



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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<b>Location:</b>	Angle Fire, New Mexico	<b>Accident Number:</b>	DEN08LA145
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	August 31, 2008, 20:45 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N397RA
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Cessna 340A	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Defining Event:</b>	Controlled flight into terr/obj (CFIT)	<b>Injuries:</b>	1 Minor
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

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## Analysis

The pilot reported that he was cleared for a GPS approach and broke out of the clouds at 1,800 feet. He entered a left hand traffic pattern and his last recollection was turning base. He woke up in the crashed airplane which was on fire. The airplane was destroyed. An examination of airplane systems revealed no anomalies.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: Controlled flight into terrain for unknown reasons.

## Findings

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Not determined	(general) - Unknown/Not determined
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## Factual Information

On August 31, 2008, approximately 2045 mountain daylight time (MDT), a Cessna 340A, N397RA, was destroyed when it impacted terrain one mile northeast of Angel Fire Airport (AXX), Angel Fire, New Mexico. A post impact fire ensued. Night visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the accident. The personal flight was being conducted under the provisions of Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91 on an instrument flight rules flight plan. The private pilot sustained minor injuries. The cross-country flight departed Hooks Memorial Airport (DWH), Houston, Texas, approximately 1730 and was en route to AXX.

According to a telephone conversation with the pilot, he broke out of the clouds and was "high." He initiated a circling approach and recalls turning back towards the airport. The next event he remembers is waking up in his airplane; the airplane was on fire. The pilot did not suspect mechanical anomalies with the airplane.

In a written statement from the pilot, he reported that upon descending into AXX he obtained weather information, re-set his altimeter, and was cleared for the GPS 17 approach. After performing the approach maneuver, he "broke out" of the clouds at about 1,800 feet with the runway in sight, and too near the airport for landing. Approximately midway down the runway when he executed a left turn and entered a "close" downwind. Upon passing the end of the runway, the pilot initiated a left turn for a base leg. He has no further recollection of his approach to the airport and woke up in the crashed, burning aircraft.

According to local law enforcement, the airplane impacted terrain northeast of runway 17. The airplane was consumed by a post-impact fire.

A witness to the accident, located south of the runway threshold, stated that he first observed the accident airplane approximately half way down the runway and flying 200 to 300 feet above the ground. The airplane was powering up to go around and the pilot initiated a left turn to enter a three quarter mile wide downwind leg of the traffic pattern. Once established on the downwind leg, the airplane entered a gradual descent, then turned left base, and disappeared from view behind a hill. Less than a minute later, he observed the glow of fire from the area he last observed the plane and notified emergency services. It began to rain shortly thereafter. This witness advised that he did not observe any visual or aural indications that the airplane was experiencing any problems.

A second witness to the accident, located north of the runway threshold, stated she observed the accident airplane fly an initial approach and turn around. The airplane made another turn, to the left, and she observed that the airplane was "on fire", but that there was no indication of the airplane being "in trouble." This witness lost sight of the airplane behind a rise, and heard an explosion shortly thereafter. A third witness at the same location as the second, provided a similar account of her observations. She advised that it was raining at the time of the accident.

The closest official weather observation station was Taos Municipal Airport automated weather observation (KSKX), Taos, New Mexico, located 7 nautical miles (nm) west of the accident site. The elevation of the weather observation station was 7,095 feet mean sea level (MSL). The

routine aviation weather report (METAR) for KSKX, issued at 2055 mdt, reported, winds, 140 degrees at 5 knots, visibility, 10 miles; sky condition, scattered 2,000, broken 2,900, overcast 8,500; temperature 15 degrees Celsius (C); dew point 13 degrees C; altimeter, 30.08 inches. METAR data for AXX, issued at 2050 mdt, reported, winds 200 degrees at 9 knots, visibility, 10 miles; sky conditions scattered 3,600, broken 4,800, overcast, 6,500; temperature 12 degrees C; dew point 11 degrees C; altimeter 30.17 inches.

The Angel Fire Airport is located in a mountain valley at an elevation of 8380 feet msl, with rising terrain in all directions. The highest terrain to the east of the airport in the immediate vicinity is 12,441 feet msl, 12,700 feet msl to the north, 13,161 feet msl to the west, and 9,440 feet msl to the south. The crash site elevation was approximately 8,305 feet msl

An examination of the airplane by National Transportation Safety Board investigators and a representative from the Cessna Aircraft on September 17th, 2008, revealed no anomalies and no evidence to support an in-flight fire. Control continuity was established, the propellers on both engines exhibited chord wise scratching, and the turbo chargers from both engines rotated freely when activated by hand.

## History of Flight

Approach-VFR pattern base	Controlled flight into terr/obj (CFIT) (Defining event)
Post-impact	Fire/smoke (post-impact)

## Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	81, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-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:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 3 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	October 1, 2007
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	October 1, 2007
Flight Time:	4725 hours (Total, all aircraft), 625 hours (Total, this make and model), 4500 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 15 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 10 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 7 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Cessna	<b>Registration:</b>	N397RA
<b>Model/Series:</b>	340A Ram 4	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Airplane
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	No
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Normal	<b>Serial Number:</b>	340A-0009
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Retractable - Tricycle	<b>Seats:</b>	4
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	July 1, 2008 Annual	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	6430 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>		<b>Engines:</b>	2 Reciprocating
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>	6507.7 Hrs as of last inspection	<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	TCM
<b>ELT:</b>	Installed	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	TSIO-520-NB
<b>Registered Owner:</b>		<b>Rated Power:</b>	335 Horsepower
<b>Operator:</b>		<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Visual (VMC)	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Night/dark
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>	AXX	<b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>	2 Nautical Miles
<b>Observation Time:</b>	20:30 Local	<b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>	360°
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>	Scattered / 3600 ft AGL	<b>Visibility</b>	10 miles
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	Broken / 4800 ft AGL	<b>Visibility (RVR):</b>	
<b>Wind Speed/Gusts:</b>	9 knots /	<b>Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Wind Direction:</b>	200°	<b>Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Altimeter Setting:</b>	30.17 inches Hg	<b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>	12° C / 11° C
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>			
<b>Departure Point:</b>	HOUSTON, TX (DWH )	<b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>	IFR
<b>Destination:</b>	Angle Fire, NM (AXX )	<b>Type of Clearance:</b>	IFR
<b>Departure Time:</b>	17:30 Local	<b>Type of Airspace:</b>	

## Airport Information

<b>Airport:</b>	ANGEL FIRE AXX	<b>Runway Surface Type:</b>	
<b>Airport Elevation:</b>	8380 ft msl	<b>Runway Surface Condition:</b>	
<b>Runway Used:</b>		<b>IFR Approach:</b>	Global positioning system
<b>Runway Length/Width:</b>		<b>VFR Approach/Landing:</b>	Traffic pattern

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	1 Minor	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	On-ground
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	On-ground
<b>Total Injuries:</b>	1 Minor	<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	36.421943, -105.289718

## Administrative Information

<b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>	Rodi, Jennifer
<b>Additional Participating Persons:</b>	John Dewitt; Albuquerque FAA Flight Standards District Office
<b>Original Publish Date:</b>	January 29, 2009
<b>Note:</b>	
<b>Investigation Docket:</b>	<a href="https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=68775">https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=68775</a>

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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](#).