



Aviation Investigation Final Report

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| Location: | Palmer, Alaska | Accident Number: | ANC03CA008 |
| Date & Time: | October 29, 2002, 10:00 Local | Registration: | N878A |
| Aircraft: | Piper PA-22 | Aircraft Damage: | Destroyed |
| Defining Event: | | Injuries: | 3 None |
| Flight Conducted Under: | Part 91: General aviation - Personal | | |

Analysis

The pilot reported he was attempting to takeoff from a remote gravel bar. He noted the wind conditions as generally calm, with infrequent gusts. Shortly after liftoff, the airplane settled onto the gravel bar and collided with rocks, collapsing the main landing gear. The airplane was consumed by a postcrash fire. The pilot said there were no preimpact mechanical problems with the airplane, and that a wind shift or gust may have contributed to the accident.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The premature liftoff by the pilot during takeoff, which resulted in on ground encounter with terrain when the airplane settled onto rocks. A contributing factor in the accident was an unfavorable wind.

Findings

Occurrence #1: ON GROUND/WATER ENCOUNTER WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF

Findings

1. (C) LIFT-OFF - PREMATURE - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - UNFAVORABLE WIND
3. TERRAIN CONDITION - ROCK(S)/BOULDER(S)
4. LANDING GEAR, MAIN GEAR - COLLAPSED

Occurrence #2: FIRE
Phase of Operation: OTHER

Factual Information

On October 29, 2002, about 1000 Alaska standard time, N878A, a wheel-equipped Piper PA-22 airplane, converted to a tailwheel configuration, was destroyed following impact with terrain and a postcrash fire while attempting to takeoff from a remote, off-airport site located about 23 miles southeast of Palmer, Alaska. The private pilot/airplane owner and the two passengers were not injured. The flight departed Wasilla, Alaska, about 0900, and operated in visual meteorological conditions without a flight plan.

During a telephone conversation with the NTSB investigator-in-charge on October 30, the pilot related that he was attempting to takeoff from a gravel bar adjacent to Lake George. He said shortly after the airplane became airborne, it settled onto the gravel bar and collided with rocks. The impact collapsed the left main landing gear and then the right main landing gear. After the pilot and passengers evacuated the airplane, it was consumed by a postcrash fire. The pilot indicated that although the wind was calm when he began the takeoff, there were infrequent gusts of wind, and a wind shift or gust may have contributed to the accident. He said there were no preimpact mechanical problems with the airplane.

Pilot Information

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|--|---------------|
| Certificate: | Private | Age: | 41, Male |
| Airplane Rating(s): | Single-engine land | Seat Occupied: | |
| Other Aircraft Rating(s): | None | Restraint Used: | |
| Instrument Rating(s): | None | Second Pilot Present: | |
| Instructor Rating(s): | | Toxicology Performed: | No |
| Medical Certification: | Class 3 | Last FAA Medical Exam: | March 3, 2000 |
| Occupational Pilot: | | Last Flight Review or Equivalent: | |
| Flight Time: | 361 hours (Total, all aircraft), 350 hours (Total, this make and model), 57 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 13 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft) | | |

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Aircraft Make: | Piper | Registration: | N878A |
| Model/Series: | PA-22 | Aircraft Category: | Airplane |
| Year of Manufacture: | | Amateur Built: | |
| Airworthiness Certificate: | Normal | Serial Number: | 22-183 |
| Landing Gear Type: | Tailwheel | Seats: | |
| Date/Type of Last Inspection: | | Certified Max Gross Wt.: | 2000 lbs |
| Time Since Last Inspection: | | Engines: | 1 Reciprocating |
| Airframe Total Time: | | Engine Manufacturer: | Lycoming |
| ELT: | | Engine Model/Series: | O-320-A3B |
| Registered Owner: | Robert A. Jewett | Rated Power: | |
| Operator: | | Operating Certificate(s) Held: | None |

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

| | | | |
|---|--------------|---|---------|
| Conditions at Accident Site: | Visual (VMC) | Condition of Light: | Day |
| Observation Facility, Elevation: | | Distance from Accident Site: | |
| Observation Time: | | Direction from Accident Site: | |
| Lowest Cloud Condition: | | Visibility | 5 miles |
| Lowest Ceiling: | | Visibility (RVR): | |
| Wind Speed/Gusts: | / | Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Wind Direction: | | Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Altimeter Setting: | | Temperature/Dew Point: | 7°C |
| Precipitation and Obscuration: | | | |
| Departure Point: | Wasilla, AK | Type of Flight Plan Filed: | None |
| Destination: | Palmer, AK | Type of Clearance: | None |
| Departure Time: | 09:00 Local | Type of Airspace: | Class G |

Wreckage and Impact Information

| | | | |
|----------------------------|--------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Crew Injuries: | 1 None | Aircraft Damage: | Destroyed |
| Passenger Injuries: | 2 None | Aircraft Fire: | On-ground |
| Ground Injuries: | N/A | Aircraft Explosion: | |
| Total Injuries: | 3 None | Latitude, Longitude: | 61.416667,-148.550003 |

Administrative Information

| | |
|--|---|
| Investigator In Charge (IIC): | LaBelle, James |
| Additional Participating Persons: | Bruce Walker; Anchorage |
| Original Publish Date: | February 25, 2003 |
| Last Revision Date: | |
| Investigation Class: | Class |
| Note: | This accident report documents the factual circumstances of this accident as described to the NTSB. |
| Investigation Docket: | https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=55987 |

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant events in other modes of transportation—railroad, transit, highway, marine, pipeline, and commercial space. We determine the probable causes of the accidents and events we investigate, and issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future occurrences. In addition, we conduct transportation safety research studies and offer information and other assistance to family members and survivors for each accident or event we investigate. We also serve as the appellate authority for enforcement actions involving aviation and mariner certificates issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and US Coast Guard, and we adjudicate appeals of civil penalty actions taken by the FAA.

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](#).