



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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| Location: | MERRILL PASS, AK | Accident Number: | ANC85FA184 |
| Date & Time: | 09/26/1985, 1230 AKD | Registration: | N5317G |
| Aircraft: | de Havilland DHC-2 | Aircraft Damage: | Destroyed |
| Defining Event: | | Injuries: | 3 Fatal |
| Flight Conducted Under: | Part 135: Air Taxi & Commuter - Non-scheduled | | |

Analysis

THE ACFT COLLIDED WITH TERRAIN IN A MOUNTAIN PASS AT AN ELEVATION OF 3600 FT MSL. THE PLT OBTAINED A WX BRIEFING AT 1329 GMT ON 9/26/86 AT WHICH TIME MERRILL PASS WAS FORECAST TO BE CLOSED BY 1100 ADT DUE TO DETERIORATING WX. THE LAST RADIO COMMUNICATION WITH THE ACFT WAS AT 1803 GMT WHEN CONTACT WAS MADE WITH MCGRATH FSS. AT THIS TIME THE PLT MADE A PLT REPORT STATING THE WX AT MERRILL PASS WAS MARGINAL; 2 MILES VIS WITH SNOW AND OCCASIONAL MODERATE TURBULENCE. THE WRECKAGE WAS LOCATED ON 6/29/85 AND INDICATED THE ACFT CONTACTED THE TERRAIN IN A RELATIVELY LEVEL ATTITUDE WITH CONSIDERABLE AIRSPEED.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT ENCOUNTER WITH WEATHER
Phase of Operation: CRUISE

Findings

1. (C) IN-FLIGHT PLANNING/DECISION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. (F) IMPROPER USE OF PROCEDURE - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (C) FLIGHT INTO KNOWN ADVERSE WEATHER - CONTINUED - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - TURBULENCE
5. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - SNOW
6. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - OBSCURATION

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

Findings

7. (C) TERRAIN CONDITION - MOUNTAINOUS/HILLY
8. (C) ALTITUDE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

Pilot Information

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| Certificate: | Commercial | Age: | 27, Male |
| Airplane Rating(s): | Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land; Single-engine Sea | Seat Occupied: | Left |
| Other Aircraft Rating(s): | Glider | Restraint Used: | Seatbelt |
| Instrument Rating(s): | Airplane | Second Pilot Present: | No |
| Instructor Rating(s): | None | Toxicology Performed: | Yes |
| Medical Certification: | Class 1 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim. | Last FAA Medical Exam: | 07/26/1985 |
| Occupational Pilot: | | Last Flight Review or Equivalent: | |
| Flight Time: | 4900 hours (Total, all aircraft), 1200 hours (Total, this make and model), 4650 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 50 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 20 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 3 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft) | | |

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

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|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Aircraft Make: | de Havilland | Registration: | N5317G |
| Model/Series: | DHC-2 DHC-2 | Aircraft Category: | Airplane |
| Year of Manufacture: | | Amateur Built: | No |
| Airworthiness Certificate: | Normal | Serial Number: | 617 |
| Landing Gear Type: | Float | Seats: | 4 |
| Date/Type of Last Inspection: | 05/06/1985, 100 Hour | Certified Max Gross Wt.: | 5090 lbs |
| Time Since Last Inspection: | 95 Hours | Engines: | 1 Reciprocating |
| Airframe Total Time: | 7640 Hours | Engine Manufacturer: | P&W |
| ELT: | Installed, not activated | Engine Model/Series: | R-985-14B |
| Registered Owner: | WILLOW AIR SERVICE | Rated Power: | 450 hp |
| Operator: | WILLOW AIR SERVICE | Operating Certificate(s) Held: | On-demand Air Taxi (135) |
| Operator Does Business As: | WILLOW AIR SERVICE | Operator Designator Code: | |

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

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|----------------------------------|------------------------|---|------------------|
| Conditions at Accident Site: | Visual Conditions | Condition of Light: | Day |
| Observation Facility, Elevation: | , 0 ft msl | Distance from Accident Site: | 0 Nautical Miles |
| Observation Time: | 1400 | Direction from Accident Site: | 0° |
| Lowest Cloud Condition: | Unknown / 4500 ft agl | Visibility | 30 Miles |
| Lowest Ceiling: | Overcast / 4500 ft agl | Visibility (RVR): | 0 ft |
| Wind Speed/Gusts: | / | Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Wind Direction: | | Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Altimeter Setting: | | Temperature/Dew Point: | 3° C |
| Precipitation and Obscuration: | | | |
| Departure Point: | HIDDEN RIVER, AK | Type of Flight Plan Filed: | VFR |
| Destination: | WILLOW, AK (Z22) | Type of Clearance: | None |
| Departure Time: | 1130 ADT | Type of Airspace: | Class G |

Wreckage and Impact Information

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|---------------------|---------|----------------------|-----------|
| Crew Injuries: | 1 Fatal | Aircraft Damage: | Destroyed |
| Passenger Injuries: | 2 Fatal | Aircraft Fire: | On-Ground |
| Ground Injuries: | N/A | Aircraft Explosion: | None |
| Total Injuries: | 3 Fatal | Latitude, Longitude: | |

Administrative Information

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|-----------------------------------|--|--------------|--|
| Investigator In Charge (IIC): | JAMES MICHELANGELO | Report Date: | |
| Additional Participating Persons: | PAUL RAKER; ANCHORAGE, AK | | |
| Publish Date: | | | |
| Investigation Docket: | NTSB accident and incident dockets serve as permanent archival information for the NTSB's investigations. Dockets released prior to June 1, 2009 are publicly available from the NTSB's Record Management Division at pubinquiry@ntsb.gov , or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/ . | | |

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), established in 1967, is an independent federal agency mandated by Congress through the Independent Safety Board Act of 1974 to investigate transportation accidents, determine the probable causes of the accidents, issue safety recommendations, study transportation safety issues, and evaluate the safety effectiveness of government agencies involved in transportation. The NTSB makes public its actions and decisions through accident reports, safety studies, special investigation reports, safety recommendations, and statistical reviews.

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](#).