



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Tucumcari, New Mexico	Accident Number:	DEN02LA061
Date & Time:	June 26, 2002, 11:27 Local	Registration:	N2443C
Aircraft:	Cessna 180	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot reported that during his cockpit preflight checks, he neglected to place the fuel selector switch on "both." The pilot said that after approximately 3 hours and 15 minutes, he began a descent for landing and "pulled the prop RPM back slightly." The pilot said, "The instant I reduced the RPM the engine began to surge ..." The pilot said he became fixated on the propeller governor as the problem. "When I returned to cruise RPM, it smoothed out for a moment and then began surging again and then stopped producing power." The pilot said he was about 5 miles from the airport. He stated that he immediately picked out a dirt road to land on. The pilot said, "Again, I failed to use the checklist." The pilot said that he was clear of all fences and obstacles when he touched the airplane down on the road, but during rollout the left wing struck a small tree, which caused the airplane to swerve and subsequently impact into a ditch. The pilot reported the fuel selector was positioned to the right tank. An examination of the airplane showed fuel in the left tank, and no fuel in the right tank. At the accident site, the fuel selector was observed in the "both" position. An examination of the engine, engine controls, and other airplane systems revealed no anomalies.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: the pilot's failure to position the fuel selector to the proper tank resulting in fuel starvation and the subsequent loss of engine power. Factors contributing to the accident were the pilot's failure to use the checklist and the lack of suitable terrain for the forced landing.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER

Phase of Operation: DESCENT

Findings

1. (C) FUEL TANK SELECTOR POSITION - INCORRECT - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (C) FLUID,FUEL - STARVATION
3. (F) CHECKLIST - NOT USED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING

Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY DESCENT/LANDING

Occurrence #3: ON GROUND/WATER COLLISION WITH OBJECT

Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY LANDING

Findings

4. OBJECT - TREE(S)

Occurrence #4: ON GROUND/WATER ENCOUNTER WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: LANDING - ROLL

Findings

5. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - NONE SUITABLE
6. TERRAIN CONDITION - DITCH

Factual Information

On June 26, 2002, at 1127 mountain daylight time, a Cessna 180, N2443C, piloted by a commercial pilot, was substantially damaged when it struck a tree during a forced landing on a road, 5 miles east of the Tucumcari Municipal Airport (TCC), Tucumcari, New Mexico. The pilot reported no injuries. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed, and no flight plan had been filed for the personal flight that was being conducted under the provisions of 14 CFR Part 91. The cross-country flight originated at Ozark, Arkansas, at 0915 central daylight time, and was en route to Tucumcari.

The pilot reported that during his cockpit preflight checks, he neglected to place the fuel selector switch on "both." The pilot said that after approximately 3 hours and 15 minutes, he began a descent for landing at TCC, and "pulled the prop RPM back slightly." The pilot said, "The instant I reduced the RPM the engine began to surge ..." The pilot said he became fixated on the propeller governor as the problem. "When I returned to cruise RPM, it smoothed out for a moment and then began surging again and then stopped producing power." The pilot said he was about 5 miles from the airport. He stated that he immediately picked out a dirt road to land on. The pilot said, "Again, I failed to use the checklist." The pilot said that he was clear of all fences and obstacles when he touched the airplane down on the road, but during rollout the left wing struck a small tree, which caused the airplane to swerve and subsequently impact into a ditch. The pilot reported the fuel selector was positioned to the right tank.

An examination of the airplane revealed the main landing gear were broken aft and crushed upward into the airplane's cabin. There was also damage to the propeller, engine cowling, forward fuselage, and to the airplane's left wing tip. Flight control continuity was confirmed. An examination of the airplane's fuel system showed fuel in the left tank. The right tank was empty. At the accident site, the fuel selector was observed in the "both" position. An examination of the engine, engine controls, and other airplane systems revealed no anomalies.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	66, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Glider	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Valid Medical-w/ waivers/lim	Last FAA Medical Exam:	April 5, 2001
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	February 16, 2001
Flight Time:	1964 hours (Total, all aircraft), 950 hours (Total, this make and model), 1964 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 37 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 13 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 3 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Cessna	Registration:	N2443C
Model/Series:	180	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	30743
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	April 16, 2002 100 hour	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	3200 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	26 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	4008 Hrs at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	Continental
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	I0550-D
Registered Owner:	Robert C. Petersen	Rated Power:	300 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:	TCC,4064 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	5 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	11:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	270°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Few / 9000 ft AGL	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	8 knots / 0 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	110°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.06 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	34°C / 10°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Ozark, AR (7M5)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Tucumcari, NM (TCC)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	09:15 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

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:	35.160209,-103.719787(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Bowling, David
Additional Participating Persons:	Michael Hartz; Federal Aviation Administration; Albuquerque, NM
Original Publish Date:	September 20, 2002
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=55085

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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](#).