



# Aviation Investigation Final Report

<b>Location:</b>	Carpinteria, California	<b>Accident Number:</b>	WPR17LA124
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	June 10, 2017, 14:30 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N2171D
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Piper PA28	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Defining Event:</b>	VFR encounter with IMC	<b>Injuries:</b>	1 Serious
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

## Analysis

The noninstrument-rated private pilot reported that, while en route, he encountered clouds about 2,200 ft above ground level (agl). He descended the airplane to 2,100 ft agl to try to get out of the clouds, but he still could not see outside. The pilot reported that he decided not to climb nor contact air traffic control; the airplane impacted a tree-covered mountain ridge and came to rest upright with its left wing bent aft. The pilot reported no anomalies with the airframe or engine 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 noninstrument-rated pilot's improper decision to continue visual flight rules flight into instrument meteorological conditions, which resulted in controlled flight into terrain.

## Findings

<b>Personnel issues</b>	Decision making/judgment - Pilot
<b>Aircraft</b>	Altitude - Not attained/maintained
<b>Environmental issues</b>	Below VFR minima - Decision related to condition
<b>Environmental issues</b>	Mountainous/hilly terrain - Effect on operation
<b>Environmental issues</b>	Below VFR minima - Effect on operation

# Factual Information

## History of Flight

Enroute-cruise	VFR encounter with IMC (Defining event)
Maneuvering	Controlled flight into terr/obj (CFIT)

On June 10, 2017, about 1430 Pacific daylight time, a Piper PA28-161 airplane, N2171D, was substantially damaged following impact with terrain while maneuvering in instrument meteorological conditions about 4 nautical miles (nm) northeast of Carpinteria, California. The non-instrument rated private pilot was seriously injured. The airplane was owned and operated by National Air College International Inc., San Diego, California. The personal cross-country flight was being operated in accordance with Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91, and no flight plan had been filed. The pilot departed Montgomery-Gibbs Executive Airport (MFY), San Diego, California, about 1100, and was destined for Santa Ynez Airport (IZA), Santa Ynez, California.

In a report submitted to the National Transportation Safety Board investigator-in-charge, the pilot reported that the coastline was covered in overcast clouds, and over Santa Barbara (SBA), California, about 19 nm west-northwest of the accident site, the clouds were at 2,200 ft above ground level (agl). The pilot stated that due to the clouds, he began to descend to get the ground in sight, but at 2,100 ft agl he was still in a thick cloud and could not see outside. The pilot reported that after he failed to make a decision to climb or contact air traffic control for assistance, he crashed into a mountain ridge. The airplane came to rest upright on a westerly heading with its left wing bent back at mid-span.

The pilot was able to contact emergency responders by cell phone. Search and rescue personnel located the downed airplane and rescued the pilot by helicopter about 1700. A strong presence of fuel was detected at the accident site. The pilot reported no mechanical anomalies with the airplane or engine prior to or during the flight that would have precluded normal operations.

The weather reporting facility at SBA, located about 19 nm west of the accident site, revealed a ceiling of 2,800 ft agl about 35 minutes prior to the accident, and a ceiling of 2,600 ft agl about 20 minutes following the accident. Winds were reported out of the south and southwest from 6 to 7 knots.

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Private	<b>Age:</b>	31,Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Single-engine land	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Left
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	3-point
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	No
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 1 With waivers/limitations	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	May 11, 2017
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	No	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	May 22, 2017
<b>Flight Time:</b>	280 hours (Total, all aircraft), 50 hours (Total, this make and model), 190 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 102 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 102 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 6 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Piper	<b>Registration:</b>	N2171D
<b>Model/Series:</b>	PA28 161	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Airplane
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>	1978	<b>Amateur Built:</b>	
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Normal	<b>Serial Number:</b>	28-7916146
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Tricycle	<b>Seats:</b>	4
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	June 6, 2017 Annual	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	2440 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>	35 Hrs	<b>Engines:</b>	1 Reciprocating
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>	15034 Hrs as of last inspection	<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	Lycoming
<b>ELT:</b>	C91A installed, activated, aided in locating accident	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	O-320-D3G
<b>Registered Owner:</b>		<b>Rated Power:</b>	160 Horsepower
<b>Operator:</b>	On file	<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Instrument (IMC)	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Day
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>	SBA, 13 ft msl	<b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>	19 Nautical Miles
<b>Observation Time:</b>	14:00 Local	<b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>	270°
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>	Thin Overcast / 2100 ft AGL	<b>Visibility</b>	10 miles
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	Broken / 2200 ft AGL	<b>Visibility (RVR):</b>	
<b>Wind Speed/Gusts:</b>	7 knots /	<b>Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:</b>	/ None
<b>Wind Direction:</b>	170°	<b>Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Altimeter Setting:</b>	29.85 inches Hg	<b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>	21°C / 13°C
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>	Moderate - Low drifting - Fog		
<b>Departure Point:</b>	San Diego, CA (MYF )	<b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>	VFR
<b>Destination:</b>	Sant Ynez, CA (IZA )	<b>Type of Clearance:</b>	VFR flight following
<b>Departure Time:</b>	11:00 Local	<b>Type of Airspace:</b>	Class E

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	1 Serious	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>		<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	None
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Total Injuries:</b>	1 Serious	<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	34.447223,-119.449165

## Administrative Information

<b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>	Little, Thomas
<b>Additional Participating Persons:</b>	Jeffrey J Culligan; Federal Aviation Administration; Van Nuys, CA
<b>Original Publish Date:</b>	November 6, 2018
<b>Note:</b>	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.
<b>Investigation Docket:</b>	<a href="https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=95341">https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=95341</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](#).