



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	Paulden, Arizona	Accident Number:	WPR14LA005
Date & Time:	October 4, 2013, 13:00 Local	Registration:	N312GC
Aircraft:	Cessna 340A	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Low altitude operation/event	Injuries:	4 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

Witnesses located at a gun club reported observing the airplane make a high-speed, low pass from north to south over the club's buildings and then maneuver around for another low pass from east to west. During the second low pass, the airplane collided with a radio tower that was about 50 ft tall, and the right wing sheared off about 10 ft of the tower's top. The tower's base was triangular shaped, and each of its sides was about 2 ft long. One witness reported that the airplane remained in a straight-and-level attitude until impact with the tower. The airplane then rolled right to an almost inverted position and subsequently impacted trees and terrain about 700 ft southwest of the initial impact point. One witness reported that, about 3 to 4 years before the accident, the pilot, who was a client of the gun club, had "buzzed" over the club and had been told to never do so again. A postaccident examination of the engines and the airframe revealed no evidence of a mechanical malfunction or failure that would have precluded normal operation.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

The pilot's failure to maintain sufficient altitude to clear a radio tower while maneuvering at low altitude and his decision to make a high-speed, low pass over the gun club.

Findings

Aircraft	Altitude - Not attained/maintained
Personnel issues	Incorrect action performance - Pilot
Environmental issues	Tower/antenna (incl guy wires) - Contributed to outcome
Personnel issues	Decision making/judgment - Pilot
Personnel issues	Confidence/reliance on equip - Pilot

Factual Information

History of Flight

Maneuvering-low-alt flying	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)
Maneuvering-low-alt flying	Low altitude operation/event (Defining event)

On October 4, 2013, at 1300 mountain standard time, a Cessna 340A, N312GC, collided with a radio tower while maneuvering near Paulden, Arizona. The airplane was registered to and operated by the pilot under the provisions of 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91 as a personal flight. The private pilot and three passengers were fatally injured. The airplane was substantially damaged. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time and no flight plan was filed. The airplane departed from Bullhead City, Arizona about 1130.

A summation of several witnesses at a gun club reported the airplane made one high speed, low pass from north to south over the club's buildings, and then maneuvered around for another low pass from east to west. During the second low pass over the buildings, the airplane collided with an approximate 50 foot tall radio tower. The base of the tower was triangular shaped with each of the sides about two feet in length. About 10 feet of the tower was sheared off by the airplane's right wing. After the impact the airplane rolled to the right almost inverted and subsequently impacted trees and terrain approximately 700 feet southwest of the initial impact point. One witness reported that the airplane remained in a straight and level attitude until the impact. This witness also stated that about three to four years prior to this accident, the pilot, a client of the gun club, had "buzzed" the club and had been told never to do so again.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	57
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane; Helicopter	Second Pilot Present:	
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 3 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	August 16, 2012
Occupational Pilot:		Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	(Estimated) 4006 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

The 57 year old pilot held a private pilot certificate and was rated in single and multi-engine land, helicopter and instrument airplane. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) records indicate that the pilot held a third class medical certificate dated August 16, 2012. A limitation indicated that the pilot must have glasses available for near vision. At the time of the medical application, the pilot reported a total flight time of 4,006 hours.

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Cessna	Registration:	N312GC
Model/Series:	340A A	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	1975	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	340A0023
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	6
Date/Type of Last Inspection:		Certified Max Gross Wt.:	5990 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	2 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	CONT MOTOR
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	TSIO-520 SER
Registered Owner:		Rated Power:	310 Horsepower
Operator:		Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

The six seat, low wing, retractable landing gear airplane, serial number 340A0023, was manufactured in 1975. It was powered by two Continental Motors TSIO-520 engines.

Maintenance records indicated that the last annual inspection was completed on April 25, 2013. At that time the airframe total time was reported as 7,690.0 hours. The entries for both the left and right engine indicated a tachometer time of 2,491.0 hours and 609.5 hours since major overhaul.

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	PRC,5052 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	14 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	12:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	159°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	8 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	300°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.01 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	9°C / -3°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Bullhead City, AZ (IFP)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Prescott, AZ (PRC)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	11:30 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	3 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	On-ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	4 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	34.865276,-112.522781

The airplane's right wing collided with the approximate 50 foot tall radio tower shearing off the top 10 feet of the tower. The right wing folded up after the impact and the airplane began a roll to the right to the almost inverted position. The airplane subsequently collided with trees and terrain about 700 feet southwest of the initial impact point. A postcrash fire consumed the wreckage.

Communications

At 1128, the pilot contacted Lockheed Martin Flight Service and reported that he was on the ground at Bullhead City and planned to fly to Prescott, Arizona. The pilot inquired about a temporary flight restriction (TFR) at Prescott and wanted to know what time the airport would reopen. The specialist confirmed that the airport would be open at 1130. Runways 12 and 30 were closed to fixed wing traffic due to air show activities. The specialist then inquired if the pilot wanted weather advisories. The pilot replied that he did and the specialist informed the pilot of an AIRMET for moderate turbulence below 14,000 feet all along the route of flight. The conversation ended at 1131.

At 1204, the pilot contacted flight watch reporting that he was 15 miles south of Kingman, Arizona, and wanted to confirm the ending time of the TFR at Prescott. The specialist confirmed that the TFR ended at 1130. Before the conversation ended the pilot provided a pilot report of the in-flight weather conditions. The pilot reported that he was at 11,500 feet and experiencing light chop to smooth air. The winds were from 340 degrees at 12 knots and the outside air temperature was 1 degree C. The conversation ended at 1209.

There were no further communications from the pilot.

Medical and Pathological Information

The office of the medical examiner, Yavapai County, performed an external examination on the pilot. The report indicated the cause of death as "blunt force trauma and thermal injury."

Toxicological samples were taken from the pilot and sent to the FAA Civil Aeromedical Institute, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma for analysis. The analysis revealed Metoprolol detected in urine and muscle; Rosuvastatin detected in urine and Zolpidem detected in urine and muscle.

Tests and Research

The wreckage was recovered to a secured facility in Phoenix, Arizona. A postaccident examination of the engines and the airframe revealed no evidence of a mechanical malfunction or failure that would have precluded normal operation. Detailed reports are in the public docket.

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Eckrote, Debra
Additional Participating Persons:	Kenton Fenning; FAA-FSDO; Scottsdale, AZ Nicole L Charnon; Continental Motors, Inc.; Mobile, AL Steve Miller; Textron Aviation; Wichita, KS
Original Publish Date:	March 10, 2015
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=88174

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