Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Newton, Mississippi	**Accident Number:**	DFW06LA207
Date & Time:	September 7, 2006, 10:00 Local	**Registration:**	N330PL
Aircraft:	Piper PA-23-250	**Aircraft Damage:**	Destroyed
Defining Event:		**Injuries:**	1 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot was attempting to return to the runway following a complete loss of power to both engines during the initial climb after takeoff. Unable to reach the airport, the airplane impacted trees and the ground. The pilot was able to exit the airplane unassisted and moments later the wreckage was engulfed in flames. An examination of the left engine revealed approximately 9.3 oz of water and about 2.1 oz of a blue liquid consistent with 100 low lead aviation fuel. Water was also found in the left engine's fuel pump. The right engine's carburetor and fuel system could not be examined due to thermal damage. According to airport personnel the accident airplane sat outside during a rain storm since it was last flown. The pilot reported that during the airplane's preflight inspection, he sampled fuel from each of the six fuel drains and observed no water contamination.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The total loss of engine power due to fuel contamination. A factor was the pilot's inadequate preflight inspection.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER(TOTAL) - NONMECHANICAL
Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF - INITIAL CLIMB

Findings

1. ALL ENGINES
2. (C) FUEL SYSTEM - CONTAMINATION,WATER
3. (F) AIRCRAFT PREFLIGHT - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - EMERGENCY

Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - EMERGENCY

Findings
4. OBJECT - TREE(S)

Occurrence #4: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - EMERGENCY

Findings
5. TERRAIN CONDITION - GROUND

Factual Information

On September 7, 2006, about 1000 central daylight time, a twin-engine Piper PA-23-250 airplane, N330PL, was destroyed when it collided with terrain following a loss of power from both engines during takeoff from the James H. Easom Field Airport (M23), near Newton, Mississippi. The private pilot, sole occupant of the airplane, sustained minor injuries. The airplane was registered to and operated by the pilot. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and no flight plan was filed for the 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91 personal flight. The 50-nautical mile cross-country flight was originating at the time of the accident and was destined for the Louisville Winston County Airport (LMS), near Louisville, Mississippi.

The 1,047-hour pilot reported that he arrived at M23 to pick up his airplane after maintenance was performed on the nose landing gear. The pilot reported that during the airplane's preflight inspection, he sampled fuel from each of the six fuel drains and observed no water contamination. After both engines performed "normally" during the engine run up, the pilot departed from Runway 13. Runway 13 was reported to be a 3,000-foot long, by 75-foot wide asphalt runway.

The pilot added that "everything was normal" during the takeoff and the initial climb. When around 500 feet above ground level (agl), the pilot initiated a left turn. Suddenly, the left and right engines began "missing and popping" and then experienced a complete loss of power. The pilot elected to turn back towards the runway and began going through the emergency checklist.

Unable to reach the runway, the airplane descended into an area of trees. The pilot reported that as the airplane began to impact the trees, the "engines came to life"; however, the airplane continued to descend until it impacted the ground. The airplane came to rest in an upright position and the pilot was able to exit the airplane unassisted. Moments after coming to rest, the wreckage was engulfed in flames.

A witness reported that he observed the pilot take a fuel sample from each of the airplane's fuel tanks during the preflight inspection. The witness added that he heard the pilot perform a magneto check and the engines "never sputtered." The witness further reported that about 200-300 feet agl both engines sputtered, popped, and lost power; however, they sounded as if they regained power at tree top level before the airplane impacted terrain.

A Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspector responded to the accident site. The inspector reported that the airplane was nearly consumed by the post crash fire.

An airframe and powerplant mechanic (A&P), under the direction of the NTSB investigator-in-charge (IIC), examined the airplane's engines. The mechanic reported that upon removing the

left engine's carburetor bowl, he found approximately 9.3 oz of water and about 2.1 oz of a blue liquid consistent with 100 low lead aviation fuel. The mechanic also reported that he found water in the left engine's fuel pump. According to the mechanic, the right engine's carburetor and fuel system could not be examined due to thermal damage. The mechanic further reported that the accident airplane sat outside during a rain storm since it was last flown.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	**Age:**	45,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Multi-engine land	**Seat Occupied:**	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	**Restraint Used:**	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	**Second Pilot Present:**	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	**Toxicology Performed:**	No
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Without waivers/limitations	**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	March 1, 2005
Occupational Pilot:	No	**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	June 1, 2005
Flight Time:	1047 hours (Total, all aircraft), 278 hours (Total, this make and model), 987 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 8 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 5 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	**Registration:**	N330PL
Model/Series:	PA-23-250	**Aircraft Category:**	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		**Amateur Built:**	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	**Serial Number:**	27-2167
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	**Seats:**	6
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	June 1, 2006 Annual	**Certified Max Gross Wt.:**	4800 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		**Engines:**	2 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	4230 Hrs at time of accident	**Engine Manufacturer:**	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, activated, did not aid in locating accident	**Engine Model/Series:**	O-540
Registered Owner:	On file	**Rated Power:**	250 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:		**Distance from Accident Site:**	
Observation Time:		**Direction from Accident Site:**	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	**Visibility**	8 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	**Visibility (RVR):**	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/ None	**Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:**	/
Wind Direction:		**Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:**	/
Altimeter Setting:		**Temperature/Dew Point:**	
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	NEWTON, MS (M23)	**Type of Flight Plan Filed:**	None
Destination:	LOUISVILLE, MS (LMS)	**Type of Clearance:**	None
Departure Time:	10:00 Local	**Type of Airspace:**	

Airport Information

Airport:	JAMES H EASOM FIELD M23	**Runway Surface Type:**	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:		**Runway Surface Condition:**	Dry
Runway Used:	13	**IFR Approach:**	None
Runway Length/Width:	3000 ft / 75 ft	**VFR Approach/Landing:**	Forced landing

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	**Aircraft Damage:**	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:		**Aircraft Fire:**	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Explosion:**	None
Total Injuries:	1 Minor	**Latitude, Longitude:**	32.311668,-89.135833

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	LeBaron, Timothy
Additional Participating Persons:	Harry McGee; Federal Aviation Administration; Jackson, MS
Original Publish Date:	April 25, 2007
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=64474