



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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<b>Location:</b>	TREMONTON, UT	<b>Accident Number:</b>	SEA95FA048
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	02/09/1995, 1821 MST	<b>Registration:</b>	N57NW
<b>Aircraft:</b>	PIPER PA-601P	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Destroyed
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	2 Fatal
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

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## Analysis

THE INSTRUMENT-RATED PRIVATE PILOT INTENDED TO LAND AT AN UNCONTROLLED AIRPORT AT NIGHT. THE AIRPORT HAD NO INSTRUMENT APPROACHES. THE AIRPLANE WAS FLYING ON AN INSTRUMENT FLIGHT RULES (IFR) FLIGHT PLAN ABOVE AN OVERCAST LAYER OF CLOUDS. THE PILOT INFORMED AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL (ATC) THAT HE WAS GOING TO TRY TO FIND A 'HOLE' IN THE OVERCAST AND ATTEMPT A VISUAL APPROACH INTO THE UNCONTROLLED AIRPORT. THE PILOT THEN STATED THAT HE COULD NOT FIND A HOLE; HE REQUESTED AND RECEIVED AN IFR CLEARANCE TO A LARGER CONTROLLED AIRPORT. ON HIS WAY TO THE CONTROLLED AIRPORT, HE STATED THAT HE FOUND A 'HOLE' AND ATTEMPTED A VISUAL APPROACH TO THE UNCONTROLLED AIRPORT. HE RECEIVED A CRUISE CLEARANCE FROM ATC FOR 12,000 FEET MSL, AND THEN DESCENDED AT 2,280 FEET PER MINUTE BEFORE IMPACTING MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN AT AN ELEVATION OF 6,200 FEET MSL. INSTRUMENT METEOROLOGICAL CONDITIONS PREVAILED NEAR THE ACCIDENT SITE. NO DISTRESS CALLS FROM THE AIRPLANE WERE RECORDED. AN EXAMINATION OF THE WRECKAGE DID NOT REVEAL ANY EVIDENCE OF PREIMPACT MECHANICAL MALFUNCTIONS.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: THE PILOT'S ATTEMPT TO CONDUCT VISUAL FLIGHT INTO INSTRUMENT METEOROLOGICAL CONDITIONS, AND HIS FAILURE TO MAINTAIN ALTITUDE/CLEARANCE WITH THE MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN. FACTORS WERE THE CLOUDS, AND THE DARK NIGHT.

## Findings

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Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

### Findings

1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - CLOUDS
2. (F) LIGHT CONDITION - DARK NIGHT
3. (C) VFR FLIGHT INTO IMC - ATTEMPTED - PILOT IN COMMAND
4. (C) ALTITUDE/CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
5. TERRAIN CONDITION - MOUNTAINOUS/HILLY

## Factual Information

### HISTORY OF FLIGHT

On February 9, 1995, at 1821 mountain standard time, N57NW, a Piper Aerostar 601P, operated by the owner/pilot, impacted terrain while descending near Tremonton, Utah, and was destroyed. The instrument-rated private pilot and his passenger were fatally injured. There was a fire. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and an instrument flight rules (IFR) flight plan was filed. The personal flight was conducted under 14 CFR 91. The flight departed from Pueblo, Colorado, at 1548 and was destined to Tremonton.

According to relatives of the occupants, the pilot and his wife were flying on a personal cross country pleasure flight that originated in Lakeland, Florida, two days prior to the accident. The couple were planning on visiting relatives in Winnemucca, Nevada. According to the Tremonton airport manager, the pilot intended on stopping over in Tremonton to view property on the way to Winnemucca. The Tremonton Airport is uncontrolled and has no published instrument approaches.

On the day of the accident, the airplane departed from Hot Springs, Arkansas, and arrived in Pueblo, Colorado. According to witnesses who are employed at a fixed based operation at the Pueblo Memorial Airport, the pilot purchased 115.8 gallons of 100 low lead aviation gasoline and a sectional chart. The witnesses reported that the pilot and his wife ate dinner and were in "good health." No problems were reported by the couple in Pueblo.

According to FAA records, the pilot telephoned the Denver Automated Flight Service Station (AFSS) at 1512 and received a weather briefing and filed an IFR flight plan to Tremonton. The airplane departed from Pueblo at 1546 and was instructed to climb to 20,000 feet above mean sea level (msl) by the Denver Air Route Traffic Control Center (ARTCC).

According to ARTCC transcripts and radar data, the pilot was handed off to the Salt Lake City ARTCC at 1713. At 1759, the pilot was instructed to descend and maintain 12,000 feet, and the pilot advised that he wanted to stay at 15,000 feet to "... see if we can find a hole up there at Tremonton, and if we can't we better go ahead and go back to say Salt Lake City." At 1802, the pilot requested to leave the ARTCC frequency so that he could contact "unicom." Permission was granted by the ARTCC. At 1805, the pilot contacted the ARTCC and stated that it "... looks like there might be a hole up there [over Tremonton]" and that he would let ARTCC know once he flew over Tremonton. The ARTCC responded and issued a pilot's discretion descent to 12,000 feet.

At 1811, the airplane was over the Tremonton Airport at 12,000 feet msl and heading north. The pilot radioed: "...I don't think we're going to make it," and stated: "if we miss this one we'd like to file back to Salt Lake City and go there." The pilot was cleared to cruise at 12,000 feet by the ARTCC.

At 1813, the pilot radioed "...there's nothing clear enough to get down through. We's better go back to Salt Lake City." The ARTCC cleared the flight into the Salt Lake City International Airport and provided the pilot with vectors.

At 1815, as the airplane was circling around to the south and heading back toward Salt Lake City at 12,000 feet msl, the pilot radioed: "...we have a hole here below us. We'd like to take a look and see if we can get into Tremonton." The ARTCC responded and issued a cruise

clearance at 12,000 feet msl. The pilot asked the controller if the clearance allowed him to descend below 12,000 feet msl. The controller responded: "Well, that clearance allows you to do what you want to get into an uncontrolled airport. I cannot clear you any lower than one two thousand." The pilot responded: "OK, thank you very much."

At 1817:45, the airplane was north of the Tremonton Airport, and circling to left. It was heading in a northerly direction away from Tremonton and Salt Lake City over mountainous terrain. The ARTCC controller asked the pilot: "... does it look like you'll be able to get into Tremonton?" The pilot responded: "...we're looking at a hole over here. I think we probably can."

The airplane continued along a northerly heading and began to descend.

At 1818:50, the ARTCC controller advised the pilot: "... I'm not sure how low I'll be able to talk to you. Report your cancellation or a missed approach on this frequency." The pilot responded; this was the pilot's last recorded transmission. No distress calls from the airplane were recorded. The airplane was at 9,900 feet msl and continuing in a left turn along a westerly heading at this time.

From 1819:31 to 1820:21, the airplane continued in the left turn and descended at a rate of 2,880 feet per minute from 9,300 feet msl to 6,900 feet msl. The last recorded radar hit occurred at 1821:02.

The airplane was found the following day in mountainous terrain at an altitude of 6,200 feet msl and 3.6 nautical miles northwest of the Tremonton Airport. The coordinates of its location were the same as the coordinates of the last recorded radar location.

The accident occurred during the hours of darkness at 41 degrees, 45.96 minutes North and 112 degrees, 14.00 minutes West.

#### PERSONNEL INFORMATION

The pilot, age 67, was a certificated private pilot and was instrument rated in both single and multiengine land airplanes. According to FAA records, the pilot was issued a FAA Third Class Medical Certificate on March 28, 1994, with the limitation that he "must have available glasses for near vision." At the time of the medical certificate issuance, the pilot reported that he had 4,215 total hours of flight time. The pilot's logbook was not recovered.

#### AIRCRAFT INFORMATION

The airplane, a 1978 Piper 601P Aerostar, is designed as a six-place, all metal, mid-wing, turbocharged, pressurized, twin engine airplane. An examination of the airplane's engine and airframe logbooks did not reveal any unresolved discrepancies prior to the accident.

#### METEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION

The following sky conditions and cloud layers were recorded by the Brigham City, Utah, Automated Weather Observation Station (AWOS-3) eight minutes after the accident: scattered clouds 3,500 feet above ground level (agl); ceiling - 4,100 feet agl broken, overcast layer 6,000 feet agl. The Brigham City AWOS-S is located 15 nautical miles southeast of the accident site at a ground elevation of 4,226 feet msl.

#### WRECKAGE AND IMPACT INFORMATION

The airplane wreckage was examined at the accident site on February 10, 1995. The

wreckage distribution path was oriented along a magnetic bearing of 085 degrees and was measured to be about 80 feet in length. The wreckage was located at an elevation of 6,200 feet msl on rocky terrain. The terrain was sloping upward at an angle of about 25 degrees from the horizon.

All primary and secondary flight control surfaces were accounted for at the accident site. No evidence was found to indicate a flight control deficiency. The leading edges of both wings of the airplane exhibited evidence of "accordion" crush damage. Both engines were separated from the airplane and found at the impact site.

Both wing fuel tanks and associated fuel lines were compromised. Evidence of a fire was found encompassing the entire accident site. The cabin area and instrument panel were destroyed by fire and impact forces. Verification of wing flap and landing gear positions was not possible due to impact and thermal damage.

Both engines underwent an external examination at the accident site. Both exhibited external evidence of thermal and impact damage. The examination did not reveal evidence of any preimpact mechanical malfunctions.

All six propeller blades (three from each engine) were found separated from their respective hubs and located at the accident site. The blades exhibited evidence of leading edge gouging and "S" bending.

#### MEDICAL AND PATHOLOGICAL INFORMATION

An autopsy was performed on the pilot by Dr. Edward A. Leis, M.D., of the State of Utah Office of the Medical Examiner, Salt Lake City, on February 11, 1995. A toxicological analysis was ordered but not performed on specimens taken from the pilot by the Medical Examiner. Staff members from the Office of the Medical Examiner reported that the specimen had been lost.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The aircraft wreckage was released to Mr. Tracy Barrus, Barrus and Steiger Insurance Adjustors, Bellevue, Washington, on February 13, 1995. Mr. Barrus is representing the registered owner of the airplane.

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	67, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Left
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	Airplane	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	No
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 3 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim.	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	03/01/1995
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>		
<b>Flight Time:</b>	4300 hours (Total, all aircraft), 6 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	PIPER	<b>Registration:</b>	N57NW
<b>Model/Series:</b>	PA-601P PA-601P	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Airplane
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	No
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Normal	<b>Serial Number:</b>	07758063388
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Retractable - Tricycle	<b>Seats:</b>	6
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	01/20/1995, Annual	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	6000 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>		<b>Engines:</b>	2 Reciprocating
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>	2100 Hours	<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	LYCOMING
<b>ELT:</b>	Installed, not activated	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	IO-540-S1A5
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	MISTYSTAR, INC	<b>Rated Power:</b>	290 hp
<b>Operator:</b>	MISTYSTAR, INC	<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Instrument Conditions	Condition of Light:	Night/Dark
Observation Facility, Elevation:	BMC, 4226 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	15 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	1829 MST	Direction from Accident Site:	135°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 3500 ft agl	Visibility	10 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 4100 ft agl	Visibility (RVR):	0 ft
Wind Speed/Gusts:	3 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	50°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	5° C / 2° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	PUEBLO, CO (PUB)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	IFR
Destination:	, UT (U27)	Type of Clearance:	Traffic Advisory
Departure Time:	1546 MST	Type of Airspace:	Class G

## Wreckage and Impact Information

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

## Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	JEFFREY B GUZZETTI	Report Date:	09/24/1995
Additional Participating Persons:	THOMAS J ARNOLD; SALT LAKE CITY, UT CHARLES R LITTLE; CHINO HILLS, CA		
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 <a href="mailto:pubinquiry@ntsb.gov">pubinquiry@ntsb.gov</a> , or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at <a href="http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/">http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/</a> .		

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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](#).