



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	MAMMOTH LAKES, CA	Accident Number:	LAX92FA082
Date & Time:	01/04/1992, 1855 PST	Registration:	N2654M
Aircraft:	CESSNA 421C	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	4 Fatal, 2 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Analysis

DUE TO THE IMPENDING ARRIVAL OF A SNOW STORM, THE CERTIFICATED COMMERCIAL PILOT AND 5 PASSENGERS DEPARTED ONE DAY EARLIER THAN PLANNED, FROM AN UNCONTROLLED AIRPORT LOCATED IN MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN TO BEGIN A NIGHT, CROSS COUNTRY FLIGHT. INSTRUMENT METEOROLOGICAL CONDITIONS PREVAILED. PRIOR TO DEPARTURE, THE PILOT WAS GIVEN AN IFR CLEARANCE VOID TIME FROM AN ARTCC. THE PILOT WAS CLIMBING TOWARD A VOR LOCATED ABOUT 27 MILES SOUTHEAST OF THE DEPARTURE AIRPORT WHILE ATTEMPTING TO CONTACT THE ARTCC TO OPEN HIS INSTRUMENT FLIGHT PLAN. THE PILOT FAILED TO MAINTAIN TERRAIN CLEARANCE, AND BECAME LOST/DISORIENTED. THE AIRPLANE STRUCK TREES AND SNOW COVERED TERRAIN AT 10,200 FEET MSL, 7 NAUTICAL MILES AND ABOUT 22 DEGREES TO THE RIGHT OF THE INTENDED COURSE.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: THE FAILURE OF THE PILOT TO PLAN AND CONDUCT HIS DEPARTURE FLIGHT TO AVOID HIGH MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN, DURING WHICH THE PILOT BECAME LOST/DISORIENTED. CONTRIBUTING TO THE ACCIDENT WAS SELF INDUCED PRESSURE TO DEPART BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF A SNOW STORM.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: CLIMB - TO CRUISE

Findings

1. OBJECT - TREE(S)
2. LIGHT CONDITION - DARK NIGHT
3. (C) PREFLIGHT PLANNING/PREPARATION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (F) SELF-INDUCED PRESSURE - PILOT IN COMMAND
5. WEATHER CONDITION - CLOUDS
6. (C) BECAME LOST/DISORIENTED
7. TERRAIN CONDITION - MOUNTAINOUS/HILLY
8. TERRAIN CONDITION - SNOW COVERED

Factual Information

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	53, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	Seatbelt
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	04/04/1991
Occupational Pilot:		Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	1250 hours (Total, all aircraft), 270 hours (Total, this make and model), 1230 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 40 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 15 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	CESSNA	Registration:	N2654M
Model/Series:	421C 421C	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	421C0691
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	6
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	03/01/1991, Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	7500 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	195 Hours	Engines:	2 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	3200 Hours	Engine Manufacturer:	CONTINENTAL
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	GTSIO-520-L
Registered Owner:	FRANK GEARHART	Rated Power:	375 hp
Operator:	FRANK GEARHART	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Instrument Conditions	Condition of Light:	Night/Dark
Observation Facility, Elevation:	MMH, 7128 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	7 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	1649 PST	Direction from Accident Site:	312°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Partial Obscuration / 0 ft agl	Visibility	8 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast / 500 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	5 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	90°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	-4° C / -6° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:		Type of Flight Plan Filed:	IFR
Destination:	LA VERNE, CA (POC)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	1845 PST	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Serious	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	4 Fatal, 1 Serious	Aircraft Fire:	On-Ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	4 Fatal, 2 Serious	Latitude, Longitude:	

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Scott R Erickson	Report Date:	06/21/1993
Additional Participating Persons:	JOHN HUY; WICHITA, KS BRIAN FINNEGAN; WICHITA, KS MICHAEL GRIMES; MOBILE, AL		
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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