



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	GM	Accident Number:	ERA12LA290
Date & Time:	04/19/2012, 1208 CDT	Registration:	N48DL
Aircraft:	CESSNA 421C	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Unknown or undetermined	Injuries:	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

Analysis

According to a statement provided by the Jacksonville Center air traffic control (ATC) facility, the pilot contacted ATC while at flight level 270. About 25 minutes later, the airplane began to deviate from the ATC-assigned altitude and route. The controller's attempts to contact the pilot were unsuccessful. The North American Aerospace Defense Command launched military fighter aircraft to intercept the airplane. The military pilots reported that the airplane was circling in a left turn at a high altitude and low airspeed and that its windows were partially frosted over. They also reported that the pilot was slumped over in the cockpit and not moving. They fired flares, and the pilot continued to be unresponsive. The airplane circled for about 3 hours before it descended into the Gulf of Mexico and sank. The pilot and airplane were not recovered. Review of the pilot's Federal Aviation Administration medical records did not reveal any recent medical conditions that would have deemed him unfit to fly.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: Pilot incapacitation, which resulted in the pilot's inability to maintain airplane control and the airplane's subsequent ocean impact.

Findings

Personnel issues	Impairment/incapacitation - Pilot (Cause)
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Factual Information

On April 19, 2012, at 1208 eastern daylight time, a Cessna 421C, N23PH, registered to and operated by a private pilot, collided with the water in the Gulf of Mexico. The personal flight was operated under the provisions of Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91 and an instrument flight rules flight plan was filed. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed. The private pilot was fatally injured and the airplane received substantial damage. The flight departed Slidell Airport (ASD), Slidell, Louisiana, at 0643 central daylight time.

According to Jacksonville Center air traffic control (ATC), the pilot contacted the ATC at approximately 0715 central daylight time at flight level 270. Approximately 20 minutes later, the airplane began to deviate from the ATC assigned altitude and route. Attempts by the ATC controller to contact the pilot were unsuccessful. The North American Aerospace Defense Command launched military fighter aircraft to intercept the airplane. The military pilots reported that the airplane was circling in a left hand turn at a high altitude, at low airspeed, and its windows partially frosted over. In addition, they reported that the pilot was slumped over in the cockpit and not moving. They fired flares and the pilot remained unresponsive. The airplane circled for approximately three hours before it descended into the Gulf of Mexico. The airplane immediately filled with water and sank.

The pilot, age 65, held a private pilot certificate with ratings for airplane single-engine land, multiengine land, and instrument airplane. His most recent Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) third-class medical certificate was issued on December 20, 2010. At that time, he reported a total flight experience of 2,350 hours. The pilot's logbook was not recovered for examination.

The seven-seat, low-wing, retractable-gear airplane, serial number 421C0511, was manufactured in 1978, and was purchased by the pilot on May 15, 1996. It was powered by two Continental GTSIO-520-L 375-horsepower engines each equipped with a three-bladed McCauley propeller assembly. Copies of maintenance records entries were obtained from the maintenance facility that conducted the last annual inspection and flight test.

A review of the maintenance records revealed the airplane's most recent annual inspection was performed on June 22, 2011, at a total airframe time of 4,659.2 hours.

A review of the aircraft delivery documents revealed that the service ceiling was 30,200 feet. The aircraft was delivered with the optional cabin altitude control knob and the standard 11 cubic foot oxygen bottle, as opposed to a larger 114.9 cubic foot oxygen bottle. There was an annunciator light that illuminated when the cabin altitude exceeded 10,000 feet. The aircraft pressurization altitude was checked to an altitude of 13,000 feet at the time of the last annual inspection. It was also noted that there were no oxygen masks onboard the aircraft at the time of inspection.

The reported weather at Mobile Regional Airport, Alabama, (MOB), which was located approximately 190 nautical miles northwest of the accident site, at an elevation 219 feet, at 1156, was: wind 350 degrees at 6 knots, visibility 10 statute miles; scattered clouds at 2,800 feet, temperature 25 degrees Celsius (C), dew point 14 degrees C, and altimeter 29.99 inches of mercury.

The airplane was last reported 190 nautical miles southeast of Mobile, Alabama. The wreckage and pilot were not recovered. A review of the pilot's FAA medical file did not reveal any recent

medical conditions that would have deemed him unfit to fly.

History of Flight

Enroute-cruise	Unknown or undetermined (Defining event)
Uncontrolled descent	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	65, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 3 With Waivers/Limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	12/20/2010
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	(Estimated) 2350 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	CESSNA	Registration:	N48DL
Model/Series:	421C	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	421C0511
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	8
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	06/22/2011, Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	7450 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	2 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	4659 Hours as of last inspection	Engine Manufacturer:	Continental
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	GTSIO-520-L
Registered Owner:	LEE H AVIATION INC	Rated Power:	375 hp
Operator:	LEE H AVIATION INC	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	ASD, 29 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	190 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	0653 CDT	Direction from Accident Site:	270°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	Light and Variable /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	Variable	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.01 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	12° C / 11° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Slidell, LA (ASD)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	IFR
Destination:	Sarasota, FL (SRQ)	Type of Clearance:	IFR
Departure Time:	0643 CDT	Type of Airspace:	

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	27.716667, -85.216667 (est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Eric Alleyne	Report Date:	10/29/2013
Additional Participating Persons:	William Stokes; FAA Tampa FSDO; Tampa, FL		
Publish Date:	10/29/2013		
Investigation Docket:	http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/search/dockList.cfm?mKey=83434		

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](#).