



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	VERNAL, UT	Accident Number:	DEN85FA227
Date & Time:	08/21/1985, 0651 MDT	Registration:	N7497L
Aircraft:	PIPER PA-31B-310	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 135: Air Taxi & Commuter - Non-scheduled		

Analysis

THE PLT CANCELLED HIS IFR PLAN AND BEGAN DESCENT FROM 13000 FT IN PREPARATION FOR LANDING AT VERNAL, UT. THE ACFT IMPACTED GROUND IN WINGS LEVEL ATTITUDE UNDER POWER. PLT WAS SERIOUSLY BURNED BY POST-CRASH GROUND FIRE. INVESTIGATION REVEALED NO EVIDENCE OF FLIGHT CONTROL FAILURE PRIOR TO IMPACT. IT WAS LEARNED PLT HAD FLOWN SMALL ACFT FROM SALT LAKE CITY TO PRICE, UT, AND TO PIERRE, SD, THE DAY BEFORE THE ACCIDENT. PLT RETURNED TO SALT LAKE CITY AT 0200 ON DAY OF ACCIDENT. ACCIDENT FLT DEPARTED SALT LAKE CITY AT 0600. FAA PHYSICIAN OPINED THAT PLT WAS ASLEEP AT IMPACT. ACFT WAS FLYING INTO RISING SUN.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - NORMAL

Findings

1. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - GROUND
2. (F) JUDGMENT - POOR - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (C) FATIGUE(CHRONIC) - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - OPEN FIELD
5. (C) FATIGUE(LACK OF SLEEP) - PILOT IN COMMAND
6. (F) LIGHT CONDITION - DAWN

Factual Information

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	36, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	Seatbelt, Shoulder harness
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane Multi-engine; Airplane Single-engine; Instrument Airplane	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	11/03/1984
Occupational Pilot:		Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	1556 hours (Total, all aircraft), 207 hours (Total, this make and model), 835 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 350 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 153 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	PIPER	Registration:	N7497L
Model/Series:	PA-31B-310 PA-31B-310	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	317300928
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	08/14/1985, Continuous Airworthiness	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	6500 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	11 Hours	Engines:	2 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	7946 Hours	Engine Manufacturer:	LYCOMING
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	TIO-540 SER
Registered Owner:	CALIFORNIA AIR CHARTER, INC	Rated Power:	310 hp
Operator:	CALIFORNIA AIR CHARTER, INC	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	On-demand Air Taxi (135)

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	VEL, 5274 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	8 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	0645 MDT	Direction from Accident Site:	315°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 8000 ft agl	Visibility	40 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None / 0 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	4 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	300°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	16° C / 8° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	SALT LAKE CITY, UT (SLC)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	IFR
Destination:	VERNAL, UT (VEL)	Type of Clearance:	IFR
Departure Time:	0605 MDT	Type of Airspace:	Airport Advisory Area; Class E

Airport Information

Airport:	VERNAL (VEL)	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	5281 ft	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	34	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	6605 ft / 150 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Valley/Terrain Following; Straight-in

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Serious	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	On-Ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	On-Ground
Total Injuries:	1 Serious	Latitude, Longitude:	

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	ARNOLD W SCOTT	Report Date:	
Additional Participating Persons:	GARY GOMES; SALT LAKE CITY, UT THOVILLE SMITH; SALT LAKE CITY, UT		
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 pubinq@ntsb.gov , or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/ .		

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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](#).