



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Big lake, Alaska	Accident Number:	ANC04CA089
Date & Time:	August 6, 2004, 17:15 Local	Registration:	N4433N
Aircraft:	Aeronca 15AC	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The private certificated pilot was departing toward the northeast from a private airstrip that was about 1,300 feet long. There were power lines and trees at the southwest end of the airstrip. The pilot reported that the weather conditions included a temperature of about 85 degrees F, and the wind conditions were from the southwest, about 15 to 20 knots. He said he decided to depart downwind, toward the northeast, because of the obstructions at the southwest end of the strip. During the takeoff, the pilot indicated that the airplane lifted off at the end of the strip, but the left main landing gear tire and the left wing clipped bushes about 5 to 10 feet above the ground. The airplane then nosed into the ground and received structural damage to the right wing and the right wing lift strut.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's inadequate evaluation of the weather conditions and subsequent collision with high vegetation during the initial climb after takeoff, which resulted in a collision with the ground. Factors contributing to the accident were the presence of a tailwind and bushes at the end of the airstrip.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF - INITIAL CLIMB

Findings

1. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - HIGH VEGETATION
2. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - TAILWIND
3. (C) WEATHER EVALUATION - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. TERRAIN CONDITION - GROUND

Factual Information

On August 6, 2004, about 1715 Alaska daylight time, a tundra tire-equipped Aeronca 15AC airplane, N4433N, sustained substantial damage when it collided with bushes and then the ground during takeoff initial climb from a private airstrip, located about 4 miles northwest of Big Lake, Alaska. The airplane was being operated as a visual flight rules (VFR) local area personal flight under Title 14, CFR Part 91, when the accident occurred. The airplane was operated by the pilot. The private certificated pilot, the sole occupant, was not injured. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed. No flight plan was filed, nor was one required.

During a telephone conversation with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigator-in-charge (IIC), on August 6, the pilot reported that the gravel surfaced airstrip is about 1,300 feet long and 40 feet wide, and is oriented southwest/northeast. There are power lines and trees at the southwest end of the airstrip. The pilot reported that the weather conditions included a temperature of about 85 degrees F, and the wind conditions were from the southwest, about 15 to 20 knots. He noted that a portion of the airstrip was obscured by dust as he taxied for takeoff. He said he decided to depart downwind, toward the northeast because of the obstructions at the southwest end of the strip. During the takeoff, the pilot indicated that the airplane lifted off at the end of the strip, but the left main landing gear tire and the left wing clipped bushes about 5 to 10 feet above the ground. The airplane then nosed into the ground and received structural damage to the right wing and right wing lift strut.

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:	October 3, 2003
Occupational Pilot:		Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	185 hours (Total, all aircraft), 53 hours (Total, this make and model), 9 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 9 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Aeronca	Registration:	N4433N
Model/Series:	15AC	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	322
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	
Date/Type of Last Inspection:		Certified Max Gross Wt.:	
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Continental
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	C-145
Registered Owner:	David D. Swartz	Rated Power:	
Operator:	David D. Schwartz	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	
Lowest Ceiling:		Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	15 knots / 20 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	195°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:		Temperature/Dew Point:	29°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	Big lake, AK	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Chugiak, AK (PABV)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	17:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	Runway Surface Type:
Airport Elevation:	Runway Surface Condition:
Runway Used:	IFR Approach: None
Runway Length/Width:	VFR Approach/Landing:

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	61.575,-149.866668

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Erickson, Scott

Additional Participating Persons:

Original Publish Date: October 28, 2004

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=59848>

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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](#).