



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Lucile, Idaho	Accident Number:	SEA02FA011
Date & Time:	November 5, 2001, 18:20 Local	Registration:	N61909
Aircraft:	Cessna A185F	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation		

Analysis

The accident airplane departed McCall, Idaho, for a planned 45-minute flight to Cottonwood, Idaho. No flight plan was filed for the flight. When the aircraft failed to arrive at Cottonwood, a concerned family member reported the aircraft as missing, and a search for the aircraft was initiated. The wreckage of the aircraft was located the following day on a slope in the Salmon River/U.S. highway 95 canyon approximately 3 nautical miles south-southwest of Lucile, Idaho (note: U.S. highway 95, which runs from McCall to Cottonwood, runs through the canyon where the aircraft crashed.) The aircraft had crashed on the west slope of the generally north/south oriented river canyon, about 800 to 900 feet above the valley floor. Terrain rises to 6,927 feet above mean sea level (MSL; about 5,000 feet above the valley floor) within 5 nautical miles west of the accident site, and to 7,814 feet MSL (about 6,000 feet above the valley floor) within about 5 nautical miles east of the accident site. The wreckage and impact signatures at the accident site were indicative of the aircraft impacting near the spine of a northwest-facing finger ridge in a generally level flight attitude on an easterly heading, with sections of the aircraft continuing east beyond the initial impact point into adjacent ravines before coming to rest. Investigators did not find any evidence of pre-impact mechanical or structural malfunctions of the aircraft during post-accident examinations. Dark night visual meteorological conditions (no moon) existed at the time of the accident flight, with few clouds at about 10,500 feet MSL reported at the departure airport, increasing to broken to overcast clouds at 10,000 to 10,500 feet MSL near the destination.

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 adequate altitude above, and/or clearance with, mountainous terrain during night visual flight rules flight. Factors included mountainous terrain and dark

night light conditions.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: UNKNOWN

Findings

1. (F) LIGHT CONDITION - DARK NIGHT
2. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - MOUNTAINOUS/HILLY
3. (C) ALTITUDE/CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

HISTORY OF FLIGHT

On November 5, 2001, approximately 1800 mountain standard time, a Cessna A185F airplane, N61909, registered to Seubert Enterprises Inc. of Cottonwood, Idaho, and being flown by a private pilot (the owner of Seubert Enterprises), departed McCall, Idaho, for a planned 45-minute flight to Cottonwood. When the aircraft failed to arrive at Cottonwood, a concerned family member reported the aircraft as missing, and a search for the aircraft was initiated. The wreckage of N61909 was located the following day, November 6, 2001, on a slope in the Salmon River/U.S. highway 95 canyon approximately 3 nautical miles south-southwest of Lucile, Idaho. The aircraft was found to have been destroyed by impact forces, and the pilot, who was the airplane's sole occupant, was found fatally injured. Based on the accident aircraft's departure time of 1800 from McCall, the performance characteristics of the accident aircraft, and the distance from McCall to the crash site, the estimated time of the accident was about 1820. Visual meteorological conditions (few clouds at 5,500 feet, 10 miles visibility) were reported at McCall at 1750, and no flight plan was filed for the 14 CFR 91 flight.

The accident occurred during dark night conditions at approximately 45 degrees 29.2 minutes North latitude and 116 degrees 19.4 minutes West longitude.

METEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION

The 1750 Automated Surface Observation System (ASOS) hourly METAR observation at McCall, Idaho (elevation 5,050 feet, about 36 nautical miles south-southeast of the accident site) reported conditions there as: wind from 020 degrees true at 4 knots; visibility 10 statute miles; few clouds at 5,500 feet; temperature 6 degrees C; dew point -1 degree C; and altimeter setting 30.10 inches Hg. The same conditions were reported there at 1850, except for winds from 010 degrees true at 3 knots, and temperature of 3 degrees C.

The 1656 Pacific Standard Time (PST) ASOS hourly METAR observation at Lewiston, Idaho (elevation 1,438 feet, about 62 nautical miles north-northwest of the accident site), reported conditions there as: wind from 060 degrees true at 5 knots; visibility 10 statute miles; ceiling 9,000 feet broken; temperature 9 degrees C; dew point 1 degree C; and altimeter setting 30.21 inches Hg. At 1756 PST, conditions there were reported as: wind from 130 degrees true at 5 knots; visibility 10 statute miles; overcast at 8,500 feet; temperature 8 degrees C; dew point 2 degrees C; and altimeter setting 30.21 inches Hg.

According to U.S. Naval Observatory astronomical data, sunset at Riggins, Idaho (approximately 5 miles south of the crash site) on November 5 was at 1627 PST (1727

mountain standard time), with end of evening civil twilight at 1658 PST. Naval Observatory data further indicated that the moon was set at Riggins on November 5 between 1110 PST and 1956 PST.

WRECKAGE AND IMPACT DATA

Investigators from the NTSB, FAA, and Cessna Aircraft Company performed an on-scene examination of the aircraft wreckage on November 7, 2001. The on-site examination disclosed that the aircraft had crashed on the west slope of the generally north/south oriented river canyon. U.S. Highway 95, which runs from McCall north to Cottonwood, goes through this canyon alongside the river. The Great Falls Sectional Aeronautical chart depicts terrain rising to a peak elevation of 7,814 feet about 5 nautical miles east-northeast of the accident site, and to a peak elevation of 6,927 feet about 5 nautical miles west-northwest of the accident site. The valley floor in the vicinity of the accident site is about 1,800 to 1,900 feet. The slopes in the area of the crash site were estimated as being principally about 40 to 50 degrees. In the vicinity of the accident site, the canyon makes an approximate 90-degree right turn, from north to east. A bowl is located adjacent to this 90-degree turn, generally to the north and west of the turn. A large ground scar with embedded and adjacent scattered aircraft fragments was found at about the 2,700-foot level on the south side of this bowl, near the spine of a generally northwest-facing, sloping finger ridge. The aircraft's left wing was located at about the same level, in the ravine immediately beyond the spine on which the ground scar was found. The main aircraft wreckage, consisting of the aircraft cabin, empennage, and engine, was also in this ravine, about 250 feet down slope from the left wing. The aircraft's right wing was found in the ravine immediately southeast of the ravine containing the left wing and main wreckage, and was approximately 100 feet below the level of the main wreckage. The aircraft's propeller had also separated from the engine via a break in the crankshaft just behind the nose seal, and was located by recovery crews about 200 feet down slope from the right wing. All of the principal wreckage components were located on, or close to, a generally easterly line originating at the large ground scar with aircraft fragments. During the on-site examination, investigators did not find any evidence of preimpact airframe structural failure, preimpact flight control malfunction, or fire.

MEDICAL AND PATHOLOGICAL INFORMATION

An autopsy on the pilot was performed at the Pathologists' Regional Laboratory, Lewiston, Idaho, on November 7, 2001, under the authority of the Idaho County, Idaho, Coroner. The autopsy report concluded that the pilot's death was due to "blunt trauma to the head and thorax, secondary to airplane crash."

Toxicology tests on the pilot were conducted by the FAA Civil Aeromedical Institute (CAMI), Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The CAMI toxicology tests screened for ethanol and various legal and illegal drugs and no such substances were detected. CAMI did not perform carbon

monoxide or cyanide analyses.

TESTS AND RESEARCH

Investigators from the NTSB, FAA, Cessna, and engine manufacturer Teledyne Continental Motors performed a follow-up examination of the aircraft wreckage, to include a field disassembly/functional examination of the airplane's Continental IO-550-D engine, at the facilities of Gustin Aviation, Lewiston, Idaho, on November 14, 2001. This examination did not disclose any evidence of pre-impact aircraft or engine malfunction.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The aircraft wreckage was released to Mr. Michael Cornia of Intermountain Claims, Inc., Boise, Idaho, on November 14, 2001. Mr. Cornia is an insurance adjuster representing the aircraft owner.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	61, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Unknown
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Valid Medical-w/ waivers/lim	Last FAA Medical Exam:	July 25, 2001
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	14970 hours (Total, all aircraft), 40 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Cessna	Registration:	N61909
Model/Series:	A185F	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	18504273
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	March 4, 2001 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	3350 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	128.7 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	3790.1 Hrs at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	Continental
ELT:	Installed	Engine Model/Series:	IO-550-D
Registered Owner:	On file	Rated Power:	300 Horsepower
Operator:	On file	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:		Condition of Light:	Night/dark
Observation Facility, Elevation:	MYL,5020 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	36 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	17:50 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	146°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Few / 5500 ft AGL	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	4 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	2°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.1 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	6°C / -1°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	McCall, ID (MYL)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Cottonwood, ID (S84)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	18:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	45.486667,-116.323608

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Nesemeier, Gregg
Additional Participating Persons:	Mark Durham; FAA - Spokane FSDO; Spokane, WA Gregory W Schmidt; Cessna Aircraft Co.; Wichita, KS Michael J Grimes; Teledyne Continental Motors; Lancaster, CA
Original Publish Date:	October 24, 2002
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	The NTSB traveled to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=53783

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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](#).