



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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| Location: | CORTEZ, CO | Accident Number: | DEN91FA056 |
| Date & Time: | 03/29/1991, 1125 MST | Registration: | N3851C |
| Aircraft: | CESSNA 421C | Aircraft Damage: | Destroyed |
| Defining Event: | | Injuries: | 5 Fatal |
| Flight Conducted Under: | Part 91: General Aviation - Personal | | |

Analysis

THE FLIGHT DEPARTED WITHOUT A FLIGHT PLAN OR WEATHER BRIEF. EN ROUTE DETERIORATING WEATHER WAS ENCOUNTERED AND AN IFR FLIGHT PLAN WAS FILED TO A REVISED DESTINATION. CLEARANCE WAS RECEIVED FOR A VOR APPROACH AND THE PILOT WAS ADVISED OF 1/2 MILE VISIBILITY IN SNOW AND FOG. A MISSED APPROACH WAS REPORTED OVER THE UNICOM FREQUENCY. IMPACT OCCURRED WITH A HEADING OF ABOUT 170 DEGREES AT 7,700 FEET MSL IN MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN ON THE 173 DEGREE RADIAL, 7.3 MILES FROM THE VOR. THE INBOUND COURSE TO THE FINAL APPROACH FIX WAS 170 DEGREES WITH AN INBOUND FINAL APPROACH COURSE OF 196 DEGREES. AIRPORT ELEVATION WAS 5,914 FEET MSL. THE AIRPORT WAS LOCATED ON THE 196 DEGREE RADIAL, 5.5 MILES FROM THE VOR FINAL APPROACH FIX. THE VOR APPROACH TO RUNWAY 21 CALLED FOR A MISSED APPROACH TO BE EXECUTED AT 5.5 DME FROM THE VOR AND A MINIMUM DESCENT ALTITUDE OF 6,600 FEET.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: THE PILOT'S IMPROPER IFR PROCEDURES. FACTORS WERE: THE EXISTING WEATHER CONDITIONS AND THE PILOT'S FAILURE TO OBTAIN A PREFLIGHT BRIEFING.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT ENCOUNTER WITH WEATHER

Phase of Operation: APPROACH - FAF/OUTER MARKER TO THRESHOLD (IFR)

Findings

1. WEATHER CONDITION - SNOW
 2. (F) PREFLIGHT BRIEFING SERVICE - NOT USED - PILOT IN COMMAND
 3. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - OBSCURATION
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Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: MISSED APPROACH (IFR)

Findings

4. TERRAIN CONDITION - MOUNTAINOUS/HILLY
5. (C) IFR PROCEDURE - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

Pilot Information

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|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| Certificate: | Private | Age: | 42, Male |
| Airplane Rating(s): | Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land | Seat Occupied: | Unknown |
| Other Aircraft Rating(s): | Helicopter | Restraint Used: | |
| Instrument Rating(s): | Airplane | Second Pilot Present: | No |
| Instructor Rating(s): | | Toxicology Performed: | Yes |
| Medical Certification: | Class 3 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim. | Last FAA Medical Exam: | 04/20/1990 |
| Occupational Pilot: | Last Flight Review or Equivalent: | | |
| Flight Time: | 530 hours (Total, all aircraft), 40 hours (Total, this make and model), 10 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 5 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft) | | |

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

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|-------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Aircraft Make: | CESSNA | Registration: | N3851C |
| Model/Series: | 421C 421C | Aircraft Category: | Airplane |
| Year of Manufacture: | | Amateur Built: | No |
| Airworthiness Certificate: | | Serial Number: | 421C0119 |
| Landing Gear Type: | Retractable - Tricycle | Seats: | 8 |
| Date/Type of Last Inspection: | Unknown | Certified Max Gross Wt.: | 7450 lbs |
| Time Since Last Inspection: | 0 Hours | Engines: | 2 Reciprocating |
| Airframe Total Time: | | Engine Manufacturer: | CONTINENTAL |
| ELT: | Installed, activated | Engine Model/Series: | GTSIO-520-L |
| Registered Owner: | GEORGE MEHL | Rated Power: | 375 hp |
| Operator: | GEORGE MEHL | Operating Certificate(s) Held: | None |

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

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|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------|
| Conditions at Accident Site: | Instrument Conditions | Condition of Light: | Day |
| Observation Facility, Elevation: | , 0 ft msl | Distance from Accident Site: | 0 Nautical Miles |
| Observation Time: | 0000 | Direction from Accident Site: | 0° |
| Lowest Cloud Condition: | Unknown / 0 ft agl | Visibility | 0 Miles |
| Lowest Ceiling: | Obscured / 800 ft agl | Visibility (RVR): | 0 ft |
| Wind Speed/Gusts: | 12 knots / 25 knots | Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Wind Direction: | 330° | Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Altimeter Setting: | | Temperature/Dew Point: | -18°C / -18°C |
| Precipitation and Obscuration: | | | |
| Departure Point: | TUCSON, AZ (TUS) | Type of Flight Plan Filed: | IFR |
| Destination: | | Type of Clearance: | IFR |
| Departure Time: | 0830 MST | Type of Airspace: | Class G |

Airport Information

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|----------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|
| Airport: | CORTEZ-MONTEZUMA COUNTY (CEZ) | Runway Surface Type: | Asphalt |
| Airport Elevation: | 5914 ft | Runway Surface Condition: | Snow--wet |
| Runway Used: | 21 | IFR Approach: | VOR/DME |
| Runway Length/Width: | 7105 ft / 100 ft | VFR Approach/Landing: | None |

Wreckage and Impact Information

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|---------------------|---------|----------------------|-----------|
| Crew Injuries: | 1 Fatal | Aircraft Damage: | Destroyed |
| Passenger Injuries: | 4 Fatal | Aircraft Fire: | On-Ground |
| Ground Injuries: | N/A | Aircraft Explosion: | On-Ground |
| Total Injuries: | 5 Fatal | Latitude, Longitude: | |

Administrative Information

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|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------|
| Investigator In Charge (IIC): | VERLIN B TRANTER | Report Date: | 05/05/1993 |
| Additional Participating Persons: | FLOYD LONDON; SALT LAKE CITY, UT | | |
| 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.ntsb.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](#).