

May 7, 1936

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF AIR COMMERCE
WashingtonSTATEMENT OF PROBABLE CAUSE CONCERNING AN AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT
WHICH OCCURRED TO A COMMERCIALLY OWNED AIRPLANE AT
TROY, NEW YORK, ON OCTOBER 21, 1935

To the Secretary of Commerce

On October 21, 1935, at approximately 11 00 a.m. at Troy, New York, a commercially owned airplane, while attempting to effect an emergency landing, crashed with resultant death to the pilot, serious injuries to the copilot, minor injuries to four other persons and the complete destruction of the aircraft.

The airplane, a Curtiss Condor, model CO, bore Department of Commerce license number NC-725K and was owned by the Chamberlain Flying Service, Incorporated, Jackson Heights, Long Island, New York. The pilot, Henry Phillip Hublitz, and the copilot, Ruth R. Nichols, both held Department of Commerce transport pilot's licenses. Ray Haynes and Ray Hold, members of the crew, and Gladys Berkenheiser and Nena Berkenheiser, passengers, all received minor injuries.

The take-off from Troy, New York, was accomplished at about 10 08 a.m. with Teterboro, New Jersey, as the destination. A full load of gasoline (approximately 444 gallons) was carried. A wind of 15 to 30 miles velocity was blowing at this time and at the time of the accident. Approximately five or six miles out of Troy and at an altitude of 800 to 1000 feet, the left engine began to miss and the pilot decided to return to Troy rather than proceed with one engine. The turn for the return was made to the left and considerable altitude was lost in getting the airplane righted again.

Everything about the return flight appeared normal until the airplane crossed a small hill a short distance from the airport. Here it was observed to clear the hill with a margin of but a few feet and throughout the rest of the return flight was observed to lose altitude faster than normal for an approach to the airport. When just east of the airport and at a very low altitude, a shallow turn to the left and into the airport was attempted. While in this turn the left wings struck some trees, throwing the airplane out of control and into the ground. Fire followed immediately.

There was no structural or mechanical failure of the aircraft or controls. The cause of the left engine failing could not be determined due to damage sustained by fire. Whether or not the right engine was delivering full power could not be determined. It is evident, however, that the airplane could not maintain its altitude after the left engine failed. It is possible also that a downdraft was encountered while crossing the hill on the return flight to the airport, which caused the airplane to lose further altitude. Turning toward the disabled engine for the return flight necessitated considerably more loss of altitude than would a turn in the direction of the functioning engine.

It is the opinion of the Bureau of Air Commerce that the probable cause of this accident was poor judgment on the part of the pilot in his handling of the airplane following engine failure.

Respectfully submitted,

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Director of Air Commerce