



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Fort Walton Beach, Florida	Accident Number:	CEN18FA358
Date & Time:	August 30, 2018, 10:30 Local	Registration:	N1876L
Aircraft:	Beech B60	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:	Controlled flight into terr/obj (CFIT)	Injuries:	4 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The commercial pilot and three passengers departed on a cross-country flight in a twin-engine airplane. As the flight neared the destination airport, the pilot canceled his instrument flight rules (IFR) clearance. The approach controller transferred the flight to the tower controller, and the pilot reported to the tower controller that the airplane was about 2 miles from the airport. However, the approach controller contacted the tower controller to report that the airplane was 200 ft over a nearby joint military airport at the time. GPS data revealed that, when pilot reported that the airplane was 2 miles from the destination airport, the airplane's actual location was about 10 miles from the destination airport and 2 miles from the joint military airport. The airplane impacted a remote wooded area about 8 miles northwest of the destination airport.

At the time of the accident, thunderstorm cells were in the area. A review of the weather information revealed that the pilot's view of the airport was likely obscured because the airplane was in an area of light precipitation, restricting the pilot's visibility.

A review of airport information noted that the IFR approach course for the destination airport passes over the joint military airport. The Federal Aviation Administration chart supplement for the destination airport noted the airport's proximity to the other airport. However, it is likely that the pilot mistook the other airport for the destination airport due to reduced visibility because of weather. The accident circumstances were consistent with controlled flight into terrain.

The ethanol detected in the pilot's blood specimens but not in his urine specimens was consistent with postmortem bacteria production. The carbon monoxide and cyanide detected in the pilot's blood specimens were consistent with inhalation after the postimpact fire.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:
The pilot's controlled flight into terrain after misidentifying the destination airport during a period of restricted visibility due to weather.

Findings

Personnel issues	Identification/recognition - Pilot
Aircraft	Altitude - Not attained/maintained
Environmental issues	Rain - Effect on personnel
Environmental issues	Low visibility - Effect on personnel

Factual Information

History of Flight

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

On August 30, 2018, about 1030 central daylight time, a Beechcraft B60 airplane, N1876L, impacted terrain near Fort Walton Beach, Florida, during a planned approach to Destin Executive Airport (DTS), Destin, Florida. The commercial pilot and three passengers were fatally injured, and the airplane was destroyed. The airplane was registered to and operated by Henry Leasing Company LLC as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 personal flight. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the accident, and an instrument flight rules (IFR) flight plan had been filed for the cross-country flight, which departed Toledo Executive Airport (TOL), Millbury, Ohio, about 0747.

A review of air traffic control communications revealed that the pilot was in contact with the Eglin Air Force Base (AFB) approach controller, who contacted the DTS tower controller at 1028 to report that the an IFR flight was inbound at 12 miles to the northwest. As the airplane approached the destination airport, the pilot canceled his IFR clearance and proceeded under visual flight rules (VFR). The approach controller contacted the DTS tower controller at 1031 to advise that the airplane was operating under VFR. Also at 1031, the DTS tower controller contacted the pilot and asked for the airplane's position. The pilot responded, "we're about 2 out for [runway] 1-4," which was the last communication received from the pilot.

GPS data recovered from a portable onboard unit showed the airplane's track as it approached DTS. The last data point, at 1032, indicated that the airplane was at an altitude of 489 ft and a ground speed of 118 knots. At 1033, the approach controller asked the tower controller if the airplane had Eglin AFB and DTS in sight, and the tower controller responded that the pilot reported that the airplane was 2 miles out. The approach controller then stated that the airplane was 200 ft over Eglin AFB. The tower controller tried to contact the pilot, but the pilot did not respond to these transmissions. The airplane wreckage was located in a remote wooded area about 8 miles northwest of DTS and 2.5 miles northwest of Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS), Eglin AFB, Florida.



Figure 1: GPS Track

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	63, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	Unknown
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 2 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	July 14, 2017
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	(Estimated) 2427 hours (Total, all aircraft), 100 hours (Total, this make and model)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Beech	Registration:	N1876L
Model/Series:	B60	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	1976	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	P-386
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	June 15, 2018 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	4167.7 Hrs as of last inspection	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	TIO-541
Registered Owner:		Rated Power:	
Operator:		Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Unknown	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KVPS	Distance from Accident Site:	
Observation Time:	15:23 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 1600 ft AGL	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 3000 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	5 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	60°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.11 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	28°C / 23°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	N/A - Thunderstorm - Rain		
Departure Point:	Toledo, OH (KTOL)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	IFR
Destination:	Destin, FL (KDOTS)	Type of Clearance:	VFR;IFR
Departure Time:		Type of Airspace:	

The convective outlook for the day of the accident indicated a slight risk of general airmass-type thunderstorms over the route of flight and the accident site.

The weather observations for VPS starting at 0855 and through 1023 indicated that lightning was observed in the distance south of the airport when a thunderstorm was reported in the terminal area. As

the thunderstorm passed over VPS between 1023 and 1039, marginal VFR conditions were reported, but the remarks section indicated that visibility was estimated at 2 miles in likely heavy rain showers to the north and northeast, with defined thunderstorm cells noted 2 miles east and 4 miles west of the station moving northward. Restricted visibility conditions were in the general direction of the accident site. No strong gusting wind was noted during the period.

The weather observations for DTS also noted lightning in the distance south and southwest from 0731 to the time of the accident. At the time of the accident, a short period of marginal VFR conditions were reported due to ceilings broken at 1,500 ft above ground level. Light precipitation was reported after the time of the accident, and no strong outflow wind or gusts were reported.

Airport Information

Airport:	Destin Executive Airport KDTs	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	21 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Unknown
Runway Used:	14	IFR Approach:	Global positioning system;RNAV
Runway Length/Width:	5001 ft / 100 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Straight-in

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) chart supplement for DTS noted, in the remarks section, the following: exercise extreme vigilance due to close proximity to Eglin AFB located 6 nautical miles northwest of the airport. Additionally, the instrument approach course for DTS runway 14 (the intended runway for landing) crossed VPS.

VPS is a joint-use facility with Eglin AFB. The FAA chart supplement for VPS noted, in the remarks section, a statement about DTS location.

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	3 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	On-ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	4 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	30.494722,-86.574447

The airplane impacted trees and the wreckage path was on about a 067° heading and 380 ft long. The airplane's nose cone was located near the initial impact point, and the left-wing-tip fuel tank and right outboard wing were near the beginning of the wreckage path. The right horizontal stabilizer and elevator were fragmented and located along the wreckage path. A tree limb, which was about 4 inches in diameter and had been cut as a result of the airplane's impact, was also in the wreckage path. The airplane came to rest inverted. A postcrash fire consumed most of the cabin and inboard section of the wings.

Control continuity was established from the elevator bellcranks to the swaged ends in the cabin and from

the rudder control surface to the torque tubes. The position of the landing gear and flaps could not be determined due to impact damage.

Both engines had extensive impact and fire damage with the right engine located to the right of the main wreckage and the left engine located in front of the main wreckage. All four magnetos were destroyed by fire and could not be tested. The top set of spark plugs were removed, and the cylinders were examined using a borescope. The right engine fuel servo screen was clear of debris. The right engine turbocharger compressor would not rotate, but the blades exhibited damage consistent with rotation during operation. The left engines turbocharger compressor was unable to be examined because of extensive fire damage.

Both three-bladed propellers had separated and were found next to their respective engines. The blades exhibited twisting and impact damage.

Although the examination of the airframe and engines was limited due to fire and impact damage, the parts examined revealed no preimpact abnormalities that would have precluded normal operation.

A portable Garmin GPSMAP 496 unit was located in the wreckage. The unit, which had sustained impact damage, was sent to the NTSB's Vehicle Recorder Laboratory for download of its nonvolatile memory. Track log data were recovered for the accident flight.

Medical and Pathological Information

The Defense Health Agency, Armed Forces Medical Examiner System, Dover AFB, Delaware, conducted an autopsy on the pilot. His cause of death was multiple injuries.

Toxicology testing by the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System identified carbon monoxide, cyanide, and ethanol in the pilot's blood specimens and losartan in the pilot's blood and urine specimens. Losartan is a prescription medication used to treat high blood pressure; the pilot had previously reported this drug to the FAA.

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Hatch, Craig
Additional Participating Persons:	Dale White; FAA FSDO; Vestavia Hills, AL Todd Pryor; FAA FSDO; Vestavia Hills, AL Mike Childers; Lycoming Engines; Williamsport, PA Peter Basile; Textron Aviation; Wichita, KS
Original Publish Date:	April 20, 2020
Note:	The NTSB traveled to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=98196

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](#).