



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Oregon City, Oregon	Accident Number:	SEA01LA134
Date & Time:	July 16, 2001, 17:55 Local	Registration:	N918TF
Aircraft:	Piper PA-12	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	2 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Instructional		

Analysis

The non-floatplane rated private pilot-in-command (front seat), accompanied by an ATP rated flight instructor (rear seat), was step taxiing in preparation for takeoff on the Willamette River. During the step taxi the aircraft's right float impacted an unmarked, submerged log protruding about 15 inches above the water's surface. The right float was breached and the aircraft gradually nosed over and sank.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The front seat (pilot-in-command's) inadequate visual lookout during step taxi resulting in the aircraft's collision with a partially submerged log. A contributing factor was the log and it's lack of any conspicuous marking.

Findings

Occurrence #1: ON GROUND/WATER COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: TAXI - TO TAKEOFF

Findings

1. (F) OBJECT - SUBMERGED OBJECT
2. (C) VISUAL LOOKOUT - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

On July 16, 2001, approximately 1755 Pacific daylight time, a Piper PA-12 floatplane, N918TF, registered to an individual, and being flown by a private non-floatplane rated pilot accompanied by a floatplane rated airline transport rated flight instructor, sustained substantial damage when the aircraft impacted a log during step taxi in daylight conditions on the Willamette River, Oregon City, Oregon. Both pilots exited the aircraft as it sank, and were uninjured. Visual meteorological conditions existed and no flight plan had been filed. The flight, which was instructional, was operated under 14CFR91, and originated locally on the late afternoon of the accident.

The airline transport rated pilot, a certified flight instructor, reported that the pilot under instruction (seated forward) had just landed on the Willamette River, reversed direction and was step taxiing to takeoff when the aircraft's right float impacted a tree stump protruding approximately 15 inches above the surface of the water. He stated that he felt the impact and the aircraft's right float became airborne while the left wing dipped. The left wing then impacted the water and the aircraft came to a stop upright in the water. The right float, which had been breached, began to fill with water and the aircraft gradually nosed over while sinking. The engine was shut down and both pilots evacuated before the aircraft became inverted (refer to attached statements of both pilots).

Clackamas County Sheriff's personnel reported locating a deadhead (submerged log) in the river measuring 1.5 to 2 feet in diameter and oriented with the end of the log protruding from the surface of the river and downstream. Additionally, white paint transfer and a small piece of embedded aluminum were noted at the log's end (refer to attached Sheriff's report). The log had no marking or identifying buoy.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	56, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Front
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Glider	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Valid Medical-w/ waivers/lim	Last FAA Medical Exam:	March 28, 2000
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	July 21, 2000
Flight Time:	4381 hours (Total, all aircraft), 13 hours (Total, this make and model), 4092 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 76 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 29 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 2 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Flight instructor Information

Certificate:	Airline transport; Commercial; Flight instructor	Age:	43, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea; Multi-engine land; Multi- engine sea	Seat Occupied:	Rear
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Balloon; Glider; Gyroplane; Helicopter	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane; Helicopter	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane multi-engine; Airplane single-engine; Glider; Helicopter; Instrument airplane; Instrument helicopter	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Valid Medical-w/ waivers/lim	Last FAA Medical Exam:	December 5, 2000
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	November 4, 2000
Flight Time:	11161 hours (Total, all aircraft), 32 hours (Total, this make and model), 6947 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 255 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 79 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 3 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N918TF
Model/Series:	PA-12	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	12-2232
Landing Gear Type:	Float	Seats:	3
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	November 3, 2000 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1935 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	172 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	2113 Hrs at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	O-320
Registered Owner:	Jane G. Nicolai	Rated Power:	150 Horsepower
Operator:	Nicolai, William S.	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	PDX,30 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	15 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	17:55 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	345°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Few / 5000 ft AGL	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 6500 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:		Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29.96 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	18°C / 10°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Lake Oswego, OR (3S1)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	17:30 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	2 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 None	Latitude, Longitude:	45.339412,-122.659545(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	McCreary, Steven
Additional Participating Persons:	Gordon Read; FAA FSDO; Hillsboro, OR
Original Publish Date:	February 20, 2002
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	The NTSB traveled to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=52737

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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](#).