



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Atwood, Illinois	Accident Number:	CHI03LA167
Date & Time:	June 18, 2003, 11:20 Local	Registration:	N94327
Aircraft:	Ercoupe (Eng & Research Corp.) 415-C	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The airplane was substantially damaged when it impacted wires and a roadway sign during an off airport landing. The pilot reported he was flying into an unfamiliar airport and lost sight of the runway while in the traffic pattern. The pilot stated he confused a road for the airstrip and struck the wires and a road sign while landing. The pilot indicated the airplane "spun" about 300 feet into a cornfield before coming to a stop.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's selection of an unsuitable landing area and his improper decision to continue the approach without the airport and runway clearly in-sight. Factors contributing to the accident were the pilot's disorientation, the transmission wires, and the road sign.

Findings

Occurrence #1: ON GROUND/WATER COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: LANDING

Findings

1. (C) BECAME LOST/DISORIENTED - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (C) UNSUITABLE TERRAIN OR TAKEOFF/LANDING/TAXI AREA - SELECTED - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (F) OBJECT - WIRE, TRANSMISSION
4. (F) OBJECT - SIGN

Occurrence #2: ON GROUND/WATER ENCOUNTER WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: LANDING

Findings

5. TERRAIN CONDITION - CROP

Factual Information

On June 18, 2003, at 1120 central daylight time, a Ercoupe 415-C, N94327, owned and operated by a private pilot, sustained substantial damage when it impacted wires during an off airport landing near Atwood, Illinois. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the accident. The pilot reported no injuries. The 14 CFR Part 91 personal flight was not operating on a flight plan. The flight departed from Coles County Memorial Airport, Mattoon, Illinois, at 1045, with an intended destination of Cooch Landing Area Airport (IL31), Atwood, Illinois.

The pilot reported he was following a group of other aircraft into IL31. He stated he had never flown into IL31 before and was unfamiliar with the area. The pilot noted, "I lost sight of the aircraft ahead of me on the downwind leg and never saw the airstrip. I extended my downwind leg to give the other plane time to land. On my final [approach] leg I still did not see the [airport]. ... Ahead I saw what I thought was the airstrip going at an angle from the road."

The pilot stated he saw the power poles but "was told the wires were underground at the field." The pilot noted the airplane struck the wires during approach. The left wing subsequently hit a road sign, causing the airplane to spin into a cornfield. It came to a stop about 300 feet from the road. The pilot reported he was "convinced [the road] was the airstrip [he] was headed for."

The pilot reported there were no mechanical malfunctions or failures during the accident flight.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	75, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
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:	March 5, 2002
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	June 19, 2002
Flight Time:	500 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Ercoupe (Eng & Research Corp.)	Registration:	N94327
Model/Series:	415-C	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	1550
Landing Gear Type:	Tricycle	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	September 24, 2002 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1400 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	10 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	2115 Hrs at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	Continental
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	C-75
Registered Owner:	On file	Rated Power:	75 Horsepower
Operator:	On file	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	CMI,754 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	15 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	10:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	35°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	3 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	270°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29.95 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	26°C / 16°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Mattoon, IL (MTO)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Atwood, IL (IL31)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	10:45 UTC	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:	39.855556,-88.461112

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Sorensen, Timothy
Additional Participating Persons:	Dave Slaybaugh; FAA-Springfield FSDO; Springfield, IL
Original Publish Date:	December 30, 2003
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=57260

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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](#).