



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Sylmar, California	Accident Number:	WPR18FA219
Date & Time:	August 12, 2018, 13:45 Local	Registration:	N136RM
Aircraft:	Beech A36TC	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Loss of control in flight	Injuries:	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

While descending toward the destination airport for landing, the private pilot made a "mayday" call and reported to air traffic control that he had "no throttle, no engine at all." Witnesses saw the airplane flying about 30 to 40 ft above ground level when it turned and descended into a flat, open field adjacent to a highway. Wreckage examination revealed that the airplane likely stalled and impacted the terrain in a nose and left-wing low attitude. Postaccident examination did not reveal any anomalies with the flight controls that would have precluded normal operation. Thus, the pilot failed to maintain control of the airplane on approach to a relatively benign emergency landing area.

Postaccident examination did not reveal any pre-impact anomalies that would have precluded the production of rated engine power and fuel was onboard. Although impact damage precluded a test run of the engine, teardown examination revealed no anomalies with the engine or its internal components. The reason for the loss of engine power could not be determined based on the available information.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's failure to maintain airplane control following a total loss of engine power for reasons that could not be determined based on the available information.

Findings

Personnel issues	Aircraft control - Pilot
Aircraft	Airspeed - Not attained/maintained
Aircraft	Descent/approach/glide path - Not attained/maintained
Not determined	(general) - Unknown/Not determined

Factual Information

History of Flight

Approach	Loss of engine power (total)
Approach	Loss of control in flight (Defining event)
Uncontrolled descent	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

On August 12, 2018, about 1345 Pacific daylight time, a Beech A36TC airplane, N136RM, impacted terrain near Sylmar, California, after declaring an emergency while approaching Whiteman Airport (WHP), Los Angeles, California. The private pilot was fatally injured and the airplane sustained substantial damage. The airplane was registered to the pilot, who was operating it as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 personal flight. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and no flight plan was filed for the flight, which originated from Placerville Airport, (PVF), Placerville, California, about 1200 and was destined for WHP.

Review of Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) air traffic control transcripts revealed that, as the pilot was descending through 3,700 ft, and just after being instructed to contact the WHP tower controller, he made a mayday call. The pilot reported that the airplane was descending and that he was looking for a place to land. He stated that he was unable to make WHP because he had "no throttle, no engine at all."

Witnesses reported that they saw the airplane flying southbound about 30 to 40 ft above the interstate when it turned east and descended below terrain into a nearby field.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	55, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Without waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	September 14, 2016
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	August 3, 2016
Flight Time:	(Estimated) 478 hours (Total, all aircraft), 148 hours (Total, this make and model), 441 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Beech	Registration:	N136RM
Model/Series:	A36TC	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	1980	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	EA97
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	September 15, 2017 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	
Time Since Last Inspection:	52 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	3870.66 Hrs at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	Continental Motors
ELT:	Installed, activated, did not aid in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	TSIO-520-UB
Registered Owner:	On file	Rated Power:	300
Operator:	On file	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	VNY,802 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	6 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	13:51 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	190°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	8 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	None / None
Wind Direction:	140°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	N/A / N/A
Altimeter Setting:	29.95 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	32°C / 12°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Placerville, CA (PVF)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	VFR
Destination:	Whiteman, CA (WHP)	Type of Clearance:	VFR flight following
Departure Time:	12:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	

Airport Information

Airport:	Whiteman Airport WHP	Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:	1003 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry;Vegetation
Runway Used:		IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	Forced landing

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	34.295555,-118.469169

The airplane came to rest in a field east of and adjacent to the interstate. The first identified point of impact was a strip of disturbed dirt with a fragment of grey paint. About halfway through the length of the disturbed dirt strip and to the right of the strip of dirt, was a paralleling disturbed strip of dirt, followed by a large disturbed area and the nose landing gear strut. Next, there was an approximate 80-ft section of mostly undisturbed grass with pieces of plexiglass, the left wingtip, and nose gear landing door scattered throughout the area. The main wreckage was located at the end of the debris path. The forward fuselage was heavily damaged; the airplane's engine, firewall, and instrument panel were fractured from the right side of the fuselage and bent to the left of the airplane; and the engine came to rest upside down. The front seats were exposed, and the remaining cabin area was mostly intact. The left wing was bent aft at the root and fractured midspan. The outboard section was bent aft underneath the inboard section and came to rest with the leading edge facing aft. The aft fuselage and empennage were mostly intact and undamaged. The right wing was mostly whole; however, the rear spar was fractured at the root and the forward portion of the wing was bent downward.

Examination of the airframe revealed flight control continuity throughout the airframe. The flaps were in the retracted position, and the landing gear was in the extended position. About 12 gallons of fuel was removed from the right wing, and fuel was observed exiting the breached left main fuel tank during the recovery process. The fuel selector faceplate was fracture separated. The fuel selector was removed from the airframe and air was blown through the selector; it was positioned to the left main fuel tank.

The engine remained mostly intact; the spark plugs were removed and exhibited normal operating signatures. The engine was rotated by hand and continuity was noted to the aft cylinders; in addition, the magnetos' distributor gears rotated. Borescope examination of the engine revealed normal operating signatures. The engine was prepared for shipment to the manufacturer for further examination.

Due to impact-related damage, the engine could not be test run. A teardown examination of the engine revealed no pre-accident anomalies that would have precluded the production of rated power. The

crankshaft was fractured aft of the propeller flange. The spark plugs, cylinders, and piston heads were removed and exhibited normal operating signatures. The turbocharger was removed and no scoring was noted on the impeller housing. The fuel pump sustained impact damage and could not be tested; all internal components exhibited normal operating wear signatures. The crankcase was split and the crankshaft, camshaft, piston arms, and journals were oily and did not exhibit abnormal or thermal signatures. The magnetos were removed and operated normally when installed onto a test bench. Both the throttle body/fuel metering unit and the fuel manifold operated when installed onto test benches.

Medical and Pathological Information

The Department of Medical Examiner-Coroner, Los Angeles, California, performed an autopsy of the pilot and determined the cause of death to be blunt trauma.

The FAA Forensic Sciences Laboratory performed forensic toxicology on specimens from the pilot with positive results for fexofenadine, losartan, and azacyclonol, none of which are considered a hazard to flight safety.

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Link, Samantha
Additional Participating Persons:	Jerry Dees; Federal Aviation Administration; Van Nuys, CA Peter Basile; Textron Aviation; Wichita, KS Nicole Charnon; Continental Motors; Mobile, AL
Original Publish Date:	April 8, 2020
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	The NTSB traveled to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=98043

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](#).