



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Eastport, Michigan	Accident Number:	CEN13LA490
Date & Time:	August 14, 2013, 11:20 Local	Registration:	N44351
Aircraft:	Taylorcraft BC12-D1	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:	Fire/smoke (non-impact)	Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot reported that he noticed the smell of gasoline while in cruise flight about 5 to 8 miles from his intended destination. He stated that when the airplane was on the downwind leg of the traffic pattern, the smell of the gasoline became much stronger. During the landing flare, the engine stopped producing power, and the pilot smelled a very strong odor that he described as a burnt metal smell. After landing, the pilot departed the airplane quickly. About 45 seconds later, flames started coming out of the left side of the engine cowl. The fire spread, and within about 15 minutes, it had consumed most of the airplane. The examination of the wreckage revealed that the most extensive fire damage was located on the left rear side of the engine; however, the source of the fuel leak and fire could not be determined because of the fire damage.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:

A fuel leak in the engine compartment and subsequent fire, the source of which could not be determined because of extensive postaccident fire damage.

Findings

Aircraft	(general) - Not specified
Not determined	(general) - Unknown/Not determined

Factual Information

History of Flight

Enroute-cruise	Fire/smoke (non-impact) (Defining event)
Standing-engine(s) shutdown	Fire/smoke (non-impact)

On August 14, 2013, at 1120 eastern daylight time, a Taylorcraft BC12-D1, N44351, was destroyed when it was consumed by fire after it landed at the Torchport Airport (59M), located near Easport, Michigan. The pilot, the sole occupant, was uninjured. The airplane was registered to and operated by the pilot under the provisions of the 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91 as a personal flight. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the accident, and no flight plan was filed. The airplane departed Traverse City, Michigan, about 1050.

The pilot stated that he noticed the smell of gasoline while in cruise flight about 5 to 8 miles from 59M. When the airplane entered the traffic pattern on downwind, the smell of the gasoline became much stronger. During the flare the engine quit, and he could smell a very strong odor that he described as being a burnt metal smell. After landing, he departed the airplane quickly. About 45 seconds later, flames started coming out of the left side of the engine cowl. The fire spread and within 15 minutes the fire had consumed most of the airplane.

A Federal Aviation Administration inspector examined the wreckage. He observed that the highest fire intensity was located on the left rear side of the engine; however, the source of the fire was not determined.

The pilot reported that the maintenance logbooks and records were kept in the airplane and were consumed in the fire. The last annual inspection was in October 2012. The pilot flew the airplane for about 2.5 hours as part of the post maintenance check. He did not fly the airplane during the winter months. He flew for 1 hour and 15 minutes on a flight before the accident flight. He stated that the airplane flew fine and there were no indications of any anomalies. There was no maintenance performed on the fuel lines, carburetor, or gascolator after the 1+15 hour flight.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Airline transport; Sport Pilot	Age:	66
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:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane single-engine; Instrument airplane	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	None Without waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	July 4, 2012
Flight Time:	22000 hours (Total, all aircraft), 250 hours (Total, this make and model)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Taylorcraft	Registration:	N44351
Model/Series:	BC12-D1	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	10151
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	October 27, 2012 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1220 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	3458 Hrs as of last inspection	Engine Manufacturer:	CONT MOTOR
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	A&C65 SERIES
Registered Owner:	George Grissom	Rated Power:	65 Horsepower
Operator:	George Grissom	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	TVC,624 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	24 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	10:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	200°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Few / 4600 ft AGL	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 5500 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	6 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	330°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.18 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	19°C / 9°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Traverse City, MI (TVC)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	Unknown
Destination:	Eastport, MI (59M)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	10:50 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	Torchport Airpark 59M	Runway Surface Type:	Grass/turf
Airport Elevation:	640 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	04	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	2600 ft / 100 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Full stop

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	On-ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	45.055831,-85.355834

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Silliman, James
Additional Participating Persons:	John Miller; FAA Grand Rapids FSDO; Grand Rapids, MI
Original Publish Date:	January 30, 2014
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=87785

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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](#).