



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	SUPERIOR, Wisconsin	Accident Number:	CHI93FAMS3
Date & Time:	April 17, 1993, 19:00 Local	Registration:	N7608L
Aircraft:	LAKE LA-4	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	2 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

THE PILOT AND PASSENGER DEPARTED DULUTH, MINNESOTA, ON A CROSS-COUNTRY FLIGHT, ON A SATURDAY AFTERNOON. VMC CONDITIONS PREVAILED, AND NO FLIGHT PLAN WAS FILED. WHEN THE PILOT DID NOT ARRIVE FOR WORK ON MONDAY, HE WAS REPORTED MISSING, AND A SEARCH WAS INITIATED. AN INVESTIGATION REVEALED THAT THE AIRPLANE DID NOT REACHED THE DESTINATION. SIX DAYS AFTER THE FLIGHT LEFT DULUTH, THE BODY OF THE PASSENGER WAS FOUND BY A SEARCH PARTY ON THE SHORE OF LAKE SUPERIOR, EAST OF SUPERIOR, WISCONSIN. THE SEARCH WAS TERMINATED TWO DAYS LATER. AFTER ABOUT TWO MONTHS, THE BODY OF THE PILOT WAS ALSO FOUND WASHED UP ON THE LAKE SHORE, EAST OF SUPERIOR. THE AIRPLANE WAS NOT FOUND AND WAS PRESUMED TO BE IN LAKE SUPERIOR.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

Findings

Occurrence #1: MISSING AIRCRAFT
Phase of Operation: UNKNOWN

Findings

1. (C) REASON FOR OCCURRENCE UNDETERMINED
2. TERRAIN CONDITION - WATER

Factual Information

On April 17, 1993, at 1846 central daylight time, a Lake LA-4, N7608L, departed Duluth International Airport, Duluth, Minnesota, with a reported destination of Cable Union Airport, Cable, Wisconsin. There were two persons aboard the airplane, the private pilot and one passenger. The Duluth tower reported the last contact they had with the pilot was at 1849 when he reported level at 2400 feet (msl) over the lake, and was given a 1200 beacon code. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time, and no flight plan was filed.

The pilot, who was not married, was reported missing on April 19 when he did not show up at work. A search was initiated by the Douglas County Wisconsin Sheriff's Department and the Civil Air Patrol. The search determined the airplane never reached its intended destination on April 17. No other airports reported seeing the airplane.

On April 23, 1993, the body of the passenger was found by a search party on the shore of Lake Superior, five miles east of Superior, Wisconsin, near the mouth of the Amicon River. A flight bag with the pilot's name and some small pieces of airplane debris were also found near the body.

The search was terminated on April 25, with no further success.

On July 25, 1993, the body of the pilot was discovered on the shore of Lake Superior about one-mile east of Superior, Wisconsin. An autopsy was performed at St. Luke's Hospital, Duluth, Minnesota, by Stanley D. Irving, M.D. The cause of death was drowning.

The airplane has never been found and is believed to be missing in Lake Superior.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	40, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea	Seat Occupied:	Unknown
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Valid Medical-w/ waivers/lim	Last FAA Medical Exam:	November 13, 1992
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	700 hours (Total, all aircraft), 200 hours (Total, this make and model)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	LAKE	Registration:	N7608L
Model/Series:	LA-4 LA-4	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	381
Landing Gear Type:	Amphibian	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2400 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	LYCOMING
ELT:	Installed	Engine Model/Series:	O-360-A1A
Registered Owner:	JOSEPH R. KUTH	Rated Power:	180 Horsepower
Operator:		Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Does Business As:		Operator Designator Code:	

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	DLH ,1428 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	15 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	17:50 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	310°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 25000 ft AGL	Visibility	15 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	10 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	130°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	7°C / -7°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	DULUTH , MN (DLH)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	CABLE , WI (3CU)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	18:46 Local	Type of Airspace:	

Airport Information

Airport:		Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:		Runway Surface Condition:	
Runway Used:	0	IFR Approach:	
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	Unknown
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	Unknown
Total Injuries:	2 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	46.670486,-92.079711(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Doub, Mark
Additional Participating Persons:	RICHARD SHEARMAN; MINNEAPOLIS , MN
Original Publish Date:	September 7, 1994
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=9185

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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](#).