



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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<b>Location:</b>	BROWNSVILLE, TX	<b>Accident Number:</b>	FTW95LA085
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	01/09/1995, 1622 CST	<b>Registration:</b>	N50WT
<b>Aircraft:</b>	PIPER PA-31-350	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	2 Minor, 1 None
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

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## Analysis

DURING AN INTERNATIONAL CROSS COUNTRY FLIGHT THE PRIVATE PILOT, CERTIFICATED SINGLE ENGINE LAND, EXPERIENCED A DUAL ENGINE POWER LOSS AS HE WAS BEING VECTORED TO THE BROWNSVILLE AIRPORT. FOLLOWING THE ACCIDENT THE AIRCRAFT WAS EXAMINED BY A FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION INSPECTOR WHO FOUND THAT THERE WAS FUEL IN THE LEFT FUEL TANK AND THAT THE FUEL SELECTOR WAS IN THE RIGHT TANK POSITION. THE PILOT HAD REPORTED, PRIOR TO LOSS OF ENGINE POWER, THAT HE HAD LOW FUEL INDICATIONS IN THE RIGHT TANK AND THAT HE NEEDED A VECTOR TO BROWNSVILLE. THE AIRCRAFT WAS LANDED IN ROUGH AND UNEVEN TERRAIN, RESULTING IN DAMAGE TO THE STRUCTURE AND WINGS, APPROXIMATELY 1/2 MILE SHORT OF THE RUNWAY.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: THE FUEL STARVATION LOSS OF ENGINE POWER DUE TO THE PILOT'S IMPROPER USE OF THE FUEL TANK SELECTOR. FACTORS WERE THE PILOT'S QUALIFICATION AND THE LACK OF SUITABLE TERRAIN FOR LANDING.

## Findings

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Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER(TOTAL) - NONMECHANICAL  
Phase of Operation: APPROACH - VFR PATTERN - FINAL APPROACH

### Findings

1. ALL ENGINES
  2. (C) FUEL TANK SELECTOR POSITION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
  3. (F) QUALIFICATION - PILOT IN COMMAND
  4. (C) FLUID,FUEL - SWITCHED OFF
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Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING  
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY DESCENT/LANDING

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Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER  
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY LANDING

### Findings

5. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - NONE SUITABLE

## Factual Information

On January 9, 1995, at 1622 central standard time, a Piper PA-31- 350, N50WT, was destroyed during a forced landing near Brownsville, Texas. The airplane was being flown by a private pilot, who was on an international personal cross country flight. A VFR flight plan was in effect and visual meteorological conditions prevailed. The pilot and one passenger received minor injuries, while the remaining passenger was not injured.

According to the flight plan information, the airplane was en route from Cancun, Mexico, to El Paso, Texas. The pilot contacted Corpus Christi, Texas, approach control, while 50 miles east of Brownsville, and stated that he had "low fuel status in the right tank, but thought he had 3 hours of fuel remaining." He then requested and was given a vector to runway 13R at the Brownsville airport. The pilot subsequently reported that he had lost power in both engines. The airplane landed about 1/2 mile short of the airport in unsuitable terrain resulting damage to the fuselage and wings. Initial examination of the wreckage, by a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspector, revealed that there was fuel on board the airplane, in the left tank, and the fuel selector was in the right tank position.

A review of the pilot records by the FAA revealed that the pilot was certificated for single engine operations, did not hold an instrument certificate, and had accumulated a total of 87 hours of flight time.

Repeated attempts to have the pilot or operator submit a completed NTSB Form 6120.1/2 (Pilot/Operator Aircraft Accident Report) were not successful.

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	37, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Single-engine Land	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Left
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	Seatbelt, Shoulder harness
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	No
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 3 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim.	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	02/02/1993
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>		<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	87 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	PIPER	Registration:	N50WT
Model/Series:	PA-31-350 PA-31-350	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	31-7952018
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	10
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	7000 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	2 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	LYCOMING
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	TIO-540-J2BD
Registered Owner:	GLADYS ENTERPRISES, INC.	Rated Power:	350 hp
Operator:	GLADYS ENTERPRISES, INC.	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	BRO, 23 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	50 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	1556 CST	Direction from Accident Site:	10°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 2200 ft agl	Visibility	10 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 2800 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	12 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	160°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	24° C / 19° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	CANCUN, MX (MMUN)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	VFR
Destination:	EL PASO, TX (ELP)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	0000	Type of Airspace:	Class E

## Wreckage and Impact Information

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

## Administrative Information

**Investigator In Charge (IIC):** MATTHEW ELLIS, **Report Date:** 08/23/1995

**Additional Participating Persons:** FRED J CECH; SAN ANTONIO, TX

**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](mailto:pubinq@ntsb.gov), or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at <http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/>.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), established in 1967, is an independent federal agency mandated by Congress through the Independent Safety Board Act of 1974 to investigate transportation accidents, determine the probable causes of the accidents, issue safety recommendations, study transportation safety issues, and evaluate the safety effectiveness of government agencies involved in transportation. The NTSB makes public its actions and decisions through accident reports, safety studies, special investigation reports, safety recommendations, and statistical reviews.

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](#).