



# Aviation Investigation Final Report

<b>Location:</b>	Judith Gap, Montana	<b>Accident Number:</b>	WPR23LA266
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	July 8, 2023, 14:00 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N4135M
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Piper PA-12	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Defining Event:</b>	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)	<b>Injuries:</b>	N/A
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

## Analysis

The pilot reported that he “failed to recon” the field he had just landed on. During his departure attempt, high density altitude and soft ground led to a longer than expected takeoff roll. While maneuvering to avoid a bank on the opposite side of a road the airplane struck a power pole resulting in substantial damage to the right wing. The pilot reported no preimpact mechanical failures or malfunctions with 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 decision to take off on a soft field that exceeded the performance capabilities of the airplane, which resulted in an impact with a pole and terrain.

## Findings

<b>Aircraft</b>	Takeoff distance - Capability exceeded
<b>Personnel issues</b>	Aircraft control - Pilot
<b>Environmental issues</b>	High density altitude - Effect on operation
<b>Environmental issues</b>	Soft surface - Effect on operation
<b>Environmental issues</b>	Pole - Effect on operation

## Factual Information

### History of Flight

Takeoff	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT) (Defining event)
---------	---

### Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	57,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Front
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	4-point
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Without waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	March 18, 2021
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	November 19, 2021
Flight Time:	350 hours (Total, all aircraft), 240 hours (Total, this make and model), 148 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 18 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 0 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 0 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

### Passenger Information

Certificate:		Age:	
Airplane Rating(s):		Seat Occupied:	Center
Other Aircraft Rating(s):		Restraint Used:	4-point
Instrument Rating(s):		Second Pilot Present:	
Instructor Rating(s):		Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:		Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:			

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Piper	<b>Registration:</b>	N4135M
<b>Model/Series:</b>	PA-12	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Airplane
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>	1947	<b>Amateur Built:</b>	
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Normal	<b>Serial Number:</b>	12-3034
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Tailwheel	<b>Seats:</b>	2
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	July 1, 2022 Annual	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	1205 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>		<b>Engines:</b>	1 Reciprocating
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>	2534.5 Hrs	<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	LYCOMING
<b>ELT:</b>	C91A installed, not activated	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	O-235 SERIES
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	On file	<b>Rated Power:</b>	115 Horsepower
<b>Operator:</b>	On file	<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Visual (VMC)	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Day
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>	KLWT, 4125 ft msl	<b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>	26 Nautical Miles
<b>Observation Time:</b>	14:54 Local	<b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>	26°
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>	Scattered / 7500 ft AGL	<b>Visibility</b>	10 miles
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>		<b>Visibility (RVR):</b>	
<b>Wind Speed/Gusts:</b>	/	<b>Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:</b>	None / None
<b>Wind Direction:</b>		<b>Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:</b>	N/A / N/A
<b>Altimeter Setting:</b>	30.01 inches Hg	<b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>	24°C / 8°C
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
<b>Departure Point:</b>	Lewistown, MT (KLWT)	<b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>	None
<b>Destination:</b>	Lewistown, MT (KLWT)	<b>Type of Clearance:</b>	None
<b>Departure Time:</b>	13:00 Local	<b>Type of Airspace:</b>	Class G

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	None
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>		<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Total Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	46.65948,-109.74389(est)

## Administrative Information

<b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>	Johnson, Scott
<b>Additional Participating Persons:</b>	John Cosenza; Federal Aviation Administration; Helena, MT
<b>Original Publish Date:</b>	November 2, 2023
<b>Last Revision Date:</b>	
<b>Investigation Class:</b>	<a href="#">Class 4</a>
<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=192584">https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=192584</a>

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](#).