



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Washington, Pennsylvania	Accident Number:	ERA12LA557
Date & Time:	September 9, 2012, 07:10 Local	Registration:	N3591P
Aircraft:	Piper PA-31-325	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Abrupt maneuver	Injuries:	4 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 135: Air taxi & commuter - Non-scheduled - Air Medical (Unspecified)		

Analysis

Shortly after the airplane lifted off the runway, the pilots observed a flock of geese approaching from the right. The pilot-in-command believed that the birds would impact the cockpit windows, so he pushed forward on the control yoke to descend and avoid such a collision. The airplane struck the runway hard and bounced back into the air. The pilots continued the takeoff and returned to the airport for an uneventful landing. Postaccident examination revealed structural damage to the airframe. Also, bird remains were found on the fuselage.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The airplane’s encounter with a flock of geese during takeoff, which resulted in the airplane’s hard impact with the runway while the pilot maneuvered in an attempt to avoid the geese.

Findings

Environmental issues	Animal(s)/bird(s) - Decision related to condition
Personnel issues	(general) - Pilot

Factual Information

History of Flight

Initial climb	Birdstrike
Initial climb	Abrupt maneuver (Defining event)
Initial climb	Abnormal runway contact

On September 9, 2012, about 0710 eastern daylight time, a Piper PA-31-325, N3591P, was substantially damaged during an abnormal contact with the runway after takeoff from runway 27 at Washington County Airport, Washington, Pennsylvania. The airline transport-rated pilot, co-pilot, and two passengers were not injured. The airplane was registered to and operated by Aeronational Incorporated under the provisions of 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 135 as an air medical flight. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and an instrument flight rules flight plan was filed. The flight was originating at the time of the accident.

The pilot reported that, shortly after lifting off the runway, a flock of geese was approaching from the right side of the airplane. He felt that the birds could have impacted the cockpit windows, so he pushed the yoke forward to avoid a collision. The landing gear contacted the runway "very hard" and the airplane bounced back into the air. Unable to abort the takeoff due insufficient runway remaining, he continued with the takeoff. The pilot remained in the traffic pattern and landed the airplane without further incident.

A Federal Aviation Administration inspector responded to the accident site and examined the airplane. The inspector confirmed substantial damage to the airframe. Bird remains were also found on the fuselage.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Airline transport	Age:	71, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane multi-engine; Airplane single-engine	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 1 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	August 23, 2012
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	20000 hours (Total, all aircraft), 10000 hours (Total, this make and model), 20000 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 175 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 50 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Co-pilot Information

Certificate:	Airline transport; Flight instructor	Age:	40, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane multi-engine; Airplane single-engine; Instrument airplane	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 1 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	May 1, 2012
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	3400 hours (Total, all aircraft), 400 hours (Total, this make and model), 3100 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 60 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 33 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N3591P
Model/Series:	PA-31-325	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	31-8012081
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	7
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	August 28, 2012 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	6840 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	13 Hrs	Engines:	2 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	15131 Hrs as of last inspection	Engine Manufacturer:	LYCOMING
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	TIO-540
Registered Owner:	AERONATIONAL INC	Rated Power:	310 Horsepower
Operator:	AERONATIONAL INC	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	On-demand air taxi (135)

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	AFJ,1184 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	2 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	07:15 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	120°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Few / 7000 ft AGL	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	3 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	220°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29.92 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	11°C / 11°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Washington, PA (AFJ)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	IFR
Destination:	Bangor, ME (BGR)	Type of Clearance:	IFR
Departure Time:	07:07 Local	Type of Airspace:	

Airport Information

Airport:	Washington County Airport AFJ	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	1184 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	27	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	5004 ft / 100 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Full stop

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	2 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	2 None	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	4 None	Latitude, Longitude:	40.13639,-80.290275(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Hicks, Ralph
Additional Participating Persons:	Joe McBride; FAA/FSDO; Pittsburgh, PA
Original Publish Date:	May 9, 2013
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=84997

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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](#).