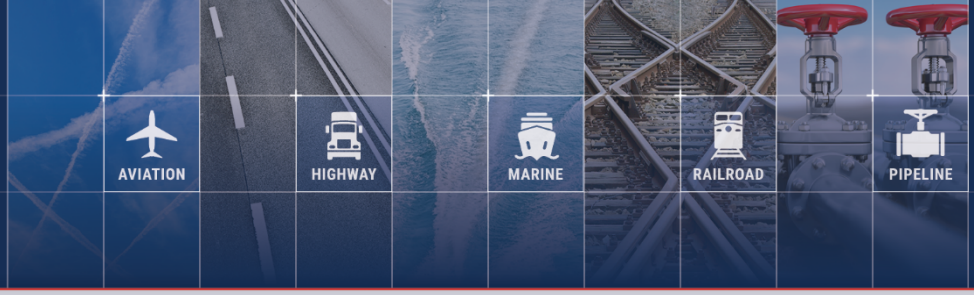

Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	JUNEAU, Alaska	**Accident Number:**	ANC99FAMS1
Date & Time:	May 2, 1999, 12:15 Local	**Registration:**	N8694P
Aircraft:	Piper PA-24-260	**Aircraft Damage:**	Destroyed
Defining Event:		**Injuries:**	2 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The certificated commercial pilot and a passenger departed on a personal, VFR cross-country flight over coastal waters. VFR flight was not recommended. The pilot was heard on the common traffic advisory frequency stating he was turning around to return to his departure airport. The weather conditions in the area of the turn were described as rain and snow showers with clouds to the surface. The airplane was reported overdue and is missing. The pilot and passenger are presumed to have received fatal injuries.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: Undetermined. Missing aircraft.

Findings

Occurrence #1: MISSING AIRCRAFT
Phase of Operation: UNKNOWN

Factual Information

HISTORY OF FLIGHT

On May 2, 1999, about 1215 Alaska daylight time, a wheel equipped Piper PA-24-260 airplane, N8694P, is presumed to have crashed about 20 miles northwest of Juneau, Alaska. Neither the airplane or its occupants have been located. The airplane was being operated as a visual flight rules (VFR) cross-country personal flight under Title 14 CFR Part 91 when the accident occurred. The airplane, registered to and operated by the pilot, is presumed to have been destroyed. The certificated commercial pilot, and the sole passenger, are presumed to have received fatal injuries. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the point of departure. Instrument meteorological conditions prevailed in the area of the presumed crash. A VFR flight plan was filed by the pilot. The accident flight originated at the Haines Airport, Haines, Alaska, about 1152.

About 1101, the pilot contacted the In-Flight One position at the Juneau Automated Flight Service Station (AFSS), Juneau, via radio, and filed a VFR flight plan from Haines, to Juneau. He indicated his time en route was 30 minutes, with one hour of fuel on board, and two persons on board. The flight service station specialist stated: "Roger, still carrying weather advisories in affect for mountain obscuration in clouds and in precipitation."

About 1122, the pilot again contacted the In-Flight One position at the Juneau AFSS and stated: "Juneau radio, Comanche 8694P, 122.6 at Haines, close my VFR flight plan to Juneau please, we turned around at Sherman Point." The AFSS specialist inquired if the pilot encountered a snow squall, and the pilot replied: "Well, it was raining, looked like the visibility was down to a mile or so, we had a pilot report that Juneau was in bad weather too, we were light on fuel to be going all the way down and have to turn around, so we came back for fuel, we will call you for weather in a few minutes."

About 1137, the pilot telephoned the Preflight Four position at the Juneau AFSS to obtain a current weather briefing for Gustavus, Alaska, and Juneau. The AFSS specialist indicated the Gustavus weather was reported as: Wind, 360 degrees at 5 knots; visibility, 10 miles; cloud condition, 600 feet broken, 1,900 feet broken, 4,700 feet overcast; temperature, 35 degrees F, dew point, 34 degree F; altimeter, 29.28 inHg; remarks, light snow in the area. The weather in Juneau was reported as: Wind, 120 degrees at 16 knots, gusts to 19 knots; visibility, 10 miles in light rain; clouds, 900 feet scattered, 1,600 feet broken, 2,500 feet overcast; temperature, 37 degrees F; dew point, 35 degrees F; remarks, dew point condition lower to the east.

The pilot then inquired if any commercial operators (air taxi) pilots were flying up and down the canal (the Lynn Canal). The specialist replied that pilots from Skagway Air Service were flying, and then mentioned a pilot report of poor weather conditions along the route from Haines to

Juneau. The accident airplane pilot replied that the previous pilot report was provided by him, and that he turned around due to a fuel issue. The pilot then inquired if the weather conditions in Gustavus had been staying as reported, and the specialist replied that at 1015, Gustavus had a visibility of 2 1/2 miles; clouds, 300 feet scattered, 1,200 feet overcast. The pilot stated: "O.K., I think we will come down to Juneau and talk to you when I get there."

About 1151, the pilot contacted the In-Flight two position of the Juneau AFSS via radio and filed a VFR flight plan from Haines to Juneau, stating his time en route was 40 minutes, with two hours of fuel, and two persons on board. The AFSS specialist replied: "Comanche 8694P Juneau radio, flight plan activated, VFR not recommended based on your pilot report for visibilities reduced in the canal. The area forecast should be updating here shortly, the latest we expected was isolated IFR conditions and mountain obscuration in rain, and snow showers, and hail." The pilot replied: "94P roger, we will go down and take a look."

After departure on the accident flight, the pilot proceeded southbound along the Lynn Canal. Two other airplanes were also southbound, and all three airplanes were reporting their position on a common traffic advisory frequency of 122.9 MHz. The second airplane was operated by Skagway Air Service Inc., Skagway, Alaska. The third airplane was operated by Haines Airways Inc., Haines. These radio conversations were not heard, or recorded, by the Juneau Automated Flight Service Station (AFSS).

The pilot of the Haines Airways airplane reported when he reached Point Sherman (35 miles northwest of Juneau), he heard the pilot of the accident airplane announce his position as approaching Mab Island (20 miles northwest of Juneau), which is 3 miles south of Bridget Point. The accident airplane pilot said he was at 1,100 feet msl, and was making a climbing right turn. The Haines Airways pilot reported that from his position, trailing the accident airplane, the weather conditions ahead appeared to consist of clouds, fog and snow. The clouds appeared to extend to the surface. Both the Skagway Air Service, and the Haines Airways pilots turned around, and returned to their respective departure airports. The Haines Airways pilot commented that an altitude of 1,100 feet appeared to be in the clouds.

The accident airplane did not reach the intended destination of Juneau, and was not located at any airport. The FAA issued an alert notice (ALNOT) at 1322. Search personnel began an extensive search effort that included aircraft, surface vessels, and ground search personnel. The search was suspended on May 6, 1999.

CREW INFORMATION

The pilot held a commercial pilot certificate with airplane single-engine land, and instrument airplane ratings. He also held private pilot privileges with an airplane multiengine rating. The most recent third-class medical certificate was issued to the pilot on March 17, 1999, and contained the limitation that correcting lenses be worn while exercising the privileges of his airman certificate.

No personal flight records were located for the pilot, and the aeronautical experience listed on page 3 of this report was obtained from a review of FAA airmen records on file in the Airman and Medical Records Center located in Oklahoma City. On the pilot's application for medical certificate, dated March 17, 1999, the pilot indicated that his total aeronautical experience consisted of about 5,500 hours, of which 30 were accrued in the previous 6 months.

METEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION

The closest official weather observation station is Juneau, Alaska, which is located about 20 nautical miles southeast of the presumed accident site. At 1153, an Aviation Routine Weather Report (METAR) was reporting in part: Wind, 110 degrees (true) at 13 knots; visibility, 10 statute miles in light rain; clouds, 900 feet scattered, 1,500 feet broken, 2,000 feet overcast; temperature, 37 degrees F; dew point, 35 degrees F; altimeter, 29.31 inHg.

An area forecast for Lynn Canal and Glacier Bay, valid until 1800 was reporting, in part: An AIRMET for mountain obscuration with mountains occasionally obscured in clouds and in precipitation. Sky condition and ceiling, 2,000 feet scattered, 4,500 feet broken, tops at 12,000 feet; visibility, 4 statute miles in light rain and light snow showers. Widely scattered broken clouds at 2,000 feet with towering cumulus clouds, tops at 18,000 feet; visibility, 3 statute miles in rain, snow, and small hail/snow pellets. Isolated visibility below 3 statute miles in snow showers. Outlook, valid from 1800 to May 3, 1999, at 1200, marginal VFR ceilings with rain showers and snow showers. White and Chilkoot Passes, marginal VFR ceilings in rain showers and snow showers, occasional IFR ceilings in snow showers. Turbulence, none significant except in the vicinity of towering cumulus clouds. Icing and freezing level, light, isolated moderate rime and mixed icing in clouds and in precipitation from 1,000 to 16,000 feet. Freezing level, 1,000 feet.

A Skagway Air Service pilot flying in the area of the presumed accident reported that in the area of Point Bridget, a ceiling of 500 to 600 feet was present and snow was falling.

COMMUNICATIONS

The pilot communicated by radio and telephone with the Juneau AFSS. The area of the accident did not have any radar recording capabilities, nor was any radar coverage available in the Lynn Canal.

SEARCH AND RESCUE/SURVIVAL ASPECTS

The U.S. Coast Guard, and the Alaska State Troopers, Juneau, conducted extensive air, water, and ground searches. Maximum survival time in the waters of the Lynn Canal, with an average temperature of 37 degrees F, were calculated by the Coast Guard. They indicated that incapacitation, when core body temperature reached 93.2 degrees F, would occur at a maximum of 9.0 hours. Unconsciousness, when core body temperature reached 82.4 degrees F, would occur at a maximum of 13.2 hours.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Private	**Age:**	50,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	**Seat Occupied:**	Unknown
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	**Restraint Used:**	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	**Second Pilot Present:**	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	**Toxicology Performed:**	No
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim	**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	March 17, 1999
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	
Flight Time:	5500 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	**Registration:**	N8694P
Model/Series:	PA-24-260 PA-24-260	**Aircraft Category:**	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		**Amateur Built:**	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	**Serial Number:**	24-4142
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	**Seats:**	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	**Certified Max Gross Wt.:**	2900 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		**Engines:**	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		**Engine Manufacturer:**	Lycoming
ELT:		**Engine Model/Series:**	O-540-E4A5
Registered Owner:	DAVID L. MCKENZIE	**Rated Power:**	260 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:	PAJ ,19 ft msl	**Distance from Accident Site:**	20 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	11:53 Local	**Direction from Accident Site:**	325°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 900 ft AGL	**Visibility**	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 1500 ft AGL	**Visibility (RVR):**	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	13 knots /	**Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:**	/
Wind Direction:	110°	**Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:**	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	**Temperature/Dew Point:**	3°C / 2°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	N/A - None - Rain		
Departure Point:	HAINES , AK (PAHN)	**Type of Flight Plan Filed:**	VFR
Destination:	(PAJN)	**Type of Clearance:**	None
Departure Time:	11:52 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:	1 Fatal	**Aircraft Fire:**	
Ground Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Explosion:**	
Total Injuries:	2 Fatal	**Latitude, Longitude:**	58.579788,-134.769973(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Erickson, Scott
Additional Participating Persons:	PATTI MATTISON (FAA); JUNEAU , AK
Original Publish Date:	June 22, 2000
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=46527