



# Aviation Investigation Final Report

<b>Location:</b>	SKWENTNA, Alaska	<b>Accident Number:</b>	ANC99LA131
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	August 31, 1999, 14:30 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N3824M
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Piper PA-12	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	2 None
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General aviation - Positioning		

## Analysis

The commercial certificated pilot/hunting guide was landing at a remote airstrip located on a mountain ridge with an assistant guide. The purpose of the flight was to establish a camp for his hunting clients. The landing strip is oriented north/south at 3,500 feet msl, and is 850 feet long, and 30 feet wide. The pilot had landed on the ridge numerous times in the past. The pilot said he made several low passes over the area to assess the landing area and wind conditions. During the low passes over the ridge, he noted a quartering head wind from the right, of 10 miles per hour. He said he landed on the ridge, but just after touchdown, encountered a wind gust that pushed the airplane to the left. He added engine power to abort the landing. The tailwheel came off the ground, and he turned the airplane downhill to the left to gain airspeed. The right wing, and the main tires struck the ground on the downhill side of the ridge. The airplane received damage to the landing gear, and the right wing spar.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's inadequate compensation for wind conditions. Factors in the accident were a crosswind, and wind gusts.

## Findings

Occurrence #1: ON GROUND/WATER ENCOUNTER WITH WEATHER  
Phase of Operation: LANDING - ROLL

Findings

1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - CROSSWIND
2. (C) COMPENSATION FOR WIND CONDITIONS - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND

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Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER  
Phase of Operation: LANDING - ABORTED

Findings

3. TERRAIN CONDITION - MOUNTAINOUS/HILLY

## Factual Information

On August 31, 1999, about 1430 Alaska daylight time, a tundra tire equipped Piper PA-12 airplane, N3824M, sustained substantial damage while landing at a remote area, about 53 miles west of Skwentna, Alaska, at latitude 62 degrees, 03.978 minutes north, and longitude 153 degrees, 03.011 minutes west. The airplane was being operated as a visual flight rules (VFR) local area positioning flight under Title 14 CFR Part 91 when the accident occurred. The airplane was operated by the pilot, a hunting guide doing business as High Country Alaska. The commercial certificated pilot, and the sole passenger, an assistant guide with the company, were not injured. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed. VFR company flight following procedures were in effect.

The accident was reported by another airplane pilot flying over the area.

On September 4, 1999, during a telephone conversation with a National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigator, the pilot reported he was planning to land on a ridge with his assistant guide to establish a camp for his hunting clients. He said the landing area is oriented north/south at 3,500 feet msl in the Ptarmigan Pass area of the Alaska Mountain Range, and that he had landed on the ridge numerous times in the past. He said he made several low passes over the area to assess the landing area and wind conditions. During the low passes over the ridge, he noted a quartering wind from the northeast of 10 miles per hour with no wind gusts. He said he landed on the ridge, but just after touchdown, encountered a wind gust that pushed the airplane to the left. He added engine power to abort the landing. He said the tailwheel came off the ground, and he turned the airplane downhill to gain airspeed, but the right wing, and main tires struck the ground on the downhill side of the ridge. The airplane received damage to the landing gear, and the right wing spar.

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Commercial	<b>Age:</b>	34, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Single-engine land	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Center
<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 2 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	March 26, 1999
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	Yes	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	1600 hours (Total, all aircraft), 350 hours (Total, this make and model), 1500 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 200 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 150 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 2 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Piper	<b>Registration:</b>	N3824M
<b>Model/Series:</b>	PA-12 PA-12	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Airplane
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Normal	<b>Serial Number:</b>	12-2744
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Tailwheel	<b>Seats:</b>	3
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	July 31, 1999 100 hour	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	1750 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>	100 Hrs	<b>Engines:</b>	1 Reciprocating
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>	4100 Hrs	<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	Lycoming
<b>ELT:</b>	Installed, activated, did not aid in locating accident	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	O-320
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	JEFFORY K. PRALLE	<b>Rated Power:</b>	160 Horsepower
<b>Operator:</b>		<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	On-demand air taxi (135)
<b>Operator Does Business As:</b>	HIGH COUNTRY ALASKA	<b>Operator Designator Code:</b>	H1GC

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Visual (VMC)	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Day
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>		<b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>	
<b>Observation Time:</b>		<b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>	
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>	Unknown	<b>Visibility</b>	25 miles
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	Overcast / 1000 ft AGL	<b>Visibility (RVR):</b>	
<b>Wind Speed/Gusts:</b>	6 knots /	<b>Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Wind Direction:</b>	45°	<b>Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Altimeter Setting:</b>		<b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>	7°C
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
<b>Departure Point:</b>	HARTMAN RIVER , AK	<b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>	Company VFR
<b>Destination:</b>		<b>Type of Clearance:</b>	None
<b>Departure Time:</b>	13:00 Local	<b>Type of Airspace:</b>	Class G

## Airport Information

<b>Airport:</b>		<b>Runway Surface Type:</b>	Dirt
<b>Airport Elevation:</b>	3500 ft msl	<b>Runway Surface Condition:</b>	Dry;Vegetation
<b>Runway Used:</b>	36	<b>IFR Approach:</b>	None
<b>Runway Length/Width:</b>	850 ft / 30 ft	<b>VFR Approach/Landing:</b>	Valley/terrain following

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	1 None	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>	1 None	<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	None
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Total Injuries:</b>	2 None	<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	61.930225,-151.730575(est)

## Administrative Information

<b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>	Erickson, Scott
<b>Additional Participating Persons:</b>	GLENN SMITH (FAA); ANCHORAGE , AK
<b>Original Publish Date:</b>	August 14, 2001
<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=47326">https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=47326</a>

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](#).