



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Westhope, North Dakota	Accident Number:	CEN23LA255
Date & Time:	June 22, 2023, 12:15 Local	Registration:	N7419Z
Aircraft:	Piper PA-25-235	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Loss of control in flight	Injuries:	1 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Flight test		

Analysis

The pilot, who did not hold an airframe and powerplant (A&P) certificate, stated that after he installed the overhauled engine onto the agricultural airplane, he planned on flying the airplane during the accident flight to break the engine in prior to having it inspected and signed off by an A&P mechanic with inspection authorization. There was no record of a current annual inspection of the airplane prior to the flight. The pilot loaded the airplane with 20 gallons of water to test the spray system since he planned on flying for about an hour. During climb after takeoff, the pilot lost control, and the airplane descended and impacted terrain resulting in substantial damage to both wings and fuselage. The pilot stated there was no mechanical malfunction/failure of the airplane 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 aircraft control that resulted in an impact with terrain after takeoff.

Findings

Personnel issues	Aircraft control - Pilot
Aircraft	(general) - Incorrect service/maintenance
Aircraft	Scheduled maint checks - Not serviced/maintained

Factual Information

History of Flight

Prior to flight	Aircraft maintenance event
Takeoff	Loss of control in flight (Defining event)
Uncontrolled descent	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	48,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Center
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	Unknown
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Without waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	November 1, 2022
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	June 30, 2021
Flight Time:	(Estimated) 400 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N7419Z
Model/Series:	PA-25-235	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	1965	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Restricted (Special)	Serial Number:	25-3390
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	1
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	May 21, 2020 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2900 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	7249 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	O-540-B2B5
Registered Owner:	Pilot	Rated Power:	
Operator:	Pilot	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	MIB,1666 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	32 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	11:55 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	180°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast / 2300 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	2 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	100°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.11 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	18°C / 12°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Westhope, ND	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Westhope, ND	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:		Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	Westhope Municipal Airport D64	Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:	1492 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	
Runway Used:	32	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	3000 ft / 60 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	None

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Serious	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Serious	Latitude, Longitude:	48.909464,-101.02071(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Gallo, Mitchell
Additional Participating Persons:	Michael Linden; Federal Aviation Administration, Fargo FSDO; Fargo, NE
Original Publish Date:	October 5, 2023
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class 4
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=192426

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant events in other modes of transportation—railroad, transit, highway, marine, pipeline, and commercial space. We determine the probable causes of the accidents and events we investigate, and issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future occurrences. In addition, we conduct transportation safety research studies and offer information and other assistance to family members and survivors for each accident or event we investigate. We also serve as the appellate authority for enforcement actions involving aviation and mariner certificates issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and US Coast Guard, and we adjudicate appeals of civil penalty actions taken by the FAA.

The NTSB does not assign fault or blame for an accident or incident; rather, as specified by NTSB regulation, “accident/incident investigations are fact-finding proceedings with no formal issues and no adverse parties ... and are not conducted for the purpose of determining the rights or liabilities of any person” (Title 49 *Code of Federal Regulations* section 831.4). Assignment of fault or legal liability is not relevant to the NTSB’s statutory mission to improve transportation safety by investigating accidents and incidents and issuing safety recommendations. In addition, statutory language prohibits the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report (Title 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b)). A factual report that may be admissible under 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b) is available [here](#).