Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Yanceyville, North Carolina	**Accident Number:**	ATL07LA073
Date & Time:	April 11, 2007, 15:45 Local	**Registration:**	N666AC
Aircraft:	Culver, Aurther L. Seawind 3000	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Defining Event:		**Injuries:**	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The private pilot, who did not hold an instrument rating, contacted an Automated Flight Service Station and requested a weather briefing for an instrument flight rules (IFR) flight. The pilot was provided a complete weather briefing which included the following weather conditions at his destination: clouds 400 feet broken, 800 feet overcast, visibility 1 3/4 statute miles in light rain and fog, temperature 45 degrees Fahrenheit, dew point 45 degrees Fahrenheit, wind 060 degrees at 8 knots, and an altimeter setting of 29.90 inches of mercury. The pilot acknowledged the weather briefing and then filed an IFR flight plan. While on approach to the pilot's planned destination, the airplane collided with trees. All airplane components were observed at the accident site and no anomalies were noted.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's failure to maintain clearance/altitude while operating in instrument meteorological conditions (IMC). Contributing to the accident was the pilot's lack of an instrument rating, his improper decision to operate in IMC, a low cloud ceiling, and reduced visibility.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: APPROACH

Findings

1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - LOW CEILING
2. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - OTHER
3. (F) PLANNING/DECISION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (C) ALTITUDE/CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings
5. OBJECT - TREE(S)

Factual Information

On April 11, 2007, about 1545 eastern daylight time, an Arthur L. Culver Seawind 3000, experimental amphibian airplane, N666AC, received substantial damage when it collided with trees in Yanceyville, North Carolina, while on approach to the Danville Regional Airport (DAN), Danville, Virginia. The private pilot received fatal injuries. Instrument meteorological conditions prevailed and an instrument flight rules (IFR) flight plan was filed for the flight which originated from Pilots Ridge Airport (03NC), Carolina Beach, North Carolina, at 1430. The airplane was registered to and operated by the private pilot under the provision of 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91.

Family members reported the airplane missing to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on April 12, 2007, at 0045, when they had not heard from the pilot. The Caswell County Sheriff's Department was notified and a search was initiated. The airplane was located at 1030 on April 12, 2007. A witness in the local area had reported to the Sheriff's department that she had heard what sounded like a "car spinning tires with the motor revving loudly in her driveway, and then a loud boom." The Sheriff's department focused their search in the vicinity of the witnesses address and located the airplane.

The pilot, age 48, held a FAA private pilot certificate for airplane single-engine land, issued on August 8, 1988. The pilot was not instrument rated. The pilot held a third-class medical certificate dated April 11, 2005, with a restriction that he "must wear corrective lenses." According to the pilot's last medical application he had accumulated 844 hours of total civilian flight time. The pilot's logbook was not recovered.

The four-seat, low-wing, retractable-amphibian, tricycle geared airplane, received its experimental, amateur built certification on June 18, 2001. It was powered by a Lycoming IO-540 SER, 300-horsepower engine. The airplane's logbooks were not recovered for examination.

Examination of the wreckage by an FAA inspector found the first pieces of the airplane about 1500 feet from the main wreckage, which consisted of small pieces of fiberglass. The next piece was one of the flaps, followed shortly by one half of an elevator. The next piece was one wing followed by the top of the canopy which was followed by the second wing. The second wing showed evidence of burning. The engine firewall was found in the top of a tree with the rest of the wreckage about seven feet from the base of the same tree. All airplane components were observed at the accident site and no anomalies were noted. The main wreckage had been consumed by a postcrash fire.

An autopsy was performed on the pilot on April 13, 2007, by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The autopsy findings report the cause of death as multiple blunt force trauma.

Forensic toxicology was performed on specimens from the pilot by the FAA, Aeronautical Sciences Research Laboratory, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The toxicology report stated that no Ethanol was detected in the muscle or brain.

On April 11, 2007, at 1417, the pilot called Raleigh Automated Flight Service Station and requested a weather briefing for an IFR flight to 03NC, leaving DAN in 15 minutes. The pilot then filed an IFR flight plan.

The nearest weather reporting facility at the time of the accident was DAN. The 1539 surface weather observation was: 400 broken, 800 overcast, visibility 1 3/4 miles in light rain and fog, temperature 45 degrees Fahrenheit, dew point temperature 45 degrees Fahrenheit, wind 060 degrees at 8 knots, and an altimeter setting of 29.90 inches of mercury.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	**Age:**	48,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:**	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 3 With waivers/limitations	**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	April 1, 2005
Occupational Pilot:	No	**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	
Flight Time:	844 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Culver, Aurther L.	**Registration:**	N666AC
Model/Series:	Seawind 3000	**Aircraft Category:**	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		**Amateur Built:**	Yes
Airworthiness Certificate:	Experimental (Special)	**Serial Number:**	30
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle; Amphibian	**Seats:**	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	**Certified Max Gross Wt.:**	3400 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		**Engines:**	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		**Engine Manufacturer:**	Lycoming
ELT:	Not installed	**Engine Model/Series:**	IO-540
Registered Owner:	Danny L. Alvis	**Rated Power:**	300 Horsepower
Operator:		**Operating Certificate(s) Held:**	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Instrument (IMC)	**Condition of Light:**	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	DAN,571 ft msl	**Distance from Accident Site:**	5 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	15:39 Local	**Direction from Accident Site:**	70°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	**Visibility**	1.75 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 400 ft AGL	**Visibility (RVR):**	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	8 knots /	**Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:**	/
Wind Direction:	60°	**Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:**	/
Altimeter Setting:	29.89 inches Hg	**Temperature/Dew Point:**	7°C / 7°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	Light - Blowing - Rain		
Departure Point:	Carolina Beach, NC (O3NC)	**Type of Flight Plan Filed:**	IFR
Destination:	Danville, VA (DAN)	**Type of Clearance:**	IFR
Departure Time:	14:30 Local	**Type of Airspace:**	

Airport Information

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

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		**Aircraft Fire:**	On-ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Explosion:**	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	**Latitude, Longitude:**	36.396454,-79.346924

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Wilson, Ralph
Additional Participating Persons:	Roy W Henry; FAA/FSDO; Greensboro, NC
Original Publish Date:	August 28, 2008
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=65620