



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	LUMBER CITY, GA	Accident Number:	ATL00FA081
Date & Time:	08/15/2000, 0825 EDT	Registration:	N801MW
Aircraft:	Piper PA-31-350	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	3 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 135: Air Taxi & Commuter - Non-scheduled		

Analysis

The flight was cleared for an NDB or GPS runway 14 instrument approach. The pilot was instructed to report procedure turn. Center radar reported the airplane's altitude was last observed at 200 feet. A witness observed the airplane as it collided with trees and the ground and, subsequently burst into flames. No mechanical problem with the airplane was reported by the pilot or discovered during the wreckage examination. Weather minimums for the approach are 800 feet and one mile. Low clouds were reported in the area at the time of the accident.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: Pilot's failure to follow instrument procedures and descended below approach minimums and collided with trees. A factor was low clouds.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT ENCOUNTER WITH WEATHER
Phase of Operation: APPROACH

Findings

1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - LOW CEILING
 2. (C) IFR PROCEDURE - NOT FOLLOWED - PILOT IN COMMAND
 3. (C) MINIMUM DESCENT ALTITUDE - BELOW - PILOT IN COMMAND
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Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: APPROACH

Findings

4. (C) OBJECT - TREE(S)

Factual Information

HISTORY OF FLIGHT

On August 15, 2000, at 0825 eastern daylight time, a Piper PA-31-350, N801MW, collided with trees and the ground, and burst into flames while attempting an instrument approach to the Hazlehurst Airport, near Lumber City, Georgia. The on-demand air taxi flight was operated by Holman Funeral Home Incorporated under the provisions of Title 14 CFR Part 135 with an instrument flight plan filed and a valid approach clearance. According to weather data recovered from the nearest reporting facility, instrument weather conditions prevailed at the time of the accident. The airplane was destroyed; the commercial pilot and his two passengers were fatally injured. The flight departed Dothan, Alabama, at 0610 central daylight time.

At 0546, the pilot telephoned Anniston Automated Flight Service Station in Anniston, Alabama and requested a preflight weather briefing for an instrument flight from Dothan Alabama to Hazlehurst, Georgia. After completing the weather briefing, the pilot filed an instrument flight plan for the flight. At 0719, the pilot radioed Dothan Tower, requested, and was issued an instrument flight plan to Hazlehurst, Georgia. The pilot was issued taxi instructions to runway 32.

The review of departure and enroute air traffic procedures disclosed normal and routine handling and communication between the pilot and the air traffic controllers.

At 0809, upon arriving in the approach area, Jacksonville Air Route Traffic Control Center cleared the flight for an NDB or GPS runway 14 instrument approach. The pilot cleared to maintain 2300 feet until the Hazlehurst NDB. The pilot was advised to report the airport in sight. At 0816, the pilot asked to report procedure turn inbound. The pilot reported that he "would not be able to see the field and that he was going to have to shoot the approach." At 0821, the pilot again asked to report procedure turn.

At 0825, Jacksonville Center reported that radar data showed the airplane's altitude was last observed at 200 feet. At the approximate time of the accident, witnesses working near the accident site reported that they heard the engines "revved-up".

Another witness reported that he observed the airplane collide with 60-foot tall trees on the northwest side of his house. At approximately the same time, the left outboard wing panel was torn from the airframe and fell to the ground in the witness's front yard. The airplane then collided with a second stand of trees southeast of the witness home, and finally collided with the ground about 240 feet southeast of his home. The witness's resident is on the NDB runway 14 final approach path into Hazlehurst Airport, and is about three miles northwest of the airport. He left his home and walked to the hay field where the airplane collided the ground, and he saw the airplane burst into flames within minutes of the collision.

PERSONNEL INFORMATION

The pilot held a commercial pilot certificate with airplane single and multi-engine land, and instrument ratings. His total flight time was 6400 hours, and the approximate flight time in the Piper PA-31-350 was not determined. The pilot held a current second-class medical certificate, dated September 30,1999.

AIRCRAFT INFORMATION

The Piper PA-31-350, N801MW, was owned and operated by Holman Funeral Home Inc., of Ozark, Alabama. N801MW was a low-wing airplane powered by two Lycoming TIO-540-J2BD engines. A review of the airplane maintenance logbooks showed the airplane was maintained in accordance with applicable Federal Aviation Regulations.

METEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION

Alma/Bacon County Airport's 0748 weather observation reported wind calm, visibility 1/4 statute mile, fog, variable visibility, temperature 20 degrees Celsius, and a dew point of 20 degrees Celsius.

Alma/Bacon County Airport's 0849 weather observation reported wind calm, visibility 1 statute mile, mist, temperature 22 degrees Celsius, and a dew point of 22 degrees Celsius.

Alma/Bacon County Airport is 25 miles southeast of the accident site.

AIRPORT INFORMATION

Hazlehurst Airport is an uncontrolled airport three miles northwest of the city and has one paved runway orientated on 320 degrees and 140 degrees (32/14). At the time of the accident, weather conditions favored runway 14. Hazlehurst Airport is approximately three miles southeast of the accident site.

WRECKAGE AND IMPACT INFORMATION

The examination of the accident site disclosed that wreckage debris was scattered over an area approximately 800 feet long and 60 feet wide. The wreckage path was oriented on a 140-degree magnetic heading. There were freshly broken tree branches from the 80-foot tall trees about 100 and 600 feet northwest of the initial ground impact. Additional wreckage debris was scattered over an area 150 feet long and 45 feet wide. All major airframe components were recovered and examined at the accident site. The wreckage examination also revealed that the wing flaps were set at the approach position and the landing gear was extended.

The left engine was separated from the airframe. Heat damage from the post impact fire was severe, the aluminum propeller hub was fractured, the hub flange remained attached at the crankshaft, accessory section suffered impact damage and severe fire damage, and crankshaft rotation established internal gear and valve train continuity. Examination of all six cylinders showed normal compression patterns.

The right engine was separated from the airframe. There was slight heat damage to the propeller hub. The propeller flange was fractured. The engine accessory section suffered impact damage, and the crankshaft rotation established internal gear and valve train continuity. Examination of all six cylinders showed normal compression patterns.

The propeller blades from the right engine exhibited tensional bending and chord wise scoring. Cockpit and flight instruments were fire damaged and no readable information was recovered. Navigational and communication radios were also fire damaged.

Examination of the airframe and subsystems failed to disclose any evidence indicative of a mechanical malfunction or component failure. The pilot did not report a mechanical problem with the airplane during the flight.

MEDICAL AND PATHOLOGICAL INFORMATION

Postmortem examination of the pilot was performed by Dr. Podjaski at the office of County

Medical Examiner in Decatur, Georgia. The Forensic toxicology was performed by the FAA Toxicology and Accident Research Laboratory, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The toxicology examinations were negative for carbon monoxide, cyanide, drugs and alcohol.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A review of the published instrument approach procedure revealed that the approach minimums, for the NDB or GPS runway 14 approach, were 800 feet and one mile visibility. The witnesses also stated that ground level visibility was about 300 feet, and that a thick layer of fog was present at the time of the accident.

The airplane wreckage was released to Harry Brooks of Carson Brooks, Insurance adjustor, Atlanta, Georgia.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	57, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	09/30/1999
Occupational Pilot:		Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	6400 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N801MW
Model/Series:	PA-31-350 PA-31-350	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	31-8152136
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	7
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	7045 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	2 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed	Engine Model/Series:	TIO-540-J2BD
Registered Owner:	HOLMAN FUNERAL HOME INC.	Rated Power:	350 hp
Operator:	HOLMAN FUNERAL HOME INC.	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	On-demand Air Taxi (135)

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Instrument Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	AMG, 200 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	25 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	0849 EDT	Direction from Accident Site:	150°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Unknown / 0 ft agl	Visibility	1 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Obscured / 0 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	Calm /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	Variable	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	20° C / 21° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	DOTHAN, AL (DHN)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	IFR
Destination:	HAZELHURST, GA (AZE)	Type of Clearance:	IFR
Departure Time:	0610 CDT	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	HAZELHURST AIRPORT (AZE)	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	255 ft	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	14	IFR Approach:	ADF/NDB
Runway Length/Width:	4508 ft / 75 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Full Stop

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	2 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	On-Ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	3 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	PHILLIP POWELL	Report Date:	07/17/2001
Additional Participating Persons:	SONNY HUNT; COLLEGE PARK, GA		
Publish Date:			
Investigation Docket:	NTSB accident and incident dockets serve as permanent archival information for the NTSB's investigations. Dockets released prior to June 1, 2009 are publicly available from the NTSB's Record Management Division at pubinq@ntsb.gov , or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/ .		

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The Independent Safety Board Act, as codified at 49 U.S.C. Section 1154(b), precludes the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an incident or accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report. A factual report that may be admissible under 49 U.S.C. § 1154(b) is available [here](#).