



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Girdwood, Alaska	Accident Number:	ANC07LA036
Date & Time:	May 3, 2007, 19:10 Local	Registration:	N5038K
Aircraft:	Bellanca 8KCAB	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot was flying over a group of hikers/skiers that were on a remote glacier. After a second pass over the group, about 80 feet agl, the airplane continued away from the group, but collided with the ice and snow-covered surface of the glacier and overturned. The skiers gave aid to the pilot and called for rescue personnel. The witness reported that the weather on the glacier at the time was an overcast sky, and a ceiling of about 600 feet. He also said there was flat light conditions and a haze. The pilot reported that when he flew over the ski members on the glacier, he had a visual horizon and could see the sky. He said he thought he was about 200 feet above the ground. During a second pass, the lighting conditions changed from bright to hazy, and the pilot indicated he probably was looking at the snow covered surface of the glacier. He said the airplane was descending, and he thought the glacier was also descending.

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 sufficient altitude/clearance from terrain while maneuvering, which resulted in an in-flight collision with a glacier. Factors contributing to the accident were snow-covered terrain, and flat light conditions.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

Findings

1. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - SNOW COVERED
2. (C) ALTITUDE/CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (F) LIGHT CONDITION - OTHER

Factual Information

On May 3, 2007, about 1910 Alaska daylight time, a wheel-equipped Bellanca 8KCAB airplane, N5038K, sustained substantial damage when it collided with snow and ice-covered terrain, about 9 miles north of Girdwood, 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, received serious injuries. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed. The flight originated at Merrill Field, Anchorage, Alaska, and no flight plan was filed.

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) personnel reported that the airplane crash was seen by hikers on the Eagle Glacier. The hikers gave medical aid to the pilot, and called for rescue personnel. The pilot and the hikers were transported from the glacier about 2030.

During a telephone conversation with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigator-in-charge (IIC), on May 10, one of the hikers/witnesses reported that a group of mountaineering club members were on the Eagle Glacier during a personal back-country ski trip. The pilot was reported to have been flying in the area of the ski trip members to check on their progress. The pilot made a low pass over the group, and then returned for another pass. The airplane flew over the group on the second pass about 80 feet above the snow and ice covered glacier. The airplane continued toward the northwest, collided with the glacier about 150 yards from the group, and overturned. The ski trip members pulled the pilot from the airplane and began medical aid. They then called for rescue personnel.

The witness reported that the weather conditions on the glacier at the time was an overcast sky, with a ceiling of about 600 feet. The witness said there was flat light conditions and a haze.

On May 12, 2007, the pilot reported via telephone that when he flew over the ski members on the glacier, he had a visual horizon and could see the sky. He said he thought he was about 200 feet above the ground. During a second pass, the lighting conditions changed from bright to hazy, and the pilot indicated he probably was looking at the snow covered surface of the glacier. In the Pilot/Operator Aircraft Accident Report (NTSB Form 6120.1) submitted by the pilot, the pilot said he encountered a high overcast over the glacier, and a slight beam of light that penetrated the overcast. He said that during a third circle over the area, the airplane was descending, and he thought the terrain of the glacier was also descending.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	46,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea	Seat Occupied:	Front
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 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	May 1, 2006
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	650 hours (Total, all aircraft), 321 hours (Total, this make and model), 595 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 18 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 10 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Bellanca	Registration:	N5038K
Model/Series:	8KCAB	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Aerobatic; Normal	Serial Number:	482-79
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	February 1, 2007 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1800 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	221 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	1169 Hrs at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, activated, did not aid in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	IO-360
Registered Owner:	Gregory T. Grubba	Rated Power:	180 Horsepower
Operator:		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	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast / 600 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:		Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:		Temperature/Dew Point:	-1°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	N/A - None - Haze		
Departure Point:	Anchorage, AK (PAMR)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	18:30 Local	Type of Airspace:	

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Serious	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Serious	Latitude, Longitude:	61.1025,-148.998336

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Erickson, Scott
Additional Participating Persons:	Scott Schweizer; FAA-AL-ANC FSDO 03; Anchorage, AK
Original Publish Date:	January 31, 2008
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=65741

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](#).