



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	West Fargo, North Dakota	Accident Number:	CHI01LA201
Date & Time:	June 10, 2001, 20:00 Local	Registration:	N3253N
Aircraft:	Piper J3-C65	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The floatplane sustained substantial damage when it landed on a grass field, subsequently collapsing the float rigging and damaging the wing. The pilot reported, "... upon slide out, aircraft turned abruptly to line 90 degrees, side loading floats. Bending struts on floats, prop struck float, wingtip struck ground when float struts gave way." The pilot reported there were no mechanical malfunctions with the airplane. A witness who worked at the airport reported the grass field adjacent to the airport had been mowed so the pilot could land. He reported the pilot was the first person to land on the grass at that airport.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: the pilot's inadequate preflight planning and the unsuitable landing area selected by the pilot. Additional factors were the uneven terrain and the failed float assembly in overload.

Findings

Occurrence #1: DRAGGED WING, ROTOR, POD, FLOAT OR TAIL/SKID
Phase of Operation: LANDING

Findings

1. (C) PREFLIGHT PLANNING/PREPARATION - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND

2. (C) UNSUITABLE TERRAIN OR TAKEOFF/LANDING/TAXI AREA - SELECTED - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - ROUGH/UNEVEN
4. (F) LANDING GEAR,FLOAT ASSEMBLY - OVERLOAD

Factual Information

On June 10, 2001, at 2000 central daylight time, a Piper J3-C65 floatplane, N3253N, sustained substantial damage when it landed on a grass field adjacent to the West Fargo Utility Airport (D54), West Fargo, North Dakota. The personal flight was operating under the provisions of 14 CFR Part 91. The aircraft departed at 1930 from the runway with the aid of dollies on the float rigging of the airplane. It flew around the traffic pattern and proceeded to land on the grass, subsequently collapsing the float rigging and damaging the wing. The private pilot was not injured. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the accident.

The pilot reported, "... upon slide out, aircraft turned abruptly to line 90 degrees, side loading floats. Bending struts on floats, prop struck float, wingtip struck ground when float struts gave way." The pilot reported there were no mechanical malfunctions with the airplane.

A witness who worked at D54 reported the grass adjacent to the airport had been mowed so the pilot could land. He reported the pilot was the first person to land on the grass at that airport.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	49, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea	Seat Occupied:	Front
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	July 20, 2000
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	November 11, 2000
Flight Time:	787 hours (Total, all aircraft), 117 hours (Total, this make and model), 717 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 10 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 2 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N3253N
Model/Series:	J3-C65	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	22444
Landing Gear Type:	Float	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	April 6, 2001 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1220 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	1 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	5665 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	Continental
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	C-90-8FJ
Registered Owner:	Lee Erickson	Rated Power:	90 Horsepower
Operator:		Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	FAR,900 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	5 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	19:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	78°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	5 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	240°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29.69 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	24°C / 15°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Fargo, ND (D54)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Fargo, ND	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	19:30 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	West Fargo Municipal D54	Runway Surface Type:	Grass/turf
Airport Elevation:	896 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Rough
Runway Used:		IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	Full stop;Traffic pattern

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	46.870838,-96.889579(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Silliman, Jim
Additional Participating Persons:	Bob Harris; FAA Fargo FSDO; Fargo , ND
Original Publish Date:	September 10, 2002
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=53267

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