



# Aviation Investigation Final Report

---

<b>Location:</b>	Crescent City, Florida	<b>Accident Number:</b>	ANC04LA022
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	February 14, 2004, 11:30 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N98WB
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Bertrand/Warner Thorp T-18	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	1 Fatal
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

---

## Analysis

The solo private certificated pilot was en route to a private airport to attend a fly-in for homebuilt aircraft owners/builders. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the airplane's point of departure, but instrument meteorological conditions were reported along the pilot's route of flight. A friend said that accident pilot had attempted the same flight earlier in the day, but was unable to reach the airport due to low clouds and fog. Several residents in the vicinity of the accident site reported low clouds, fog, and reduced visibility in the area at the time of the accident. Ear witnesses reported hearing what sounded like a low flying airplane to the east, over a large lake. The witnesses said that as the airplane's engine sound increased, they heard a sudden impact, and the engine noise stopped abruptly. The witnesses consistently reported that they were not able to see the airplane due to very low visibility in mist and fog, and that the accident airplane's engine appeared to be producing full power prior to striking the water. Search and rescue personnel located the submerged airplane wreckage, and discovered the pilot's body inside, still restrained within the pilot's seat.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's continued VFR flight into instrument meteorological conditions, and his failure to maintain terrain clearance. Factors associated with the accident were fog and low ceilings.

## Findings

---

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT ENCOUNTER WITH WEATHER

Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

### Findings

1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - FOG
2. (C) VFR FLIGHT INTO IMC - CONTINUED - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - LOW CEILING

-----

Occurrence #2: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT

Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

-----

Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

### Findings

4. TERRAIN CONDITION - WATER
5. (C) CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

## Factual Information

On February 14, 2004, about 1130 Eastern standard time, a wheel-equipped experimental/homebuilt, Bertrand/Warner Thorp T-18 airplane, N98WB, was destroyed during an in-flight collision with water, about 1 mile southeast of Crescent City, Florida. The airplane was being operated as a visual flight rules (VFR) cross-country personal flight under Title 14, CFR Part 91, when the accident occurred. The solo private certificated pilot received fatal injuries. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the airplane's point of departure, and no flight plan was filed. The flight originated at the New Smyrna Beach Municipal Airport, New Smyrna Beach, Florida, about 1100, and was en route to the Pomona Landing Airport, Pomona Park, Florida.

During a telephone conversation with the National Transportation Safety Board investigator-in-charge on February 14, a friend of the pilot said that the accident pilot was en route to the Pomona Landing Airport to attend a fly-in for homebuilt aircraft owners/builders. He said that the accident pilot had attempted the same flight earlier in the day, but was unable to reach the airport due to low clouds and fog.

Several residents of Crescent City reported low clouds, fog, and reduced visibility in the area at the time of the accident. According to a responding Florida Highway Patrol Officer, witnesses reported hearing what sounded like a low flying airplane to the east of Crescent City, and over Crescent Lake. The witnesses said that as the airplane's engine sound increased, they heard a sudden impact, and the engine noise stopped abruptly. The witnesses consistently reported that they were not able to see the airplane due to very low visibility in mist and fog, and that the accident airplane's engine appeared to be producing full power prior to striking the water.

Search and rescue personnel conducted an extensive search of Crescent Lake for survivors. About 1300, divers located the submerged airplane wreckage, and discovered the pilot's body inside, still restrained within the pilot's seat.

The closest official weather observation station is located in Saint Augustine, Florida, about 30 miles northeast of the accident site. On February 14, at 1135, an Aviation Routine Weather Report (METAR) for Saint Augustine stated in part: Wind, 010 degrees (true) at 5 knots; visibility, 1/2 statute miles with mist; clouds, 100 feet overcast; temperature, 55 degrees F; dew point, 55 degrees F; altimeter, 30.00 inHg.

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	73, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Single-engine land	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Front
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	Yes
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 3 Valid Medical-w/ waivers/lim	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	June 26, 2002
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	No	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	3300 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Bertrand/Warner	<b>Registration:</b>	N98WB
<b>Model/Series:</b>	Thorp T-18	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Airplane
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	Yes
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Experimental (Special)	<b>Serial Number:</b>	524
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Tailwheel	<b>Seats:</b>	2
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>		<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	1700 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>		<b>Engines:</b>	1 Reciprocating
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>		<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	Lycoming
<b>ELT:</b>	Installed, not activated	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	O-320
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	William F. Bertrand	<b>Rated Power:</b>	150 Horsepower
<b>Operator:</b>		<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Instrument (IMC)	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Day
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>	KSGJ,9 ft msl	<b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>	30 Nautical Miles
<b>Observation Time:</b>	11:35 Local	<b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>	240°
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>		<b>Visibility</b>	0.5 miles
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	Overcast / 100 ft AGL	<b>Visibility (RVR):</b>	
<b>Wind Speed/Gusts:</b>	5 knots /	<b>Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Wind Direction:</b>	100°	<b>Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Altimeter Setting:</b>	30 inches Hg	<b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>	13°C / 13°C
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>	N/A - None - Fog		
<b>Departure Point:</b>	New Smyrna , FL (KEVB)	<b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>	None
<b>Destination:</b>	Pomona , FL (78FL)	<b>Type of Clearance:</b>	None
<b>Departure Time:</b>	11:00 Local	<b>Type of Airspace:</b>	Class E

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	1 Fatal	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>		<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	None
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Total Injuries:</b>	1 Fatal	<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	29.501943,-81.57833

## Administrative Information

<b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>	Johnson, Clinton
<b>Additional Participating Persons:</b>	Michael J Cichanowski ; Federal Aviation Administration; Orlando, FL
<b>Original Publish Date:</b>	October 28, 2004
<b>Last Revision Date:</b>	
<b>Investigation Class:</b>	<a href="#">Class</a>
<b>Note:</b>	
<b>Investigation Docket:</b>	<a href="https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=58760">https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=58760</a>

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](#).