



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Aniak, Alaska	Accident Number:	ANC17FA012
Date & Time:	December 15, 2016, 15:00 Local	Registration:	N5028H
Aircraft:	Piper PA 11	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Miscellaneous/other	Injuries:	2 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The private pilot and a passenger departed on a flight to an airstrip about 40 nautical miles away. When they failed to return as scheduled, family members notified law enforcement, and the wreckage was subsequently located in an area of snow-covered, rising terrain. Postaccident examination of the wreckage revealed no mechanical malfunctions or anomalies that would have precluded normal operation.

Following a death investigation, the State Medical Examiner classified the manner of death as a suicide.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

The pilot's intentional flight of the airplane into terrain in an act of suicide.

Findings

Personnel issues	Suicide - Pilot
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Factual Information

History of Flight

Enroute	Miscellaneous/other (Defining event)
Enroute	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

On December 15, 2016 about 1500 Alaska standard time, a ski-equipped Piper PA-11 airplane, N5028H, sustained substantial damage following impact with rising snow-covered terrain about 40 miles south of Aniak, Alaska. The private pilot and passenger sustained fatal injuries. The airplane was operated by the pilot under the provisions of 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) Part 91 at the time of the accident. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the accident and no flight plan was on file. The flight departed Aniak Airport (PANI), about 1400, and was destined for an off-airport ski strip about 40 miles south of Aniak near Marvel Creek.

On December 16, Alaska State Troopers were notified by family members that the airplane did not return as scheduled. The wreckage was located on the southwest side of Marvel Dome at an elevation about 2,000 feet above ground level (agl).

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	62,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Front
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	Lap only
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 3 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	March 26, 2015
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	4500 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

The pilot, age 62, held a private pilot certificate with an airplane single-engine land rating. His most recent third class Federal Aviation Administration medical certificate was issued on March 26, 2015, with a limitation that he must have glasses available for near vision.

No personal logbooks were located for the pilot. He reported on his last medical certificate application 4,500 hours of total flight experience, with 100 hours in the previous six months.

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N5028H
Model/Series:	PA 11	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	1949	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	11-908
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel; Ski	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	LYCOMING
ELT:	C91A installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	O-320 SERIES
Registered Owner:	On file	Rated Power:	160 Horsepower
Operator:	On file	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

The airplane was manufactured in 1949 and equipped with a Lycoming O-320 series engine. No airframe or engine logbooks were located for the accident airplane.

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	PANI, 85 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	38 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	23:56 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	3°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility:	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	7 knots / None	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/ Unknown
Wind Direction:	110°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/ Unknown
Altimeter Setting:	30.06 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	-1°C / -1°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	ANIAK, AK (ANI)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Aniak, AK	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:		Type of Airspace:	Class G

The 1456 weather observation at PANI included wind from 110° degrees at 07 knots; 10 statute miles visibility; clear skies; temperature 30°F; dew point, 30°F; and an altimeter setting of 30.07 inches of mercury.

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	60.944442,-159.620834

On December 17, the NTSB investigator-in-charge (IIC) and an Alaska State Trooper, arrived at the accident site about 1400 AST. The airplane impacted the southwest side of Marvel Dome in a near wings-level attitude and came to rest inverted, about 20 ft uphill from the first piece of noticeable debris. Due to recent snowfall, no ground scars were visible. The propeller was separated from the engine at the propeller flange and located uphill about 80 ft. The engine was fractured in several places, consistent with impact damage. The remainder of the wreckage was contained at a single location, with the fuselage coming to rest on top of the left wing.

The rudder and elevator primary flight control cables were continuous from the cockpit controls to each respective flight control surface. Aileron control cable continuity was confirmed from the cockpit controls to each aileron.

No mechanical malfunctions or anomalies were found that would have precluded normal operation.

Medical and Pathological Information

A postmortem examination was conducted under the authority of the Alaska State Medical Examiner, Anchorage, AK. The cause of death for the pilot was multiple blunt force injuries, with the manner of death classified as a suicide.

The FAA Bioaeronautical Sciences Research Laboratory, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, performed toxicology testing on specimens from the pilot. Testing was negative for ethanol, drugs and carbon monoxide.

Additional Information

An incident report from the Alaska State Troopers lists the pilot's death as a suicide under the heading of Incident Activities/Offenses.

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Williams, David
Additional Participating Persons:	BENJAMIN HERNING; FAA; ANCHORAGE, AK
Original Publish Date:	June 13, 2017
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	The NTSB traveled to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=94509

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](#).