



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	ROCKSPRINGS, Texas	Accident Number:	FTW00LA123
Date & Time:	April 11, 2000, 22:00 Local	Registration:	N789CA
Aircraft:	Piper PA-32R-301	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	2 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

While on a dark night visual approach to a lighted runway, the pilot lost visual contact with the runway and elected to perform a go-around. The pilot applied full power, raised the landing gear, and selected 10 degrees of flaps. Subsequently, the airplane struck trees, impacted the ground, and came to a stop against a fence. A postimpact fire consumed the airplane.

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 proper glidepath. A factor was the dark night light conditions.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: APPROACH - VFR PATTERN - FINAL APPROACH

Findings

1. OBJECT - TREE(S)
2. (C) PROPER GLIDEPATH - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (F) LIGHT CONDITION - DARK NIGHT

Factual Information

On April 11, 2000, approximately 2200 central daylight time, a Piper PA-32R-301 single-engine airplane, N789CA, impacted trees and terrain while on approach to the Edwards County Airport near Rocksprings, Texas. The airplane was registered to Henjill, Inc., of Wilmington, Delaware, and operated by the pilot. The private pilot and pilot rated passenger were not injured. The airplane was destroyed by impact forces and fire. Dark night visual meteorological conditions prevailed, and an IFR flight plan was filed for the 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91 personal flight. The cross-country flight departed Beaumont, Texas, about 1930, with a planned destination of El Paso, Texas.

The pilot reported to the NTSB investigator-in-charge (IIC) that he diverted about 15 degrees to the left of course to avoid some weather. As the flight continued toward its destination, "dark night IFR conditions" were encountered. He further reported that he contacted Houston Center and requested directions to the nearest airport. Houston Center directed the flight toward the Sonora Airport, near Sonora, Texas. After encountering moderate turbulence, he again contacted Houston Center and requested directions to a closer airport. Houston Center directed him toward the Edwards County Airport near Rocksprings, Texas.

As the flight neared Rocksprings, the pilot activated the airport's runway lights and set up for a visual approach to runway 14. While on the approach, the pilot lost visual contact with the runway, and elected to perform a go-around. The pilot applied full power, raised the landing gear, and selected 10 degrees of flaps. Subsequently, the airplane struck trees, impacted the ground, and came to a stop against a fence. A postimpact fire consumed the airplane.

At 2153, the reported weather at Kimble County Airport, near Junction, Texas, located 40 nautical miles northeast of the accident site, was scattered clouds at 3,000 feet, ceiling broken at 3,700 feet, visibility 9 statute miles, wind from 340 degrees at 9 knots gusting to 17 knots, temperature of 73 F, dew point 63 F, and altimeter setting of 30.03 inches of Mercury. The NTSB IIC calculated the density altitude at 3,758 feet.

On the enclosed Pilot/Operator Aircraft Accident Report (NTSB Form 6120.1/2), the pilot reported that he had accumulated 880 total flight hours of which 30 hours were at night. In the 90 days prior to the accident, the pilot had flown 60 hours in the accident aircraft of which 5 hours were at night. In the 30 days prior to the accident, the pilot had flown 3 hours at night of which 2 hours were in the previous 24 hours.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	42, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
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--no waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	January 13, 1998
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	880 hours (Total, all aircraft), 500 hours (Total, this make and model), 800 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N789CA
Model/Series:	PA-32R-301 PA-32R-301	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	3213094
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	6
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	July 16, 1999 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	3600 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	871 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed	Engine Model/Series:	IO-540-K1G5D
Registered Owner:	HENJILL INC	Rated Power:	300 Horsepower
Operator:	IVAN B. GREENHUT	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:	Night/dark
Observation Facility, Elevation:	JCT ,1749 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	40 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	21:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	45°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 3000 ft AGL	Visibility	9 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 3700 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	9 knots / 17 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	340°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	23°C / 17°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	BEAUMONT , TX (BPT)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	IFR
Destination:	(69R)	Type of Clearance:	IFR
Departure Time:	19:30 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class E

Airport Information

Airport:	ROCK SPRINGS 69R	Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:	2371 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	
Runway Used:	14	IFR Approach:	Visual
Runway Length/Width:	4050 ft / 50 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Go around

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Fire:	On-ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 None	Latitude, Longitude:	30.009857,-100.209815(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Wigington, Douglas
Additional Participating Persons:	WAYNE CARTER; SAN ANTONIO , TX
Original Publish Date:	May 8, 2001
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	The NTSB traveled to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=48999

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](#).