



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Abbeville, South Carolina	Accident Number:	ERA23LA160
Date & Time:	March 20, 2023, 15:30 Local	Registration:	N79VE
Aircraft:	Maule M-7-235C	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Loss of control on ground	Injuries:	1 Serious, 1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Instructional		

Analysis

The pilot/owner of the newly-acquired tailwheel airplane reported that he hired a flight instructor to help him gain proficiency landing on short, narrow runways. He admitted that he was not proficient in this area, although he was current in tailwheel airplanes. He set up for landing on runway 8 with a left crosswind prevailing. He stated that he “arrived too high for the runway.” He stated that the flight instructor did not want him to go around, so the instructor took the controls to demonstrate a slip to lose altitude. The pilot/owner stated that the flight instructor entered a ground loop to the left after touchdown, damaging the airplane.

The flight instructor provided a contrary account of the accident sequence. He reported that the pilot/owner had a bad habit of flying with his feet high on the rudder pedals, and he provided guidance prior to the flight to avoid this. Following airwork and takeoff/landing practice at another airport, the pilot attempted a landing at his home airport, which was 2,250 ft long and 40 ft wide. He reported that the pilot/owner, who was at the controls the entire time, overcontrolled the left rudder at 1 ft above the ground during landing, and this occurred so quickly that he was unable to intervene. The right wing contacted the runway, the right main landing gear separated, and the airplane skidded to a stop. A shutdown and egress were then performed.

The pilot/owner reported that there was substantial damage to both wings and the fuselage. He also reported that there were no preaccident mechanical malfunctions or failures with the airplane that would have precluded normal operation, and the flight instructor did not report any mechanical anomalies in his written statement.

A Federal Aviation Administration inspector reported that the flight instructor had no experience in the aircraft make and model prior to the accident flight.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

A loss of directional control during landing, which resulted in a ground loop and substantial damage to the airplane. The pilot flying could not be determined since both pilots claimed that the other was at the controls during the landing. The flight instructor demonstrated poor judgement in accepting the training flight without prior experience in the airplane make and model.

Findings

Aircraft	Directional control - Not attained/maintained
Personnel issues	Aircraft control - Unknown/Not determined
Personnel issues	Total experience w/ equipment - Instructor/check pilot
Personnel issues	Decision making/judgment - Instructor/check pilot

Factual Information

History of Flight

Landing	Loss of control on ground (Defining event)
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Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	72, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Class 2 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	February 18, 2023
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	March 5, 2021
Flight Time:	849 hours (Total, all aircraft), 11 hours (Total, this make and model), 748 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 14 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 9 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Flight instructor Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Flight instructor	Age:	74, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane multi-engine; Airplane single-engine; Instrument airplane	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	BasicMed Unknown	Last FAA Medical Exam:	July 3, 2020
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	(Estimated) 3025 hours (Total, all aircraft), 0 hours (Total, this make and model)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Maule	Registration:	N79VE
Model/Series:	M-7-235C	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	2023	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	25118C
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	January 10, 2023 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2800 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	15 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	15 Hrs at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	O-540-B4B5
Registered Owner:	On file	Rated Power:	235
Operator:	On file	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KGRD, 617 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	12 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	15:56 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	58°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	9 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	None / None
Wind Direction:	20°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	N/A / N/A
Altimeter Setting:	30.31 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	12°C / -9°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Greenwood, SC (GRD)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Abbeville, SC	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	15:15 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	Abbeville Airport SC81	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	550 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	8	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	2250 ft / 39 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Traffic pattern

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Serious, 1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:		Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Serious, 1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	34.151078,-82.354537(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Hicks, Ralph
Additional Participating Persons:	Todd Clamp; FAA/FSDO; Columbia, SC
Original Publish Date:	June 23, 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=106942

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](#).