



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Truckee, California	Accident Number:	WPR23LA235
Date & Time:	June 21, 2023, 16:00 Local	Registration:	N356AW
Aircraft:	JOHN TOPLIFF PA18-200EXP	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Loss of control on ground	Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot of the tailwheel equipped airplane reported that he had been approved by air traffic control (ATC), to enter the traffic pattern for runway 11. On final approach, ATC advised the pilot that the wind had changed, and suggested a straight in approach to land runway 02. The pilot accepted the suggestion and clearance to land runway 02. The airplane touched down on its main landing gear and as the tailwheel settled to the ground, the tail “was pushed around.” The airplane ground looped and came to a stop in the grass beside the runway. Once on the ground, the pilot noticed that multiple windsocks on the airport were displaying different wind directions and suspected the airplane had encountered a strong crosswind. The left wing sustained substantial damage. The pilot reported that there were no preaccident mechanical malfunctions or failures 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 loss of directional control on landing roll out, during variable wind conditions.

Findings

Aircraft	Directional control - Not attained/maintained
Personnel issues	Aircraft control - Pilot
Environmental issues	Variable wind - Effect on equipment

Factual Information

History of Flight

Landing	Loss of control on ground (Defining event)
---------	--

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	68,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:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Class 3 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	November 4, 2022
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	May 20, 2022
Flight Time:	(Estimated) 320 hours (Total, all aircraft), 31 hours (Total, this make and model), 9 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 6 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 3 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	JOHN TOPLIFF	Registration:	N356AW
Model/Series:	PA18-200EXP	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	2013	Amateur Built:	Yes
Airworthiness Certificate:	Experimental (Special)	Serial Number:	PA-18-200-1-JT
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	August 6, 2022 Condition	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2200 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	465.7 Hrs as of last inspection	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	IO-360-A1A
Registered Owner:	On file	Rated Power:	200 Horsepower
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:	KTRK,5904 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	0 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	15:50 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Few / 6000 ft AGL	Visibility	
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	5 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:		Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/ Light
Altimeter Setting:	30.11 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	19°C / -4°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Oakdale, CA (027)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Truckee, CA	Type of Clearance:	VFR;Traffic advisory
Departure Time:	14:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class D

Airport Information

Airport:	Truckee-Tahoe TRK	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	5904 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	02	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	4654 ft / 75 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Full stop;Straight-in

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:		Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	39.3196,-120.1545

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Blocher, Kristyn
Additional Participating Persons:	Ryan Branch; Federal Aviation Administration; Reno, NV
Original Publish Date:	October 26, 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=192422

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](#).