



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Office of Research and Engineering
Washington, DC

MEDICAL FACTUAL REPORT

March 14, 2017

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Medical Officer

A. ACCIDENT: CEN16LA004 - Dexter, Missouri

On October 5, 2015, about 0430 central daylight time, a Cessna 150G, single-engine airplane, N3174J, impacted trees and terrain about two miles west from Dexter Municipal Airport (DXE), Dexter, Missouri. The pilot was seriously injured, and the airplane was substantially damaged. The airplane was registered to and operated by a private individual, as a 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 personal flight. Night visual meteorological conditions (VMC) prevailed and a flight plan had not been filed. The airplane had departed DXE about 0400 for a local flight.

B. GROUP IDENTIFICATION:

No group was formed for the medical evaluation in this accident.

C. DETAILS OF INVESTIGATION

Purpose

This investigation was performed to evaluate the pilot for any medical conditions, the use of any medications/illicit drugs, and the presence of any toxins.

Methods

The FAA medical certification file, postaccident hospital treatment records, police, and postaccident hospital toxicology reports were reviewed.

FAA Medical Certification File

According to the FAA medical file, the 60-year-old male pilot was 72 inches tall, weighed 197 pounds, and reported he had accrued 260 total flight hours as of his most recent FAA medical certification exam, dated May 08, 2015. He reported a history of a DUI in 2013 and hepatitis C. He reported no medications. The physical examination did not identify any abnormal findings. The aviation medical examiner issued the pilot a third class medical certificate without limitations. Following the exam, the FAA sent the pilot a letter asking for information related to the DUI and hepatitis. The pilot sent the FAA medical certification division documentation of his DUI in 2013 but did not send

documents concerning his hepatitis. On October 19, 2015 (two weeks after the accident), the FAA sent the pilot a denial letter for failure to provide information about his hepatitis.

Hospital Treatment Records

The hospital records documented that at the time of admission his medications included sertraline (a prescription antidepressant medication marketed as Zoloft) and zolpidem (a short acting sleep aid marketed as Ambien).^{1,2} The records did not contain any information about the pilot's mental health condition or insomnia.

Toxicology

A blood sample collected by the Missouri State Highway Patrol at 0725 a.m. and analyzed by the Missouri State Highway Patrol Crime Laboratory was positive for a blood alcohol of 0.075%.

Hospital alcohol testing found the pilot's blood alcohol collected at 9:30 a.m. was 0.034%.³ Additionally, hospital urine drug testing collected at 10:40 a.m. was positive for cannabinoids but confirmatory blood testing was not performed.

Per 14 CFR 91.17, no person may act or attempt to act as a crewmember of a civil aircraft while having 0.04% (0.040 g/dL) or more alcohol in the blood. In fact, it is illegal to drive a vehicle with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08% in all fifty states.⁴ Additionally, adverse clinical symptoms have been noted with blood ethanol levels as low as 0.02% (0.020 g/dL).⁵

D. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The pilot had been treated with sertraline and zolpidem but there was no documentation concerning his mental health conditions. Additionally, his postaccident hospital urine drug screen was positive for cannabinoids but confirmation testing was not performed. Finally, his blood alcohol was documented as 0.075% and 0.034% about 3 and 5.3 hours after the crash respectively.

¹ National Institute of Health, U.S. Library of Medicine, DailyMed 2017 - ZOLOFT- sertraline. <https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/drugInfo.cfm?setid=92278f12-0f00-4c0b-bb44-c6dddbb5b6c> Accessed 01/23/2017

² National Institute of Health, U.S. Library of Medicine, DailyMed 2017 - AMBIEN- zolpidem <https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/drugInfo.cfm?setid=c36cadf4-65a4-4466-b409-c82020b42452> Accessed 01/23/2017

³ The hospital documented a serum alcohol of 0.039 g/dL which converts to an equivalent blood alcohol of 0.034%

⁴ Governors Highway Safety Association, Drunk Driving Laws Information. http://www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/impaired_laws.html Accessed 11/20/2015

⁵ Federal Aviation Administration. CAMI Toxicology Drug Information. Ethanol <http://jag.cami.jccbi.gov/toxicology/DrugDetail.asp?did=60> Accessed 11/20/2015