



MEMORANDUM

Noreen Price
Aviation Accident Investigator
Alaska Regional Office

NTSB Accident Number: ANC18FA036 N7061W PA-28
Subject: Investigative Weather Information

On May 12, 2018, about 0940 Alaska daylight time, a Piper Cherokee PA-28-180 airplane, N7061W, sustained substantial damage after impacting remote, mountainous, snow-covered terrain about 1 mile south-southeast of Whittier, Alaska. The student pilot sustained fatal injuries. The airplane was registered to and operated by the pilot as a 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) Part 91 visual flight rules solo cross-country flight. Visual meteorological conditions existed at the departure airport and no flight plan was filed. The flight originated from the Merrill Field Airport (MRI,) Anchorage, Alaska, about 0900, and was destined for the Valdez Pioneer Field Airport (VDZ,) Valdez, Alaska.

According to two pilots who flew through the accident area about the time of the accident, the weather was marginal visual flight rules with obscured mountain tops. An NTSB Meteorologist weather specialist reviewed various weather products for the day and time of the accident. Also, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) provided weather camera images around the time of the accident. The weather information is summarized below.

FAA AvCam Images

Portage Glacier Camera views are depicted on the Anchorage VFR Sectional in figure 1. The Southeast (SE) views and visibility on a clear day are depicted in figure 2 and the actual camera image from the time surrounding the accident (0937 local) is depicted in figure 3. The visibility is about 2 statute miles (sm) and the mountains are obscured.

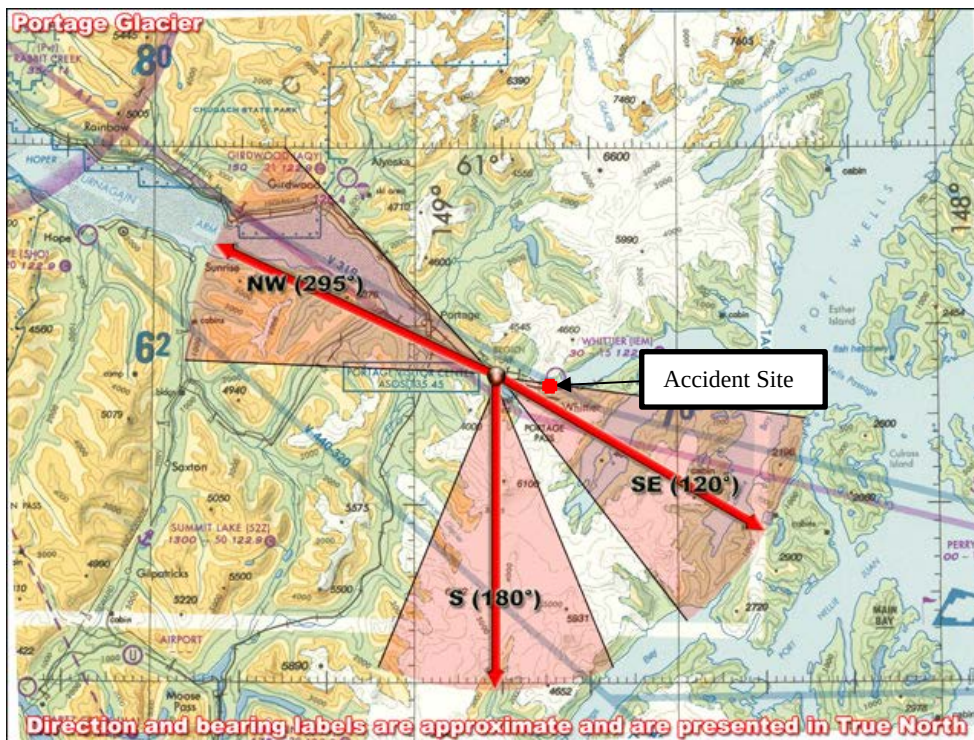


Figure 1. Portage Glacier Camera views.

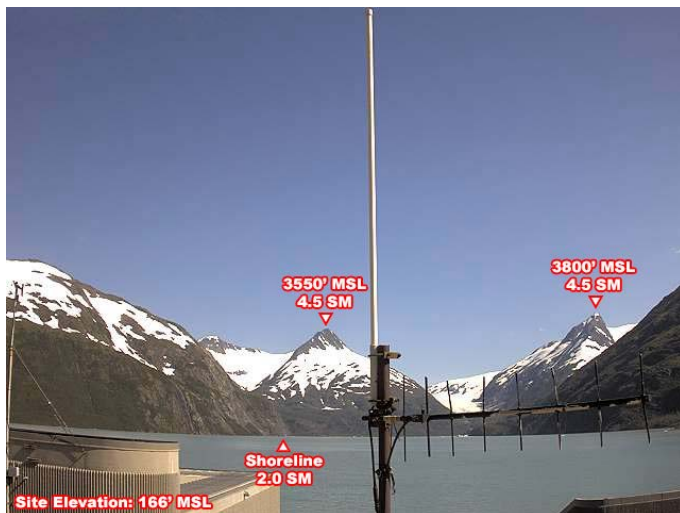


Figure 2. Portage Glacier SE view on clear day.



Figure 3. Same view at 0937 on May 12, 2018.

Whittier camera views are depicted in figure 4 and the southwest view on a clear day is depicted in figure 5. The actual southwest camera image at 0941 on May 12 is depicted in figure 6. It indicates that there was a broken to overcast ceiling slightly above 800 ft mean sea level (msl) and the visibility was between 1 and 5 sm. The Whittier northeast view is depicted in figures 7 and 8. Figure 8 indicates that the lowest cloud layer to the north was below 3,100 ft msl and visibility was between 7.5 and 10 sm.

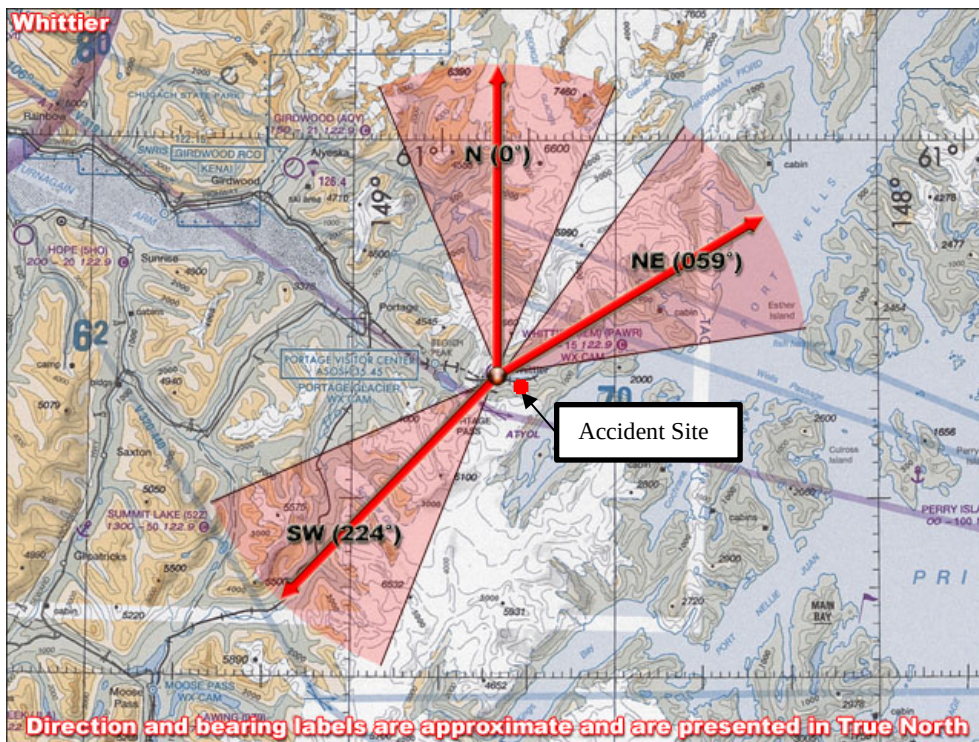


Figure 4. Whittier Weather camera views on VFR sectional chart.

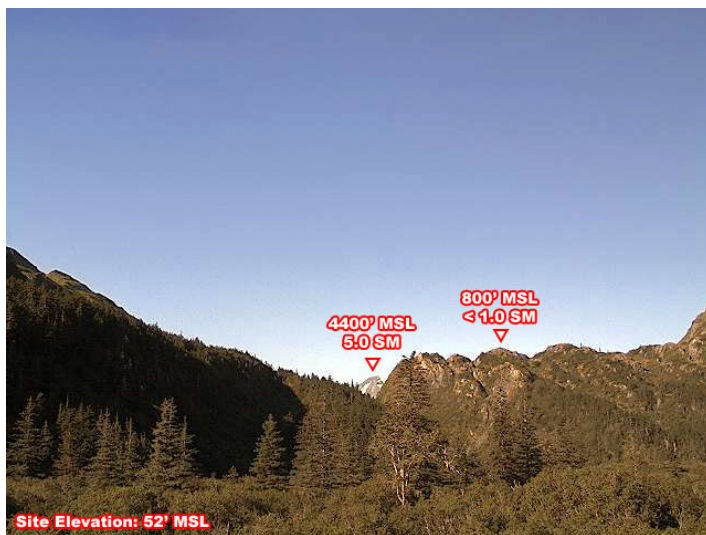


Figure 5. Whittier camera southwest view on clear day.



Figure 6. Same view at 0941 on the accident day.

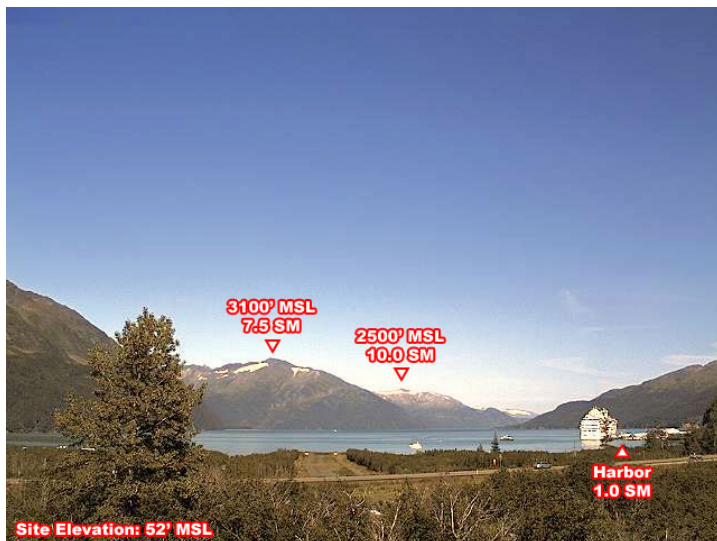


Figure 7. Whittier northeast view on a clear day.



Figure 8. The same view at 0942 on the accident day.

METARs

The nearest weather observation station was Portage Glacier (PATO) which was 4 miles west-northwest,

METAR PATO 121653Z AUTO 08011G20KT 10SM BKN030 OVC035 06/01 A3023 RMK AO2 SLP238 T00610011 TSNO=

METAR PATO 121753Z AUTO 10008G18KT 10SM FEW028 BKN034 OVC041 06/01 A3025 RMK AO2 SLP243 60000 T00560011 10061 20039 52013 TSNO=

METAR PATO 121853Z AUTO 09009G21KT 10SM SCT029 BKN036 OVC090 06/01 A3026 RMK AO2 SLP246 T00610011 TSNO=

Area Forecast

The accident occurred in the “Cook Inlet and Susitna Valley” area but was also very close to “Central Gulf Coast” area.

FAAK48 PAWU 121216
FA8H
ANCH FA 121215
AK SRN HLF EXCP SE AK...

AIRMETS VALID UNTIL 122015
CB IMPLY POSSIBLE SEV OR GREATER TURB SEV ICE LLWS AND IFR CONDS.
NON MSL HEIGHTS NOTED BY AGL OR CIG.

SYNOPSIS VALID UNTIL 130600
1000MB LOW NR PAMY MOV TO 70NM NW PACZ AT 1006MB BY 06Z. SFC RIDGE
ERN GULF AK WKNS THRU PD. ADVANCING WMFNT SRN GULF AK LIES NE-SW
ACROSS GULF AK BY END OF PD. OCFNT FAR WRN ALUTNS MOVS LITTLE THRU PD.

COOK INLET AND SUSITNA VLY AB...VALID UNTIL 130000
...CLOUDS/WX...

*****AIRMET MT OBSC*****MTS OCNL OBSC BY CLDS/PCPN. NC..

SCT040 BKN080 OVC120 CI ABV.
ALG MTS OCNL BKN040 VIS 5SM -SHRA BR. ELSW ISOL -SHRA.
OTLK VALID 130000-130600...VCY MTS MVFR CIG SHRA. ELSW VFR.
PASSES...LAKE CLARK...MERRILL...RAINY...MVFR CIG SHRA.

WINDY...VFR OCNL MVFR CIG SHRA.
PORTAGE...MVFR CIG RA.
...TURB...
NIL SIG.
...ICE AND FZLVL...
ISOL MOD ICEIC 040-110. FZLVL 025.

CNTRL GLF CST AD...VALID UNTIL 130000
...CLOUDS/WX...
AIRMET MT OBSCMTS OCNL OBSC BY CLDS/PCPN. NC...
SCT025 BKN035 LYRD TO FL200. OCNL BKN025 VIS 5SM -SHRA BR.
OTLK VALID 130000-130600...MVFR CIG SHRA.
...TURB...
AIRMET TURBPAWD-PAMD LN NE OCNL MOD TURB FL250-FL370. NC...
...ICE AND FZLVL...
NW MONTAGUE IS ISOL MOD ICEIC 040-110. FZLVL 025.

AIRMET

AIRMET SIERRA was issued for the accident area and was valid for the time of the accident. See below.

WAAK48 PAWU 121216
WA8O
ANCS WA 121215
AIRMET SIERRA FOR IFR AND MT OBSC VALID UNTIL 122015

COOK INLET AND SUSITNA VLY AB
VCY MTS EXCP KENAI MTS OCNL OBSC BY CLDS/PCPN. NC.

COPPER RIVER BASIN AC
WRANGELL AND CHUGACH MTS OCNL OBSC BY CLDS/PCPN. IMPR.

CNTRL GLF CST AD
MTS OCNL OBSC BY CLDS/PCPN. NC.

Alaska Aviation Weather Unit (AAWU) Forecast Graphics

Figures 9, 10 and 11 were forecast products that were available to the pilot before the flight and were valid at the time of the accident. Figure 9 indicates that conditions in the area east of Whittier were expected to be marginal visual flight rules (MVFR-ceiling between 1,000 and 3,000 ft and/or visibility between 3 to 5 sm.) Figures 10 and 11 indicate that turbulence and icing were not forecasted for the area.

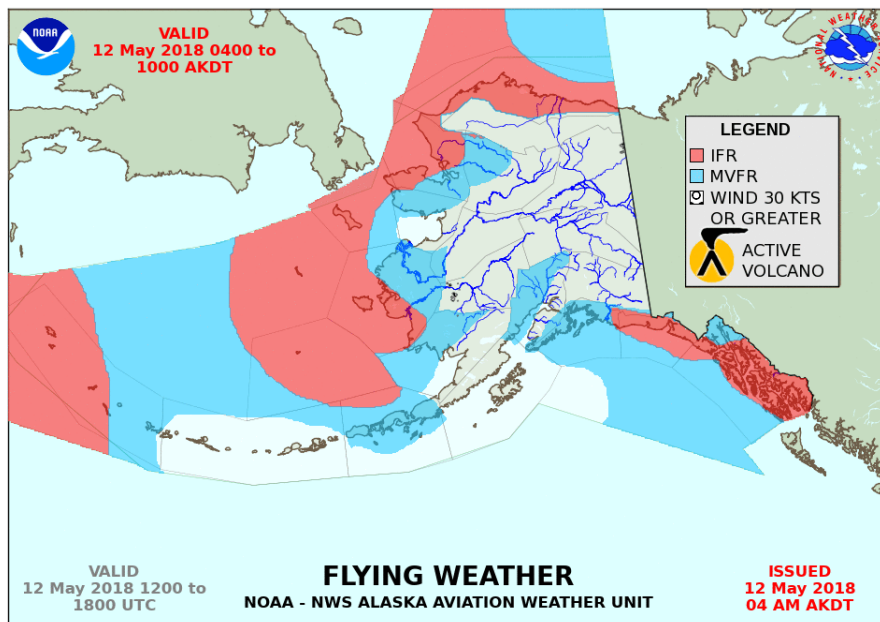


Figure 9. Flying weather graphic.

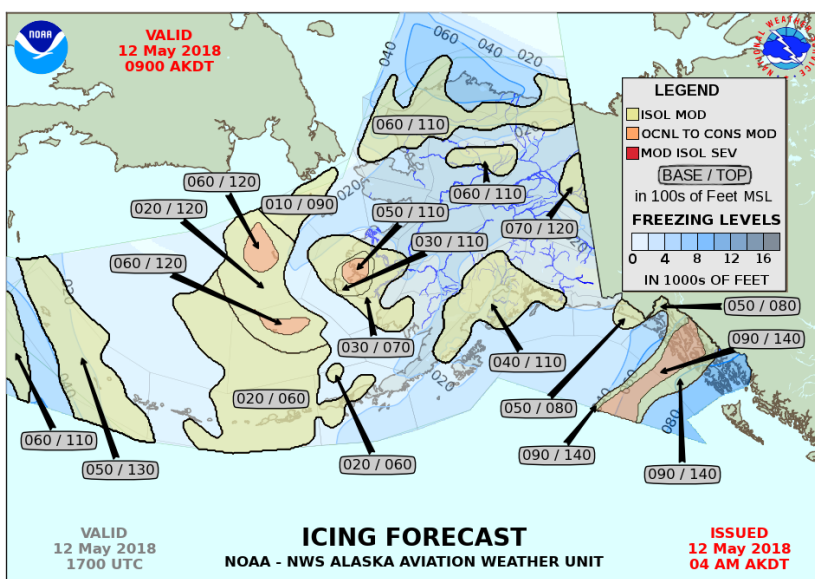


Figure 10. Icing forecast graphic.

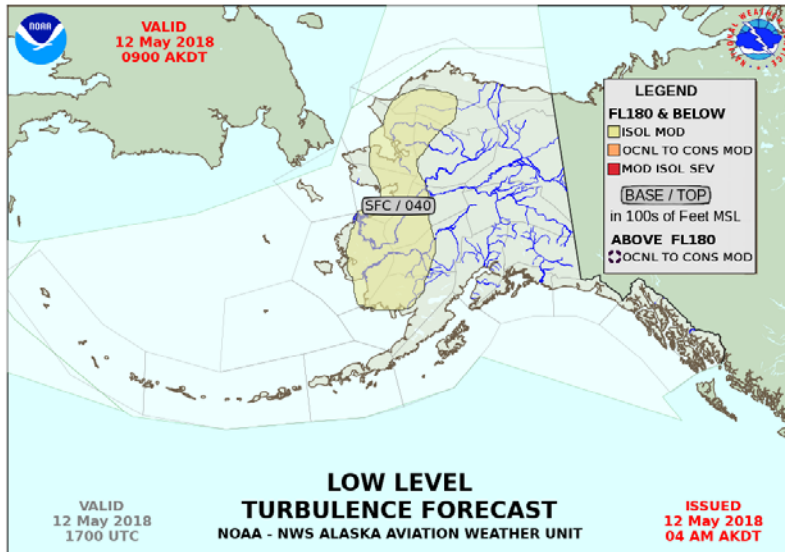


Figure 11. Turbulence forecast.