



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Watsonville, California	Accident Number:	WPR12LA286
Date & Time:	June 24, 2012, 12:40 Local	Registration:	N55DN
Aircraft:	Cessna 182	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Loss of engine power (total)	Injuries:	1 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Skydiving		

Analysis

The pilot stated that he departed the airport for the 15-minute skydiving flight with about 20 gallons of fuel onboard. After completing a jump run, he was returning to the airport and maneuvered the airplane on final approach. When the airplane was about 3 miles from the runway and about 1,200 feet above ground level, the engine experienced a partial loss of power. The pilot configured the airplane for the best glide speed, and, shortly thereafter, the engine quit producing any power. The airplane subsequently collided with trees in an orchard about 600 yards from the approach end of the runway.

At the accident site, there was no fuel in the right wing; the remaining fuel from the left wing totaled about 5 gallons. Neither of the tanks were breached; however, the airplane was inverted and some fuel was slowly dripping out the vent, thus it was not possible to determine the exact quantity of fuel in the tanks at the time of the accident. The fuel selector was in the "BOTH ON" position and the unusable fuel for each 30-gallon tank was 2.5 gallons; therefore, the left wing tank had usable fuel at the time of the accident. A postaccident engine examination revealed no evidence of mechanical malfunctions or failures 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: A total loss of engine power during approach for reasons that could not be determined because postaccident examination did not reveal any mechanical malfunctions or failures that would have precluded normal operation.

Findings

Not determined

(general) - Unknown/Not determined

Factual Information

History of Flight

Approach-VFR pattern final	Loss of engine power (total) (Defining event)
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HISTORY OF FLIGHT

On June 24, 2012, about 1240 Pacific daylight time, a Cessna 182, N55DN, collided into an orchard following a total loss of engine power while on approach to the Watsonville Municipal Airport, Watsonville, California. Skydive Surfcity was operating the airplane under the provisions of 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 91. The commercial pilot, the sole occupant, sustained minor injuries. The airplane sustained substantial damage. The local skydiving flight departed from Watsonville about 1200. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed, and no flight plan had been filed.

The pilot stated that he completed a normal pre flight inspection of the airplane and departed the airport with about 20 gallons of fuel onboard. After completing a jump run, he was returning back to the airport and maneuvered the airplane on final approach for runway 20. When the airplane was about 3 miles from the runway and about 1,200 feet above ground level (agl), the engine experienced a partial loss of power. The pilot configured the airplane for the best glide speed, and shortly thereafter, the engine quit producing any power. The airplane collided with trees in an orchard about 600 yards from the approach end of the runway.

The wreckage was sold following recovery and the engine underwent a teardown. The mechanic that performed the teardown inspection stated that there was no evidence of mechanical malfunction or failure aside from the engine case being damaged from the accident. The gear train, pistons, cylinders, camshaft and crankshaft all appeared normal.

AIRCRAFT INFORMATION

The Cessna 182 single-engine airplane, serial number 33257, was manufactured in 1956. The airplane was equipped with the a Texas Skyways O-520-F/TS engine, serial number 686835, which was installed in May 2005. A review of the airplane maintenance logbooks revealed that at the time of the last annual inspection the engine had accumulated 1,588 hours since major overhaul. The last annual inspection was dated as having been completed June 24, 2012, on the day of the accident.

The mechanic that performed the annual inspection of the airplane was the first person on-scene after the accident. He stated that there was no fuel in the right wing and, by request of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspectors, he drained the remaining fuel from the left wing, which totaled about 5 gallons. He noted that neither of the tanks were breached,

although the airplane was inverted and some fuel was slowly dripping out the vent. The fuel selector was in the "BOTH ON" position.

Fuel System

The airplane's fuel system was designed to supply the engine via two bladder-type fuel tanks located in both the left and right wing. Each tank holds 30 gallons, of which 2.5 gallons was unusable in level flight conditions. A fuel vent was located in the right wing and a vent line interconnected the two tanks. From the tanks fuel was gravity fed to the fuel selector valve, which contained an option of the following selections "BOTH OFF," "LEFT TANK," "RIGHT TANK," and "BOTH ON." From the selector, fuel would flow to the strainer and continue to the engine's carburetor.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The FAA issued a pamphlet titled "Flying for Skydive Operations," (P-8740-62), where it stated that one of the three common skydiving operation accidents is fuel exhaustion/starvation accidents because the pilots will commonly fly with "reduced fuel to accommodate heavier payloads while maintain weight and balance limits."

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	48, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Glider	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Without waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	March 20, 2012
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	3250 hours (Total, all aircraft), 998 hours (Total, this make and model), 3173 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 290 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 123 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 7 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Cessna	Registration:	N55DN
Model/Series:	182	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	33257
Landing Gear Type:	Tricycle	Seats:	1
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	June 24, 2012 100 hour	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2950 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	1 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	6132 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	CONT MOTOR
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	O-520 Series
Registered Owner:	Volker Haag	Rated Power:	230 Horsepower
Operator:	Skydive Surfcity	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	WVI,163 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	
Observation Time:	12:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	10 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	250°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.04 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	18°C / 7°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Watsonville, CA (WVI)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Watsonville, CA (WVI)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	12:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	

Airport Information

Airport:	Watsonville Municipal Airport WVI	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	163 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	20	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	4501 ft / 149 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Forced landing;Traffic pattern

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Minor	Latitude, Longitude:	36.935554,-121.789443

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Keliher, Zoe
Additional Participating Persons:	Jefferey Ebey; Federal Aviation Administration; San Jose, CA
Original Publish Date:	September 5, 2013
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=84166

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](#).