



# Aviation Investigation Final Report

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|                                |                                      |                         |            |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| <b>Location:</b>               | Gulf of Mexico,                      | <b>Accident Number:</b> | ERA10FAMS1 |
| <b>Date &amp; Time:</b>        | December 15, 2009, 16:16 Local       | <b>Registration:</b>    | N723LJ     |
| <b>Aircraft:</b>               | Cirrus SR22                          | <b>Aircraft Damage:</b> | Destroyed  |
| <b>Defining Event:</b>         | Missing aircraft                     | <b>Injuries:</b>        | 1 Fatal    |
| <b>Flight Conducted Under:</b> | Part 91: General aviation - Personal |                         |            |

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## Analysis

After takeoff from the coastal airport, the airplane made a left turn to the west, and the pilot was approved for a frequency change by air traffic control. There were no further known communications with the pilot. A radar target consistent with the airplane's departure was observed flying westbound over gulf waters. The target climbed to an altitude of 9,900 feet mean sea level (msl), where it remained until radar contact was lost. The last radar target was observed about 1 hour after takeoff, about 150 miles west-southwest of the departure airport, traveling at a ground speed of 167 knots. The pilot's spouse was not aware that he had been flying and reported the airplane missing 2 days later. Search and Rescue personnel conducted three sorties which covered 1,890 square miles with negative results. At the time of this writing, the location of the airplane, and the condition of the pilot, are not known. The airplane had accumulated about 500 hours of operation since new, and 100 hours since its most recent annual inspection, which was performed about 8 months prior to the flight. The pilot had accumulated about 700 hours of total flight experience, which included about 520 hours in the accident airplane.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: Undetermined (airplane and pilot missing).

## Findings

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**Not determined**

(general) - Unknown/Not determined

## Factual Information

### History of Flight

|                |                                   |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Unknown</b> | Unknown or undetermined           |
| <b>Unknown</b> | Missing aircraft (Defining event) |

On December 15, 2009, at 1616 eastern standard time, radar contact was lost with a Cirrus Design Corp SR22, N723LJ, while in cruise flight over the Gulf of Mexico. As of November 22, 2010, the airplane had not been located. The airplane was presumed destroyed and the certificated private pilot was presumed killed; however, as of the date of this report, the location of the airplane, and the condition of the certificated private pilot were not known. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and no flight plan had been filed for the personal flight that departed Albert Whitted Airport (SPG), St. Petersburg, Florida, about 1520. The personal flight was conducted under the provisions of 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91.

According to the pilot's wife, the pilot, who was a retired doctor, had lunch at home about 1130. He had a meeting scheduled with a business partner in the local area. She was not aware of him having any plans to go flying. The pilot's wife did not have any further contact with the pilot. She subsequently learned that the pilot did not attend the meeting, and when he did not return home, contacted local police.

The airplane was based at SPG. A witness at a fixed-based-operator, who spoke with the pilot, stated that he asked to have the airplane taken out of its hangar, and the pilot sounded the same as he normally did. Witnesses at SPG observed the pilot at the airport and reported observing the airplane taxiing for takeoff.

According to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), review of air traffic control communications revealed that the airplane was cleared for takeoff from runway 7, with a left turn to the west, by the SPG air traffic control tower at 1517. At 1520, the airplane was approved for a frequency change. There were no further known communications with the airplane. Radar data revealed a radar target consistent with the airplane's departure. The target subsequently proceeded westbound over the Gulf of Mexico and climbed to an altitude of 9,900 feet, where it remained until radar contact was lost. The last radar target was observed at 1616:35, about 150 miles west-southwest of SPG at an altitude of 9,900 feet, and traveling at a ground speed of 167 knots.

The pilot's wife was not aware that the pilot's airplane was missing until December 17, 2009, and the airplane was subsequently reported as overdue to the United States Coast Guard at 1711. Search and Rescue personnel conducted three sorties which covered 1,890 square miles over 13 hours with negative results.

According to FAA records, the four-seat, low-wing, fixed-gear airplane, serial number 2402, was manufactured in 2007, and issued a standard airworthiness certificate on March 13, 2007. It was constructed primarily of composite materials, and equipped with a Teledyne Continental Motors IO-550-N, 310-horsepower engine. The airplane was purchased new by the pilot through a limited liability company on March 15, 2007.

Review of maintenance records revealed that the airplane's most recent annual inspection was completed on March 25, 2009. At that time, the airplane had been operated for about 400 hours. In addition, an oil change was performed on August 8, 2009, at a total time of 470.4 hours. The pilot had flown the airplane for about 100 hours since the annual inspection.

The airplane's last known refueling was performed on November 20, 2009, when 19.4 gallons of 100-low-lead aviation gasoline was added to the airplane at SPG. The pilot's family did not believe the airplane had been flown in-between November 20, and December 15, 2009.

The pilot, age 50, held a private pilot certificate, with ratings for airplane single-engine land and instrument airplane. He reported 410 hours of total flight experience on his most recent application for an FAA third-class medical certificate, which was issued on June 23, 2008.

Review of the pilot's logbook revealed that the most recent entry was dated November 20, 2009. At that time, the pilot had accumulated about 700 hours of total flight experience, which included about 520 hours in the accident airplane. The pilot had logged approximately 1.4 and 14.7 hours during the 30 and 90 days, which preceded the flight; respectfully.

## Pilot Information

|                                  |   |  |                  |
|----------------------------------|---|--|------------------|
| <b>Certificate:</b>              | Private   | <b>Age:</b>                              | 50, Male         |
| <b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>       | Single-engine land  | <b>Seat Occupied:</b>                    | Unknown          |
| <b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b> | None  | <b>Restraint Used:</b>                   |                  |
| <b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>     | Airplane  | <b>Second Pilot Present:</b>             | No               |
| <b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>     | None  | <b>Toxicology Performed:</b>             | No               |
| <b>Medical Certification:</b>    | Class 3 With waivers/limitations  | <b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>            | June 23, 2008    |
| <b>Occupational Pilot:</b>       | No  | <b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b> | October 26, 2008 |
| <b>Flight Time:</b>              | 700 hours (Total, all aircraft), 520 hours (Total, this make and model), 640 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 15 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 0 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft) |  |                  |

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

|                                      |                             |                                       |                 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Aircraft Make:</b>                | Cirrus                      | <b>Registration:</b>                  | N723LJ          |
| <b>Model/Series:</b>                 | SR22                        | <b>Aircraft Category:</b>             | Airplane        |
| <b>Year of Manufacture:</b>          |                             | <b>Amateur Built:</b>                 |                 |
| <b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>    | Normal                      | <b>Serial Number:</b>                 | 2402            |
| <b>Landing Gear Type:</b>            | Retractable - Tricycle      | <b>Seats:</b>                         | 4               |
| <b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b> | March 25, 2009 Annual       | <b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>       | 3400 lbs        |
| <b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>   | 100 Hrs                     | <b>Engines:</b>                       | 1 Reciprocating |
| <b>Airframe Total Time:</b>          | 500 Hrs at time of accident | <b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>           | TCM             |
| <b>ELT:</b>                          | Installed, not activated    | <b>Engine Model/Series:</b>           | IO-550N         |
| <b>Registered Owner:</b>             | On file                     | <b>Rated Power:</b>                   | 310 Horsepower  |
| <b>Operator:</b>                     | On file                     | <b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b> | None            |

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

|   |                          |   |                    |
|---|--------------------------|---|--------------------|
| <b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>     | Visual (VMC)             | <b>Condition of Light:</b>                  | Day                |
| <b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b> | SPG,5 ft msl             | <b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>         | 150 Nautical Miles |
| <b>Observation Time:</b>                | 16:53 Local              | <b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>        | 260°               |
| <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>               | 30.01 inches Hg          | <b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>               | 78°C / 64°C        |
| <b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>   | In the vicinity - None - |   |                    |
| <b>Departure Point:</b>                 | St Petersburg, FL (SPG ) | <b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>           | None               |
| <b>Destination:</b>                     |                          | <b>Type of Clearance:</b>                   | None               |
| <b>Departure Time:</b>                  | 15:17 Local              | <b>Type of Airspace:</b>                    |                    |

## Airport Information

|                             |                    |                                  |      |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|------|
| <b>Airport:</b>             | Albert Whitted SPG | <b>Runway Surface Type:</b>      |      |
| <b>Airport Elevation:</b>   | 7 ft msl           | <b>Runway Surface Condition:</b> |      |
| <b>Runway Used:</b>         |                    | <b>IFR Approach:</b>             | None |
| <b>Runway Length/Width:</b> |                    | <b>VFR Approach/Landing:</b>     | None |

## Wreckage and Impact Information

|                            |         |                             |                           |
|----------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Crew Injuries:</b>      | 1 Fatal | <b>Aircraft Damage:</b>     | Destroyed                 |
| <b>Passenger Injuries:</b> |         | <b>Aircraft Fire:</b>       | None                      |
| <b>Ground Injuries:</b>    | N/A     | <b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>  | None                      |
| <b>Total Injuries:</b>     | 1 Fatal | <b>Latitude, Longitude:</b> | 27.366111,-85.433609(est) |

## Administrative Information

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>     | Schiada, Luke   |
| <b>Additional Participating Persons:</b> | Hector Diaz; FAA/FSDO; Tampa, FL  |
| <b>Original Publish Date:</b>            | April 12, 2011  |
| <b>Last Revision Date:</b>               |   |
| <b>Investigation Class:</b>              | <a href="#">Class</a>   |
| <b>Note:</b>                             |   |
| <b>Investigation Docket:</b>             | <a href="https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=75193">https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=75193</a> |

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](#).