



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

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Date: 1/24/2022
NTSB Accident Number: CEN20LA402

Examination Notes

On September 20, 2020, about 1051 central daylight time (CDT), a Piper PA-46-310, N236KM, was substantially damaged when it was involved in an accident near Hilltop Lakes, Texas. The commercial pilot and 3 passengers sustained fatal injuries.

On May 5, 2021, an NTSB Air Safety Investigator conducted a wreckage examination with the assistance of Piper Aircraft. The following are observations from that examination:

Fuselage

The cockpit area exhibited extensive aft crushing and tearing around the circumference, resulting in the fuselage being separated near Fuselage Station (FS) 132. Flight control cable continuity was confirmed from the cockpit controls to the respective control surfaces except for separations consistent with recovery cuts and separations due to impact forces. The fuel selector valve appeared intact and would not allow low pressure air to pass when applied to either the left or right fuel lines at the wing roots. The fuel selector valve could not be rotated by hand or by pushing/pulling on the portion of the selector cable attached to the valve. The cable was impact damaged and bent as it passed through the frame forward of the valve. The fuel selector valve was removed from the fuselage to facilitate examination. After removal from the fuselage and disconnected from the control cable, the valve would rotate to each position with the detents being noticeable and low-pressure air was able to pass through the valve and vapor return ports.

Left Wing

The aileron remained attached to the wing by its hinges and the aileron cables were continuous from the sector to the wing root. The flap was partially separated from the wing and only remained connected by one hinge. The leading edge of the wing exhibited aft crushing along the entire span. The upper wing skin was separated from the wing at the main spar for the length of the fuel tank. The inboard fuel filler cap remained installed in the fuel filler opening. The fuel filler cap for the outboard fuel filler opening was separated from the filler neck and resting inside the wing, adjacent to the filler neck. The pitot mast on the wing tip was impact damaged and broken. The lift detector remained installed in its mount but was impact damaged. The main landing gear was in the extended position. The landing gear strut, including the wheel and tire, was separated from the trunnion.

Right Wing

The aileron remained attached to the wing by its hinges and the aileron cables were continuous from the sector to the wing root. The flap was impact damaged and bent about mid span, and only remained connected by the outboard hinges. The leading edge of the wing exhibited aft crushing along the entire span. The upper wing skin was separated from the wing at the main spar for a portion of the fuel tank. The fuel filler caps remained installed in their respective filler necks. The pitot mast was partially separated from the wing tip. The main landing gear was in the extended position. When rotating the wing from the inverted position, liquid consistent in odor and appearance with jet fuel was observed pouring from the vapor return line at the wing root and from the leading edge near the inboard end of the fuel tank.

Flaps

Flap actuator rod was found extended about 6 inches, which would correspond to the flaps being fully extended at the time of impact.

Empennage

The vertical stabilizer remained intact and appeared undamaged. The rudder remained attached to the vertical stabilizer and also appeared undamaged. The horizontal stabilizers, elevators, and elevator trim tabs had been cut about 12" either side of the aircraft centerline consistent with aircraft recovery efforts and did not appear to show any impact damage. The elevator trim screw was extended forward from the drum about 7/8" which would correspond to a slight aircraft nose down trim setting.

Propeller

All four blades appeared to be rotated in the hub to a high blade angle at or near the feathered position.

---End of Record---