



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	PACIFIC OCEAN, WA	Accident Number:	SEA87LA041
Date & Time:	12/23/1986, 1800 PST	Registration:	N96361
Aircraft:	DOUGLAS C-54/DC-4	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	2 None

Flight Conducted Under: Part 91: General Aviation - Instructional

Analysis

THE PLT REPTD THAT HE DITCHED HIS DC-4 IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN ON THE EVENING OF DECEMBER 23 AFTER EXPERIENCING AN UNCONTROLLABLE NO. 3 ENG FIRE AT THE CONCLUSION OF A TNG FLT. THE DITCHING OCCURRED IN DARK NIGHT CONDITIONS WITH MINIMAL 10 FOOT SWELLS HAVING A PERIOD OF APPROXIMATELY 10 SECONDS AND THE ACRFT WAS REPTD TO HAVE REMAINED AFLOAT APPROXIMATELY 10 MINUTES AFTER THE DITCHING. ALTHOUGH THE FLT PENETRATED THE PACIFIC COASTAL ADIZ ON AT LEAST 2 OCCASIONS NO RADAR EVIDENCE CORROBORATED THE PENETRATIONS NOR WAS THERE ANY RECEIPT OF THE PLTS MAYDAY ON 121.5 MHZ. NO WRECKAGE HAS BEEN OBSERVED ALONG THE WASHINGTON SHORELINE SINCE THE EVENT. WX CONDTNS AT 1750 HRS PST WITHIN 20 MILES OF THE DITCHING WERE REPTD AS MEASURED 900 FOOT OVCST WITH 1.5 MILES VIS IN LIGHT RAIN AND FOG. SFC WINDS PREVAILED FROM THE SOUTHEAST YET THE TWO PLTS REPTDLY DRIFTED NORTHEAST COVERING A DISTANCE OF AT LEAST 14 NAUTICAL MILES VIA RAFT IN 16 HOURS. THE BOARD'S FINDINGS SURROUNDING THIS EVENT REMAIN UNDETERMINED.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

Findings

Occurrence #1: FIRE

Phase of Operation: CRUISE - NORMAL

Findings

1. (C) ENGINE ASSEMBLY - UNDETERMINED
2. (C) REASON FOR OCCURRENCE UNDETERMINED

Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING

Phase of Operation: DESCENT - EMERGENCY

Occurrence #3: DITCHING

Phase of Operation: LANDING - FLARE/TOUCHDOWN

Factual Information

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Airline Transport	Age:	37, 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):	None	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):		Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 1 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	05/30/1986
Occupational Pilot:	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:		
Flight Time:	4500 hours (Total, all aircraft), 400 hours (Total, this make and model), 4000 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 25 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 4 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	DOUGLAS	Registration:	N96361
Model/Series:	C-54/DC-4 C-54/DC-4	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Transport	Serial Number:	90412
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	08/01/1986, Unknown	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	73000 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	60 Hours	Engines:	4 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	27804 Hours	Engine Manufacturer:	P&W
ELT:	Installed	Engine Model/Series:	R-2000
Registered Owner:	SERVICES ORGANIZED, INC.	Rated Power:	1450 hp
Operator:	WEST COAST AIR CARGO	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Unknown	Condition of Light:	Night/Dark
Observation Facility, Elevation:	UIL, 195 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	18 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	1750 PST	Direction from Accident Site:	13°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear / 0 ft agl	Visibility	2 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast / 900 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	140°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	9° C / 8° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	ARLINGTON, WA (S88)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	Company VFR
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	0000	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	2 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	In-Flight
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 None	Latitude, Longitude:	

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	S. MCCREARY	Report Date:	
Additional Participating Persons:	E. DUCHNOWSKI; SEATTLE, WA		
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](#).