



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Office of Aviation Safety
Washington, D.C. 20594

March 15, 2016

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL SPECIALIST'S REPORT

CEN15FA135

A. AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

Location: Lubbock, Texas
Date: February 4, 2015
Time: 1930 Central Standard Time (CST)¹
0130 Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) / (February 5, 2015)
Airplane: N301D, Piper, PA46

B. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL INVESTIGATOR

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C. SUMMARY

On February 4, 2015, at 1930 central standard time, a Piper PA46 500TP airplane, N301D, collided with a TV tower guy wire and terrain about 7 miles south of the Lubbock Preston Smith International Airport (LBB), Lubbock, Texas. The pilot, who was the sole occupant, was fatally injured and the airplane was destroyed. The airplane was registered to Deadalus Air LLC, and operated by a private individual under the provisions of 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91 as a personal flight. Instrument meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the accident and an instrument flight rules (IFR) flight plan was filed en route. The airplane departed the Cavern City Air Terminal (CNM), Carlsbad, New Mexico at an unknown time and was en route to LBB.

D. DETAILS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The National Transportation Safety Board's (NTSB) air traffic control investigator was not on scene, and did not travel in support of this investigation. All ATC work was conducted from the investigator's office. The information provided in this report was compiled utilizing the following source data provided by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA): Certified air traffic control audio re-recordings, radar data from LBB, and aircraft accident package.

E. FACTUAL DATA

1.0 History of Flight

1907:20 N301D first contacted Lubbock Air Traffic Control Tower (LBB ATCT) reporting an altitude of 16,700 feet and descending to 14,000 feet. The LBB radar controller instructed N301D to descend at pilot's discretion to 7,000 feet and confirmed the pilot's receipt of the current ATIS information "Whiskey."

¹ All times are in central standard time (CST) unless otherwise noted

- 1907:58 The LBB radar controller informed the accident pilot that a regional jet had reported moderate rime icing at 5,000 feet approximately 10 miles south of the airfield, and the pilot acknowledged with “okay, I’ll be looking.”
- 1909:32 The accident pilot requested the current ceiling and the radar controller informed him that bases had been previously reported 3,900 feet. The pilot acknowledged stating that it was better than “his weather information” which had indicated an 800 feet ceiling. And the controller then explained that the bases were reported in msl, which would make the ceiling approximately 800 feet agl. The pilot acknowledged, and stated his information was in agreement.
- 1912:23 A position relief briefing took place on the LBB radar controller in which all pertinent information was passed to the relieving radar controller to include current ATIS information, PIREP information, approach in use, and traffic information including N301D who had been cleared to 7,000 feet.
- 1914:19 The radar controller announced on the recorded line that the required controller two minute overlap after relief was complete.
- 1918:02 The radar controller asked N301D what type of approach was being requested and the pilot stated that he wanted the RNAV RWY 35L, but that he was having a little trouble getting his instruments set up and wanted to circle until he could get things worked out. The radar controller then just asked the pilot to advise once he knew what he wanted to do.
- 1918:41 The radar controller instructed N301D to maintain at or above 8,000 feet, and that he could continue on his present heading let the pilot know he would just box him back in once he had figured out his instrument issues. The pilot acknowledged with a correct read back.
- 1921:24 The pilot of N301D stated that he wanted to turn south direct to ZOVOC for the RNAV RWY 35L. The radar controller instructed him to turn right to a 160 heading and descend and maintain 7,000 feet. The pilot acknowledged the turn, but not the descent.
- 1922:20 The radar controller asked the pilot of N301D what altitude he was at, and the pilot stated that he was descending through 9,340 feet to 7,000 feet.
- 1923:00 The radar controller asked the pilot of N301D how many flying miles he would need to make his descent to the airport. The pilot responded that he just wanted to continue his present direction for a bit further and then he could start his turn back to the west and continue on his flight plan to ZOVOC.
- 1923:17 The radar controller instructed N301D to turn right to a 220 heading. The pilot acknowledged with a correct read back.

- 1924:39 The radar controller instructed N301D to turn right to a 260 heading. The pilot acknowledged with a correct read back.
- 1925:19 The radar controller cleared N301D for the RNAV Y RWY 35L approach and instructed the pilot to cross ZOVOC at or above 6,000 feet. The pilot acknowledged the “direct ZOVOC”, but had some trouble understanding the remainder of the controller’s instructions. After some clarification, the accident pilot acknowledged the approach clearance and altitude crossing restriction.
- 1926:13 The tower controller called down and informed the radar controller that he may have cancel N301D’s approach because he had another inbound (N319ME) that had remained faster than he expected, and had also requested to circle to another runway and the controller would need room to do that. The tower controller further stated that N319ME was “flying crazy...”, so the radar controller stated that he would just take N301D off the approach and bring him back around for another.
- 1929:29 The radar controller cancelled N301D’s approach clearance and instructed the pilot to climb to 7,000 feet and fly a heading of 275 degrees for re-sequencing. The pilot acknowledged and then confirmed the turn which the controller amended to 270 degrees.
- 1929:56 The last recorded transmission from the accident pilot was a read back of the 270 heading assignment.
- 1930:50 After a couple of attempts to contact N301D with no response, the radar controller explained to the local controller who had called to check on the status of N301D that they had just experienced a “power spike” and that he was going to attempt contact via the PET (portable radio) in the event the power spike had effected their ground based communication equipment.

2.0 Radar Data

Radar source data was provided by the FAA from the Lubbock ASR-9 radar located near the Lubbock airport. Attachment 1 is an overhead view of the accident aircraft’s flight track with arrows provided for directional reference only, and the accident location indicated with the Maltese cross symbol. Attachment 2 is a closer view of the final portion of the accident flight track. Attachment 3 is an overview of the accident aircraft’s flight track as rendered in Google Earth and is oriented looking from South to North.

Radar data indicated that the accident aircraft followed all course and altitude instructions that were provided by ATC without noted deviation. According to audio recordings the last instruction provided by ATC to the pilot of N301D was the approach clearance cancellation and instructions to turn left to a heading of 270 and climb to 7,000 feet. Immediately after the pilot’s correct read back acknowledging the control instructions, radar data indicated that N301D began a left turn, climbing out of 5,600 feet reaching an altitude of 5,800 feet before entering a

continued left hand turn through the assigned heading of 270 and descending rapidly. Radar data revealed only two recorded returns over a 10 second time span after the aircraft had reached 5,800 feet. The last recorded radar return indicated an altitude of 5,100 feet at 1930:21. The radar track and accident location were consistent with a rapid continued descending left turn to impact.

3.0 Weather Information

Local weather was obtained from the Lubbock Automated Surface Observation System (KLBB) and was augmented by contract weather observers located at the airport.

[1831 CST] SPECI KLBB 050031Z 02023G32KT 9SM OVC009 M01/M03 A3024

Weather at 1831 CST, wind from 020 degrees at 23 knots with gusts to 32 knots, 9 miles visibility, overcast ceiling at 900 feet agl, temperature -1 degrees Celsius (C), dew point temperature -3 degrees C, altimeter 30.24 inHg.

[1853 CST] METAR KLBB 050053Z 03021G31KT 8SM OVC008 M02/M04 A3024 RMK AO2 PK WND 02034/0033 SLP252 OCNL PTCHY BLDU T10171039

Weather at 1853 CST, wind from 030 degrees at 21 knots with gusts to 31 knots, 8 miles visibility, overcast ceiling at 800 feet agl, temperature -2 degrees C, dew point temperature -4 degrees C, altimeter 30.24 inHg. Remarks, station with a precipitation discriminator, peak wind from 020 degrees at 34 knots at 1833 CST, sea level pressure 1025.2 hPa, occasional patchy blowing dust, temperature -1.7 degrees C, dew point temperature -3.9 degrees C.

[1930 CST] APPROXIMATE TIME OF ACCIDENT

[1947 CST] SPECI KLBB 050147Z 04018G27KT 7SM OVC007 M02/M04 A3028 RMK AO2 PK WND 03031/0100

Weather at 1947 CST, wind from 040 degrees at 18 knots with gusts to 27 knots, 7 miles visibility, overcast ceiling at 700 feet agl, temperature -2 degrees C, dew point temperature -4 degrees C, altimeter 30.28 inHg. Remarks, station with a precipitation discriminator, peak wind from 030 degrees at 31 knots at 1900 CST.

F. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Plot – Flight overview with radar data and approximate accident site indicated

Attachment 2: Plot – Final portion of the accident flight track

Attachment 3: Plot – Google Earth rendering of the accident flight track

Submitted by:

Brian Soper