



AVIATION



HIGHWAY



MARINE



RAILROAD



PIPELINE

Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Sterling, Alaska	Accident Number:	ANC23LA034
Date & Time:	May 11, 2023, 17:30 Local	Registration:	N3151
Aircraft:	DENNIS D DOWNS CCK-1865	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Fuel exhaustion	Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

During an interview, the non-certificated pilot reported that he departed from a private airstrip without conducting a preflight inspection and was unaware of how much fuel was in the airplane. After departure the engine lost all power. The pilot turned the airplane back to the airstrip but did not have the altitude, and subsequently the airplane impacted trees along a road. The airplane sustained substantial damage to the wings and empennage during the accident sequence. The non-certificated pilot reported no preimpact mechanical malfunctions or failures with the airplane that would have precluded normal operation. During recovery of the airplane the non-certificated pilot reported that there was no fuel in either fuel tank and he suspected the airplane ran out of fuel.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

The pilot's inadequate preflight inspection and fuel planning, which resulted in a total loss of engine power due to fuel exhaustion.

Findings

Personnel issues	Qualification/certification - Pilot
Personnel issues	Preflight inspection - Pilot
Aircraft	Fuel - Not serviced/maintained
Personnel issues	Fuel planning - Pilot
Personnel issues	Decision making/judgment - Pilot

Factual Information

History of Flight

Initial climb	Fuel exhaustion (Defining event)
Prior to flight	Aircraft inspection event

Pilot Information

Certificate:	None	Age:	72,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Front
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	None None	Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:			

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	DENNIS D DOWNS	Registration:	N3151
Model/Series:	CCK-1865	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:	2015	Amateur Built:	Yes
Airworthiness Certificate:	Experimental (Special)	Serial Number:	CCK-1865-0106
Landing Gear Type:	Tailwheel	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	August 14, 2022 Condition	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	ESCI
ELT:	Installed, activated, did not aid in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	0340
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:	PAEN,99 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	11 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	17:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	283°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 6000 ft AGL	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast / 10000 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	6 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	None / None
Wind Direction:	220°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	N/A / N/A
Altimeter Setting:	29.87 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	12°C / 1°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Sterling, AK	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Sterling, AK	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:		Type of Airspace:	Class G

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:	60.539931,-150.87026

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Ward, Mark

Additional Participating Persons: Fred Adams; FAA; AK

Original Publish Date: August 31, 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=162755>

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](#).