



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Defuniak Springs, Florida	Accident Number:	ERA23LA217
Date & Time:	May 4, 2023, 12:15 Local	Registration:	N3796T
Aircraft:	Piper PA28R	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Loss of control in flight	Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot listened to the recorded weather information then took off on the airport's only paved runway with a direct crosswind of about 5 kts. He described that during the initial climb, the airplane encountered either a downdraft or increasing wind over trees next to the runway that resulted in the airplane rolling left. The pilot attempted to counteract the roll; however, the airplane settled off the sloped left side of the runway, impacted a berm, bounced up, and came to rest on the taxiway. The left wing was substantially damaged. The pilot reported that there were no preimpact mechanical malfunctions or failures of the airplane that would have precluded normal operation. Postaccident communication with the Federal Aviation Administration revealed that the airport manager's weather reporting system included gusting wind that was not reported by the automated weather system.

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 directional control while taking off in a crosswind, which resulted in a runway excursion and impact with a berm. Contributing was the automated weather briefing which failed to include accurate wind information.

Findings

Environmental issues	Gusts - Availability of related info
Environmental issues	Gusts - Ability to respond/compensate
Aircraft	Lateral/bank control - Attain/maintain not possible
Personnel issues	Aircraft control - Pilot

Factual Information

History of Flight

Takeoff	Other weather encounter
Takeoff	Loss of control in flight (Defining event)

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	67, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	Unknown
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	BasicMed With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	April 7, 2020
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	November 4, 2022
Flight Time:	944 hours (Total, all aircraft), 815 hours (Total, this make and model), 936 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 6 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 2 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 0 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N3796T
Model/Series:	PA28R 180	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	1967	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	28R-30109
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	January 11, 2023 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2500 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	C126 installed, activated, did not aid in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	IO360SER
Registered Owner:	On file	Rated Power:	180 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:	CEW, 155 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	19 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	11:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	278°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	None / None
Wind Direction:		Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	N/A / N/A
Altimeter Setting:	30.03 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	27°C / 6°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Defuniak Springs, FL	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Defuniak Springs, FL	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:		Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	DeFuniak Springs Airport 54J	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	289 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	9	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	4146 ft / 60 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	None

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	30.733363,-86.155192

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Spencer, Lynn
Additional Participating Persons:	Clay Perkins; FAA/FSDO; Vestavia Hills, AL
Original Publish Date:	June 29, 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=107814

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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](#).