



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Folkston, Georgia	Accident Number:	ERA25LA172
Date & Time:	April 10, 2025, 16:08 Local	Registration:	N179ST
Aircraft:	PIPER AIRCRAFT INC PA46R-350T	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Loss of control in flight	Injuries:	2 Serious, 1 Minor, 3 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

At the conclusion of the instrument flight rules flight, the pilot approached the 2,500-ft-long by 50-ft-wide runway at the destination airport. The pilot was unable to recall any of the events that transpired after the landing flare, but the front seat passenger described that the airplane’s nose pitched up as the airplane descended below the tops of the trees that surrounded the airport. The pilot then initiated a go-around, but the airplane did not climb as expected and drifted left towards the trees. The left wing then dropped before the airplane struck the ground, resulting in a postimpact fire. The fuselage and left wing were substantially damaged during the accident sequence. The pilot reported, and a postaccident examination of the wreckage confirmed, that there were no preimpact mechanical malfunctions of the airplane that would have precluded normal operation.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

The pilot’s failure to maintain control of the airplane during a go-around.

Findings

Personnel issues

Aircraft control - Pilot

Aircraft

Directional control - Not attained/maintained

Factual Information

History of Flight

Approach-VFR go-around	Loss of control in flight (Defining event)
Uncontrolled descent	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	55, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-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):	None	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Class 3 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	February 6, 2024
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	March 6, 2024
Flight Time:	(Estimated) 1510 hours (Total, all aircraft), 194 hours (Total, this make and model), 15 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft)		

Passenger Information

Certificate:		Age:	Male
Airplane Rating(s):		Seat Occupied:	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):		Restraint Used:	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):		Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):		Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:		Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:			

Passenger Information

Certificate:	Age:	Female
Airplane Rating(s):	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Restraint Used:	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot: No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:		

Passenger Information

Certificate:	Age:	Female
Airplane Rating(s):	Seat Occupied:	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Restraint Used:	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot: No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:		

Passenger Information

Certificate:	Age:	Female
Airplane Rating(s):	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Restraint Used:	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot: No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:		

Passenger Information

Certificate:	Age:	Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Seat Occupied:	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Restraint Used:	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot: No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	PIPER AIRCRAFT INC	Registration:	N179ST
Model/Series:	PA46R-350T	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	2008	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	4692003
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	6
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	April 25, 2024 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	4340 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	1502 Hrs as of last inspection	Engine Manufacturer:	LYCOMING
ELT:	C126 installed, activated, did not aid in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	T10-540-AE2A
Registered Owner:	On file	Rated Power:	350 Horsepower
Operator:	On file	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	JAX,32 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	25 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	15:56 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	136°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 2700 ft AGL	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 9000 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	9 knots / None	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	90°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.09 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	23°C / 16°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Cornelia, GA (AJR)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	IFR
Destination:	Folkston, GA (3J6)	Type of Clearance:	IFR
Departure Time:	14:40 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	Davis Field 3J6	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	68 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	01	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	2500 ft / 50 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Full stop;Traffic pattern

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	2 Serious	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	1 Minor, 3 None	Aircraft Fire:	On-ground
Ground Injuries:		Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 Serious, 1 Minor, 3 None	Latitude, Longitude:	30.795928,-82.028097(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Gunther, Todd
Additional Participating Persons:	Rodney Hood; FAA/FSDO; Atlanta, FL Kris Wetherell; Piper Aircraft; Vero Beach, FL
Original Publish Date:	March 19, 2026
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class 4
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=199992

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant events in other modes of transportation—railroad, transit, highway, marine, pipeline, and commercial space. We determine the probable causes of the accidents and events we investigate, and issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future occurrences. In addition, we conduct transportation safety research studies and offer information and other assistance to family members and survivors for each accident or event we investigate. We also serve as the appellate authority for enforcement actions involving aviation and mariner certificates issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and US Coast Guard, and we adjudicate appeals of civil penalty actions taken by the FAA.

The NTSB does not assign fault or blame for an accident or incident; rather, as specified by NTSB regulation, “accident/incident investigations are fact-finding proceedings with no formal issues and no adverse parties ... and are not conducted for the purpose of determining the rights or liabilities of any person” (Title 49 *Code of Federal Regulations* section 831.4). Assignment of fault or legal liability is not relevant to the NTSB’s statutory mission to improve transportation safety by investigating accidents and incidents and issuing safety recommendations. In addition, statutory language prohibits the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report (Title 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b)). A factual report that may be admissible under 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b) is available [here](#).