

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF AIR COMMERCE
Washington

STATEMENT OF PROBABLE CAUSE
CONCERNING AN AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT
WHICH OCCURRED TO A COMMERCIALY OWNED PLANE
ON MAY 7, 1935, NEAR FILLMORE, CALIFORNIA

To the Secretary of Commerce

On May 7, 1935 at about 10 30 a.m. near Fillmore, California, a commercially owned airplane, carrying three passengers and the pilot, collided with a mountain with resultant serious injury to one passenger, minor injuries to two passengers and the pilot and the complete destruction of the aircraft.

The airplane, a Bellanca Skyrocket, model CH-400, was owned by the Petrol Oil Corporation of Los Angeles and bore Department of Commerce license number NC-547V. The pilot, Leland F. Williams, held a Department of Commerce transport pilot's license.

The ceiling at Los Angeles at the time of take-off was 600 feet with a visibility of three miles. A fog over this area was estimated about 1200 feet in thickness. This was a local condition, however, because at a point six miles out of Los Angeles, the ceiling was approximately 1500 feet with a visibility of seven miles and about sixty miles out the weather was clear and unlimited.

The pilot should have been able to clear the mountains under the clouds had he been sufficiently familiar with the terrain to have followed an exact course out of Saugus, California, under the existing poor visibility. However, he attempted to get through at a point about ten miles west of this course. In flying up a canyon and just under the clouds at an altitude of about 2300 feet, he flew into a heavy fog. In attempting to turn to get out of the fog the plane collided with the side of a mountain.

It is the opinion of the Accident Board that the probable cause of this accident was poor judgment on the part of the pilot for attempting this flight under weather conditions which existed at the time and for continuing flight up a canyon until engulfed in fog which could have been avoided and for attempting a turn in a canyon so narrow that there was not a reasonable expectancy of being able to complete the turn.

Respectfully submitted,

Eugene L. Vidal
Director of Air Commerce