



AVIATION



HIGHWAY



MARINE



RAILROAD



PIPELINE

Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Porterville, Utah	Accident Number:	WPR23LA103
Date & Time:	February 4, 2023, 15:05 Local	Registration:	N3969B
Aircraft:	Piper PA-12	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Loss of visual reference	Injuries:	1 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot reported that, the intention of the flight was to sight see and look at some local airstrips to determine their conditions. He noticed fresh tracks in the snow at an airstrip he was familiar with and decided to do a low pass to inspect further. On the third low approach he misjudged the tailwheel airplane's height above the snow and the main wheels contacted and dug in. The pilot attempted a go-around however the airplane nosed over and came to rest inverted. The airplane sustained substantial damage to the wing struts, vertical stabilizer, and rudder. The pilot reported there were no preaccident mechanical malfunctions or failures 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 failure to maintain clearance from snow covered terrain while maneuvering at low altitude.

Findings

Personnel issues	Decision making/judgment - Pilot
Aircraft	Altitude - Not attained/maintained
Personnel issues	Visual illusion/disorientation - Pilot

Factual Information

History of Flight

Maneuvering-low-alt flying	Low altitude operation/event
Maneuvering-low-alt flying	Loss of visual reference (Defining event)
Landing-landing roll	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Airline transport; Commercial; Flight instructor	Age:	36,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Front
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Glider	Restraint Used:	4-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane multi-engine; Airplane single-engine	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Without waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	February 14, 2022
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	March 12, 2022
Flight Time:	7434 hours (Total, all aircraft), 218 hours (Total, this make and model), 7243 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 37 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 20 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N3969B
Model/Series:	PA-12 12-278	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	1946	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	12-278
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	3
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	March 22, 2022 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1750 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	72 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	4743 Hrs at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	C126 installed, activated, did not aid in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	O-320A1B
Registered Owner:	On file	Rated Power:	150 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:	KSLC, 4225 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	17 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	14:54 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	210°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	4 miles
Lowest Ceiling:		Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	4 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	None /
Wind Direction:	360°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.25 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	5°C / -3°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	Light - None - Haze		
Departure Point:	Ogden, UT (OGD)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Ogden, UT (OGD)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	14:40 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	Field of Dreams 15UT	Runway Surface Type:	Grass/turf;Snow
Airport Elevation:	5675 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Snow
Runway Used:	8	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	1438 ft / 100 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Traffic pattern

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:		Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Minor	Latitude, Longitude:	40.972142,-111.70443(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Blum, Contessa

Additional Participating Persons: Gordon Behunin; FAA; SLC FSDO, UT

Original Publish Date: March 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=106691>

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](#).