



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Gallup, New Mexico	Accident Number:	CEN09CA302
Date & Time:	May 16, 2009, 12:00 Local	Registration:	N94300
Aircraft:	Ercoupe 415-C	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Collision during takeoff/land	Injuries:	2 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot and passenger departed in a single-engine, 85-horsepower airplane from an airport with a density altitude that was later calculated to be about 8,666 feet. When the airplane was approximately 300 feet above ground level, the airplane experienced a loss of lift. Unable to maintain altitude, the pilot selected a dirt road as a possible landing site; however, the airplane impacted terrain before reaching the road. The airplane came to rest in an upright position and the pilot and passenger were able to exit the airplane unassisted. An examination of the engine revealed no pre impact anomalies.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's inadequate preflight planning. Contributing to the accident was the high density altitude.

Findings

Personnel issues	Performance calculations - Pilot
Environmental issues	High density altitude - Effect on equipment

Factual Information

History of Flight

Initial climb	Collision during takeoff/land (Defining event)
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Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	65, 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:	No
Medical Certification:	Sport pilot	Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	September 10, 2008
Flight Time:	145 hours (Total, all aircraft), 73 hours (Total, this make and model), 85 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Ercoupe	Registration:	N94300
Model/Series:	415-C	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	1523
Landing Gear Type:	Tricycle	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	August 15, 2008 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	2265 Hrs as of last inspection	Engine Manufacturer:	CONT MOTOR
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	C85 SERIES
Registered Owner:	SMITH CURTIS S	Rated Power:	85 Horsepower
Operator:	SMITH CURTIS S	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	GUP,6472 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	1 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	11:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	225°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	4 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:		Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.23 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	24°C / 0°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Gallup, NM (GUP)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Gallup, NM (GUP)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	12:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	

Airport Information

Airport:	Gallup Municipal Airport GUP	Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:	6472 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	
Runway Used:		IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	Forced landing

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	1 Minor	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 Minor	Latitude, Longitude:	35.511112,-108.789169(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	LeBaron, Timothy
Additional Participating Persons:	Walter Tidmore; Federal Aviation Administrator; Albuquerque, NM
Original Publish Date:	November 9, 2009
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=73858

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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](#).