



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	TUCUMCARI, New Mexico	Accident Number:	DEN00LA183
Date & Time:	September 30, 2000, 16:27 Local	Registration:	N2421H
Aircraft:	Ercoupe 415-C	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	2 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

Two people, a father and son, were hired by the airplane owner to mow grass at the airport in preparation for an upcoming air show. Without the airplane owner's permission, they took the airplane, taxied to the fueling station, had the airplane fueled, and taxied to takeoff. During initial climb following takeoff, at about 150 feet above ground level, the wings were observed to "wobble" and the airplane entered a vertical dive. The airplane then impacted the ground beside the runway and burst into flames. Neither of the occupants had any pilot training or experience.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: loss of control during initial climb following takeoff by an unqualified person.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF - INITIAL CLIMB

Findings

1. STOLEN AIRCRAFT/UNAUTHORIZED USE - INTENTIONAL - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (C) LACK OF CERTIFICATION - UNQUALIFIED PERSON

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings

3. TERRAIN CONDITION - OPEN FIELD

Factual Information

On September 30, 2000, at 1627 mountain daylight time, an Ercoupe 415-C, N2421H, was destroyed when it collided with the ground following a loss of control during initial climb following takeoff from Tucumcari Municipal Airport, Tucumcari, New Mexico. Both occupants, neither of whom held a pilot certificate, received fatal injuries. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed for this unauthorized flight that was originating at the time the accident occurred. No flight plan was filed.

An airport employee, who witnessed the event, called the local authorities who arrived on scene in about 10 minutes. On arrival, they found the aircraft in flames with one person on board and the other person sitting on the ground about 50 yards from the aircraft. This person was conscious and had multiple burns over most of his body. He identified himself as the pilot of the aircraft and the other person as his father. He was transported to the local hospital where he passed away.

The airport employee said that the two occupants had taxied the airplane to the fueling facility where they purchased 9.2 gallons of 100 octane low lead aviation gasoline. He was unaware that they were not authorized to use the airplane or that neither was a qualified pilot. The airport employee related that he watched them taxi the airplane to runway 26 where they commenced a takeoff. Following lift off, at about 150 feet above ground level, the airplane was observed to "wobble" from side to side and enter a vertical dive, with the top of the airplane fully visible from the terminal building, until it impacted the ground and burst into flames.

According to the airplane's owner, he periodically hired the father and son to do odd jobs around the airport. On this occasion, he had hired them to mow grass in preparation for an upcoming air show. He said that they would have known where the airplane's keys were kept, and to the best of his knowledge, neither had any pilot training or experience.

A search of FAA records provided no evidence that either of the occupants had ever had either a medical certificate or a pilot's license.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	None	Age:	28, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	None None	Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:			

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Ercoupe	Registration:	N2421H
Model/Series:	415-C 415-C	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	3046
Landing Gear Type:	Tricycle	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	June 6, 1999 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1475 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	10 Hrs	Engines:	Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	3010 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	Continental
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	C-85-12
Registered Owner:	STANLEY E. JENNINGS	Rated Power:	85 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:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	TCC ,4064 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	1 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	15:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	180°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 9500 ft AGL	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	3 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	0°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	91°C / 37°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	(TCC)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	14:30 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class E

Airport Information

Airport:	TUCUMCARI TCC	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	4064 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	26	IFR Approach:	
Runway Length/Width:	4600 ft / 60 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	None

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	2 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	On-ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	35.159523,-103.720146(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	WIEMEYER, NORM
Additional Participating Persons:	TAMARA BELL; ALBUQUERQUE , NM
Original Publish Date:	December 18, 2001
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=50376

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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](#).