



# Aviation Investigation Final Report

<b>Location:</b>	Soledad, California	<b>Accident Number:</b>	LAX08CA034
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	December 6, 2007, 10:30 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N6024M
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Air Tractor AT-401	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	1 Serious
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 137: Agricultural		

## Analysis

The pilot was seeding an area located adjacent to mountainous terrain. Prior to making the first pass, he had flown a reconnaissance flight to inspect the area. After completion of the first pass as he was maneuvering in a turn back towards the field, he was checking the seeding pattern and making adjustments to the GPS system inside the cockpit. When he checked the gauges again, he realized that the airplane had lost airspeed and rolled out to a wings level configuration to regain the lost airspeed. The airplane was headed towards rising terrain. He jettisoned the remaining seed and made a controlled collision with terrain in a ravine. The airplane was destroyed in a post impact fire. He reported that he had preoccupied himself with less important flight duties at a critical time during the flight. The pilot reported no mechanical problems that would have precluded normal operation.

## 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 an adequate clearance from mountainous terrain while maneuvering during an aerial application mission. Contributing to the accident was the pilot's diverted attention inside the cockpit.

## Findings

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

## Findings

1. TERRAIN CONDITION - MOUNTAINOUS/HILLY
2. (C) IN-FLIGHT PLANNING/DECISION - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (F) DIVERTED ATTENTION - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (C) CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

## Factual Information

According to the pilot, he departed from King City, California, airport about 1000 for a seeding flight mission west of the Soledad, California. After performing a reconnaissance flight over the area, he made his first application pass heading towards the west. During this time he was also visually checking the seeding pattern and making adjustments to the GPS application equipment located inside the airplane. After completion of the first pass, he initiated a turn and noted that his airspeed had slowed during the first pass. He was not able to complete the turn, and "rolled" back to wings level flight. He added full power and checked the engine gauges. The pilot stated that he believed he would be able to regain sufficient airspeed to complete his turn and continued straight ahead. He stated that his direction of flight was towards a canyon with "rapidly rising terrain."

The pilot stated that as soon as he maneuvered back to wings level flight, he was rapidly approaching the rising terrain, and he was not going to be able to "climb or out maneuver" the terrain. He immediately released the emergency dump handle to jettison the remaining seed from the hopper. While jettisoning the seed, he also chose the best possible location for an emergency landing. The pilot's next memory was of fire and smoke; he was able to extricate himself from the wreckage.

In the pilot's written submission to the Safety Board (NTSB Form 6120.1; Pilot/Operator Aircraft Accident/Incident Report), in the section titled RECOMMENDATION (How could this accident/incident have been prevented), the pilot stated that he had preoccupied himself with other, "less important flight duties at a critical time when all focus should have been outside the cockpit verifying that my chosen flight path could be maintained." The pilot reported no mechanical malfunctions that would have precluded normal operation.

According to a responding Battalion Chief from the California Department of Forestry, the airplane flew into a box canyon and was not able to turn around. The airplane struck several trees and impacted in a ravine near an old Jeep road, and was destroyed in the post impact fire.

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Commercial	<b>Age:</b>	40, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Single-engine land	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Center
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	Helicopter	<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>	No
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 2	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	October 1, 2007
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	Yes	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	October 1, 2007
<b>Flight Time:</b>	11000 hours (Total, all aircraft), 240 hours (Total, this make and model), 10740 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 300 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 40 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Air Tractor	<b>Registration:</b>	N6024M
<b>Model/Series:</b>	AT-401	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Airplane
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Restricted (Special)	<b>Serial Number:</b>	401-0949
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Tailwheel	<b>Seats:</b>	1
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>		<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	9000 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>		<b>Engines:</b>	1 Reciprocating
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>		<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	Pratt & Whitney
<b>ELT:</b>		<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	R1340
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	US Bancorp Equipment Finance Inc.	<b>Rated Power:</b>	600 Horsepower
<b>Operator:</b>	SOILSERV INC	<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	
<b>Operator Does Business As:</b>		<b>Operator Designator Code:</b>	LSHG

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Visual (VMC)	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Day
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>		<b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>	
<b>Observation Time:</b>		<b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>	
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>	Clear	<b>Visibility</b>	10 miles
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	None	<b>Visibility (RVR):</b>	
<b>Wind Speed/Gusts:</b>	/	<b>Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Wind Direction:</b>		<b>Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Altimeter Setting:</b>		<b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>	10°C
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
<b>Departure Point:</b>	KING CITY, CA (KIC )	<b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>	None
<b>Destination:</b>	(KIC )	<b>Type of Clearance:</b>	None
<b>Departure Time:</b>	10:15 Local	<b>Type of Airspace:</b>	

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	1 Serious	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>		<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	On-ground
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	
<b>Total Injuries:</b>	1 Serious	<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	36.374168,-121.414169

## Administrative Information

<b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>	Cornejo, Tealeye
<b>Additional Participating Persons:</b>	David Witt; Federal Aviation Administration; San Jose, CA
<b>Original Publish Date:</b>	January 31, 2008
<b>Last Revision Date:</b>	
<b>Investigation Class:</b>	<a href="#">Class</a>
<b>Note:</b>	This accident report documents the factual circumstances of this accident as described to the NTSB.
<b>Investigation Docket:</b>	<a href="https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=67215">https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=67215</a>

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