Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Londonderry, New Hampshire	**Accident Number:**	ERA24FA097
Date & Time:	January 26, 2024, 07:26 Local	**Registration:**	N53RP
Aircraft:	Beech C99	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Defining Event:	Loss of control in flight	**Injuries:**	1 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 135: Air taxi & commuter - Non-scheduled		

Analysis

The weather about the time of departure included visibility of 3 miles in rain and mist, a broken ceiling at 1,000 ft, and an overcast ceiling at 2,400 ft. The pilot stated that during the initial climb, he heard a loud “pop.” The left door/hatch appeared to be partially open, so he grabbed it with his left hand. The door then opened completely while he was still holding on to it, injuring his left hand. He reached up with his right hand and hung on to the door with both hands but was beginning to be pulled out of his seat, so he let go and, shortly after, the door completely separated from the airplane. After the door departed, the airplane went through a series of unusual attitudes as the pilot attempted to return to the departure airport. He did not recall anything after the last unusual attitude.

Postaccident examination of the wreckage did not reveal any preimpact mechanical malfunction. The cockpit door was found about 10 miles from the main wreckage. The airplane was also equipped with a portable ladder for pilot entry, which secured to the fuselage under the cockpit door, and was supposed to have been stowed inside the cockpit before takeoff. Although the pilot reported that he checked that the door before takeoff, the portable ladder was found outside and aft of the cockpit, consistent with the pilot forgetting to secure the portable ladder inside the cockpit. He likely also failed to ensure that the cockpit door was secured before takeoff.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:

The pilot’s failure to ensure that the cockpit door was secured before flight, which resulted in its separation during initial climb and a subsequent loss of control.

Findings

Personnel issues	Forgotten action/omission - Pilot
Aircraft	Passenger/crew doors - Incorrect use/operation

Factual Information

History of Flight

Prior to flight	Cabin safety event
Maneuvering	Loss of control in flight (Defining event)
Uncontrolled descent	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

On January 26, 2024, about 0726 eastern standard time, a Beech C99, N53RP, was substantially damaged when it was involved in an accident near Londonderry, New Hampshire. The commercial pilot was seriously injured. The airplane was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 135 on-demand cargo flight.

According to information from FAA air traffic control (ATC), the airplane departed Manchester Boston Regional Airport (MHT), Manchester, New Hampshire, at 0710, destined for Presque Isle International Airport (PQI), Presque Isle, Maine. Immediately after takeoff, the airplane broadcast an emergency transponder code. The airplane then flew erratically for 16 minutes while the ATC controller attempted to establish radio contact, before it collided with wooded terrain about 5 miles south of MHT.

Due to his serious injuries, the pilot was initially unable to provide a statement. However, about 3 months after the accident, on April 15, 2024, he made himself available for an FAA inspector to interview him.

The pilot reported that, before the flight, he checked that the pilot door was latched by shining his flashlight down both holes to check that the latches were on the pins. He stated that during the initial climb from the airport he heard a loud “pop.” The pilot door appeared to be partially open, so he grabbed it with his left hand. The door then opened completely while he was still holding on to it, injuring his left hand. He reached up with his right hand and hung on to the door with both hands but was beginning to be pulled out of his seat, so he let go and, shortly after, the door completely departed the airplane.

The pilot further stated that sometime while the door was open, his headset was violently pulled off and the earcups detached. After the door departed, the airplane went through a series of unusual attitudes that occurred about four or five times during the flight. He set the transponder code to 7700 and attempted to make an emergency radio transmission sometime after the door departed the airplane, and also attempted to maneuver the airplane so as to set up for a downwind leg to runway 35 at MHT.

He added that he was attempting to fly at 1,800 ft. After flying the downwind leg, he attempted to make another turn but experienced a final unusual attitude. The unusual attitude was the last thing he remembered before impact.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Flight instructor	**Age:**	50,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea; Multi-engine land	**Seat Occupied:**	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	**Restraint Used:**	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	**Second Pilot Present:**	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane single-engine; Instrument airplane	**Toxicology Performed:**	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 1 With waivers/limitations	**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	August 5, 2023
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	November 13, 2023
Flight Time:	3551 hours (Total, all aircraft), 77 hours (Total, this make and model), 3490 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 64 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 23 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Beech	**Registration:**	N53RP
Model/Series:	C99 NO SERIES	**Aircraft Category:**	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	1982	**Amateur Built:**	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	**Serial Number:**	U-195
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	**Seats:**	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	November 15, 2023 AAIP	**Certified Max Gross Wt.:**	11300 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	88 Hrs	**Engines:**	2 Turbo prop
Airframe Total Time:	28882 Hrs at time of accident	**Engine Manufacturer:**	Pratt & Whitney Canada
ELT:	C91 installed, not activated	**Engine Model/Series:**	PT6A-36
Registered Owner:	UAS TRANSERVICES INC	**Rated Power:**	715 Horsepower
Operator:	Wiggins Airways	**Operating Certificate(s) Held:**	On-demand air taxi (135)
Operator Does Business As:		**Operator Designator Code:**	AXSA

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	**Condition of Light:**	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	MHT,229 ft msl	**Distance from Accident Site:**	5 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	07:48 Local	**Direction from Accident Site:**	349°
Lowest Cloud Condition:		**Visibility**	3 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 1000 ft AGL	**Visibility (RVR):**	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	4 knots / None	**Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:**	None / None
Wind Direction:	360°	**Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:**	N/A / N/A
Altimeter Setting:	30.2 inches Hg	**Temperature/Dew Point:**	2°C / 0°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	Moderate - None - Mist		
Departure Point:	Manchester, NH (MHT)	**Type of Flight Plan Filed:**	IFR
Destination:	Presque Isle, ME (PQI)	**Type of Clearance:**	IFR
Departure Time:	07:10 Local	**Type of Airspace:**	Class C

The recorded weather at MHT at 0748 included visibility of 3 miles in rain and mist; a broken ceiling at 1,000 ft; and an overcast ceiling at 2,400 ft.

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Serious	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Fire:**	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Explosion:**	None
Total Injuries:	1 Serious	**Latitude, Longitude:**	42.85405,-71.415783

A debris path, beginning with a damaged fiber optic line about 75 ft high, extended on a magnetic course of 140° for about 200 ft through wooded terrain. The right aileron was found near the beginning of the debris path, suspended in a tree. The airplane came to rest upright and oriented south at the end of the debris path.

The airplane's left (pilot) side cockpit door/hatch was subsequently found in a residential yard about 10 miles north of the main wreckage (see figure 1). Additionally, the airplane was equipped with a portable ladder for pilot entry, which secured to the fuselage under the cockpit door/hatch and was supposed to be stowed inside the cockpit before takeoff (see figure 2). The portable ladder was found outside and aft of the cockpit, resting against the left engine

nacelle. The fuselage remained intact with both wing roots attached and the empennage partially attached. There was a hole in the upper left side of the cockpit where the door/hatch had separated.

Figure 1. Cockpit hatch as found. **Figure 2.** Exemplar ladder and hatch above.

The empennage had partially separated from the main wreckage and was canted right. The left horizontal stabilizer and elevator remained attached to the empennage. The outboard section of the right horizontal stabilizer separated and was found about the midpoint of the debris path. The right elevator separated and was found near the right horizontal stabilizer. The upper section of the vertical stabilizer separated and was also found near the midpoint of the debris path. The rudder remained attached to the empennage. The horizontal stabilizer trim actuator was found in a neutral position. The rudder trim actuator was extended beyond the limit left deflection.

Both wings separated outboard of the engine nacelles. The right wing fragmented into small sections along the debris path. The outboard section of the left wing remained intact, with the aileron attached, and was found aft of the empennage. Measurement of the flap actuators corresponded to a flaps retracted setting. The aileron trim actuator (located in the left wing) was found in a neutral position.

All three landing gear remained attached and were in the retracted position.
The cockpit was crushed, but the pilot seats and harnesses (3-point, dual shoulder harness) remained intact. The left throttle lever was in the aft position. The right throttle lever and both propeller levers were in the forward position. All flight control cable continuity was confirmed

from their respective flight control surfaces to the cockpit, with multiple broomstraw cable separations.

The wreckage was further examined at a recovery facility. The left side cockpit hatch/door and portable ladder were staged during wreckage examination for orientation purposes. The left side cockpit door/hatch handle (inside and outside handle) operated normally when moved by hand.

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Gretz, Robert
Additional Participating Persons:	Matthew Hall; FAA/FSDO; Portland, ME Ernest Hall; Textron Aviation; Wichita, KS Laurence Schaedel; Wiggins Airways; Manchester, NH Beverley Harvey; Transportation Safety Board of Canada; Gatineau, OF
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