



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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<b>Location:</b>	PACIFIC OCEAN, PO	<b>Accident Number:</b>	LAX97LA154
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	04/10/1997, 0706 HST	<b>Registration:</b>	N27659
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Piper PA-31-350	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	2 None
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General Aviation - Ferry		

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## Analysis

The aircraft was being operated on a trans-Pacific ferry flight. A special flight permit authorized a gross weight increase and ferry fuel tanks had been installed along with long range communication and navigation radios. The pilot reported that when 85 miles from the departure airport, the right engine failed and he was unable to restart it. Power from the remaining engine was insufficient to maintain level flight at the overweight condition and the pilot permitted the aircraft to drift down until it was necessary to ditch in the ocean 28 miles offshore. The pilot had departed and returned to Hawaii twice previously. The first time he returned due to an oil leak on the left engine, and the second time because of a loose window. A mechanic who repaired the window reported that the left engine appeared to still be leaking oil. Both pilots told the FAA inspector that the oil leak had been repaired.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The loss of engine power in one engine for undetermined reasons. A factor in the accident was the aircraft's diminished single engine performance during the early portion of the overweight ferry flight.

## Findings

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Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER

Phase of Operation: CRUISE

Findings

1. 1 ENGINE

2. (C) REASON FOR OCCURRENCE UNDETERMINED

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Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING

Phase of Operation: DESCENT - EMERGENCY

Findings

3. (F) AIRCRAFT PERFORMANCE,ENGINE OUT CAPABILITY - EXCEEDED

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Occurrence #3: DITCHING

Phase of Operation: DESCENT - EMERGENCY

## Factual Information

On April 10, 1997, at 0706 hours Hawaiian standard time, a Piper PA-31-350, N27659, was destroyed when it ditched in the Pacific ocean, 30 miles northeast of Hilo, Hawaii, following loss of power in one engine. The aircraft departed Hilo on a VFR flight plan at 0546. The ferry flight was destined for Hayward, California, and visual meteorological conditions prevailed. Both of the airline transport pilots were not injured.

The aircraft was being operated on a special (ferry) flight permit which authorized a gross weight increase to 9,500 pounds. Ferry fuel tanks had been installed, along with long range communication and navigation radios.

The pilot reported that when 85 miles northeast of Hilo, the right engine failed in a slow, gradual loss of power, and he was unable to restart it. He feathered the propeller, declared an emergency, and reversed course. Power from the remaining engine was insufficient to maintain level flight at the overweight condition, and he permitted the aircraft to drift down until he ditched in the ocean 28 miles offshore. He and the other pilot evacuated the aircraft into life rafts, the aircraft sank, and they were rescued by Coast Guard helicopters about 2 hours later.

The location of the ditching was latitude 20 degrees 05.34 minutes north, and 154 degrees 40.04 minutes west.

According to inspectors from the FAA Honolulu Flight Standards District Office, the pilot had departed and returned to Hawaii twice previously. The first time he returned due to an oil leak on the left engine, and the second time because the pilot's openable window was "coming off". A mechanic who repaired the window reported that the left engine appeared to still be leaking oil. Both pilots told the FAA inspector that the oil leak had been repaired.

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Airline Transport; Flight Instructor; Commercial	<b>Age:</b>	28, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Multi-engine Land; 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>	Airplane	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	Yes
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	Airplane Multi-engine; Airplane Single-engine; Instrument Airplane	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	No
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 1 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	03/10/1997
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>		
<b>Flight Time:</b>	5700 hours (Total, all aircraft), 15 hours (Total, this make and model), 5400 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 150 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 50 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 3 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N27659
Model/Series:	PA-31-350 PA-31-350	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Special Flight; Normal	Serial Number:	31-7852090
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	01/31/1997, Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	7000 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	6 Hours	Engines:	2 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	5074 Hours	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed	Engine Model/Series:	TIO-540-J2BD
Registered Owner:	PARAGON AIR, INC.	Rated Power:	350 hp
Operator:	PILOT SERVICES INTL	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	ITO, 13 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	30 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	0753 HST	Direction from Accident Site:	213°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 2400 ft agl	Visibility	15 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None / 0 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	5 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	220°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	19° C / 18° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	HILO, HI (ITO)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	VFR
Destination:	HAYWARD, CA (HWD)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	0547 HST	Type of Airspace:	Class G

## Wreckage and Impact Information

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

## Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	RICHARD B PARKER	Report Date:	10/14/1997
Additional Participating Persons:	ANDREW COLVIN; HONOLULU, HI		
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 <a href="mailto:pubinq@ntsb.gov">pubinq@ntsb.gov</a> , or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at <a href="http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/">http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/</a> .		

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](#).