

National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Aviation Safety

Washington, DC 20594



CEN24FA160

ON SCENE EXAMINATION SUMMARY

February 3, 2026

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A. ACCIDENT

Location: Hartsburg, Missouri
Date: April 16, 2024
Time: 1204 CDT
1704 UTC
Airplane: N451MA, Piper PA-46-350P

B. ON SCENE EXAMINATION SUMMARY

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C. SUMMARY

On April 16, 2024, about 1205 central daylight time, a Piper PA-46-350P airplane was destroyed when it impacted the ground near Hartsburg, Missouri. The pilot was fatally injured. The airplane was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) Part 91 personal flight.

The pilot filed an instrument flight rules flight plan for the flight from the Dane County Regional Airport (MSN), Madison, Wisconsin, to the Smith Field Airport (SLG), Siloam Springs, Arkansas, and was in contact with air traffic control since his departure from MSN about 0951.

Review of flight track data provided by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) revealed that after departing MSN, the airplane turned to the southwest and climbed to about 16,000 ft mean sea level (msl). The airplane's course was a direct line to SLG. The airplane remained on this course and altitude until 1149 when it turned left to a south-southeast direction, and a few minutes later made a right turn to the south. The airplane continued south until 1204 when it entered a descending left turn. At the end of the data, the airplane was heading north and had descended to about 9,400 ft msl. The calculated descent rate during the final portion of the turn was more than 16,000 ft per minute. The airplane's fuselage came to rest about 0.14 nm north of the last in-flight recorded position of the airplane.

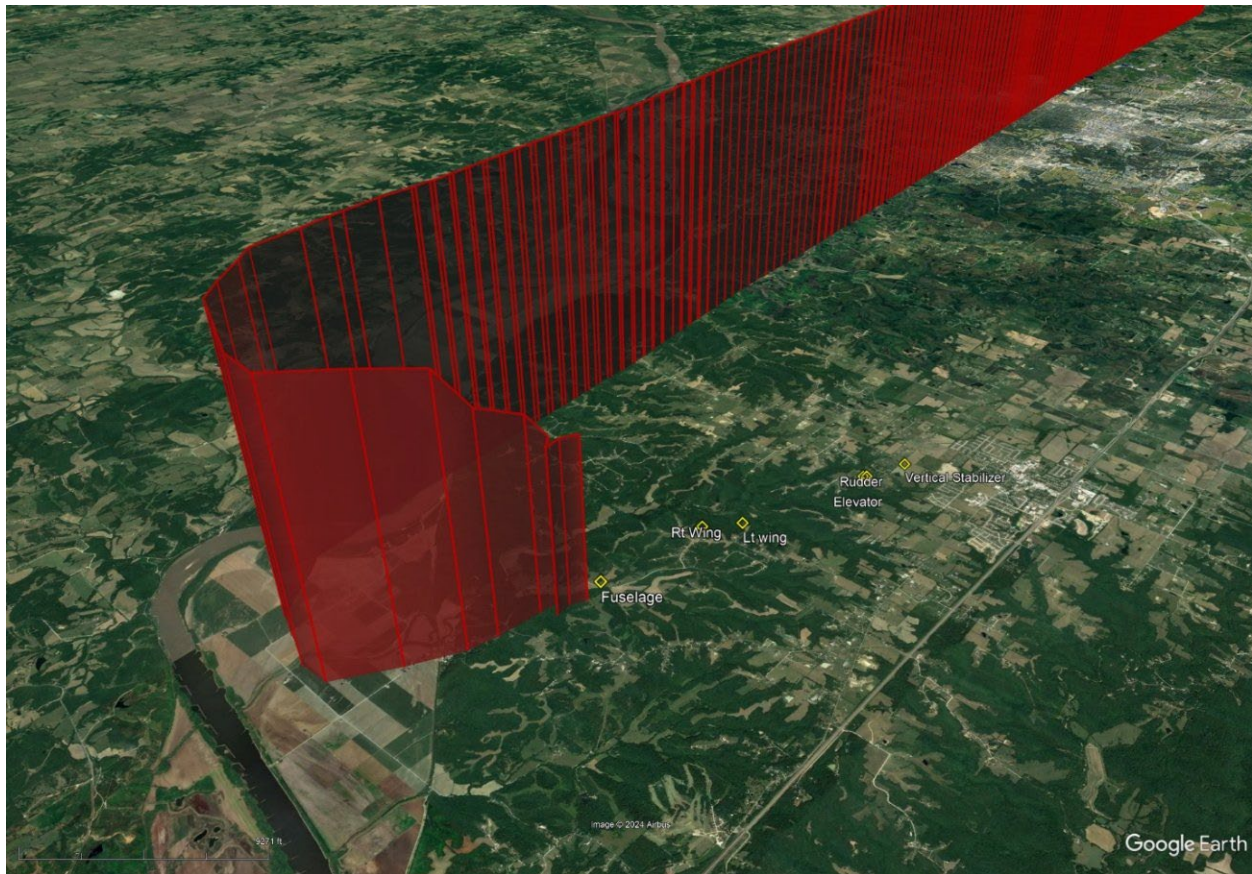


FIGURE 1. Plot of the final portion of the airplane's flight path.

Review of weather data revealed that a Convective Significant Meteorological Information (SIGMET) advisory had been issued for the area including the accident site and was valid at the time of the accident. The SIGMET warned of areas of severe embedded thunderstorm activity, with tornados, hail up to 2 inches in diameter, and wind gusts of up to 60 kts possible. The main wreckage consisted of the airplane's fuselage which came to rest on a wooded hillside next to a pasture. The tree canopy was mostly undisturbed and the few tree limb breaks suggested a near vertical impact with the ground. The fuselage was resting upright. The engine was pushed rearward and the forward fuselage in the area of the forward baggage compartment exhibited accordion crushing. The inboard 4 ft of each wing remained attached to the fuselage. The fuselage sides over the wing exhibited little crush damage. The roof of this area was folded back, presumably by first responders for occupant extraction. The fuselage aft of the front seats to the rear baggage compartment was fragmented. The aft fuselage from the tip forward about 8 ft was predominately intact. No tail surfaces were present at the main wreckage site.

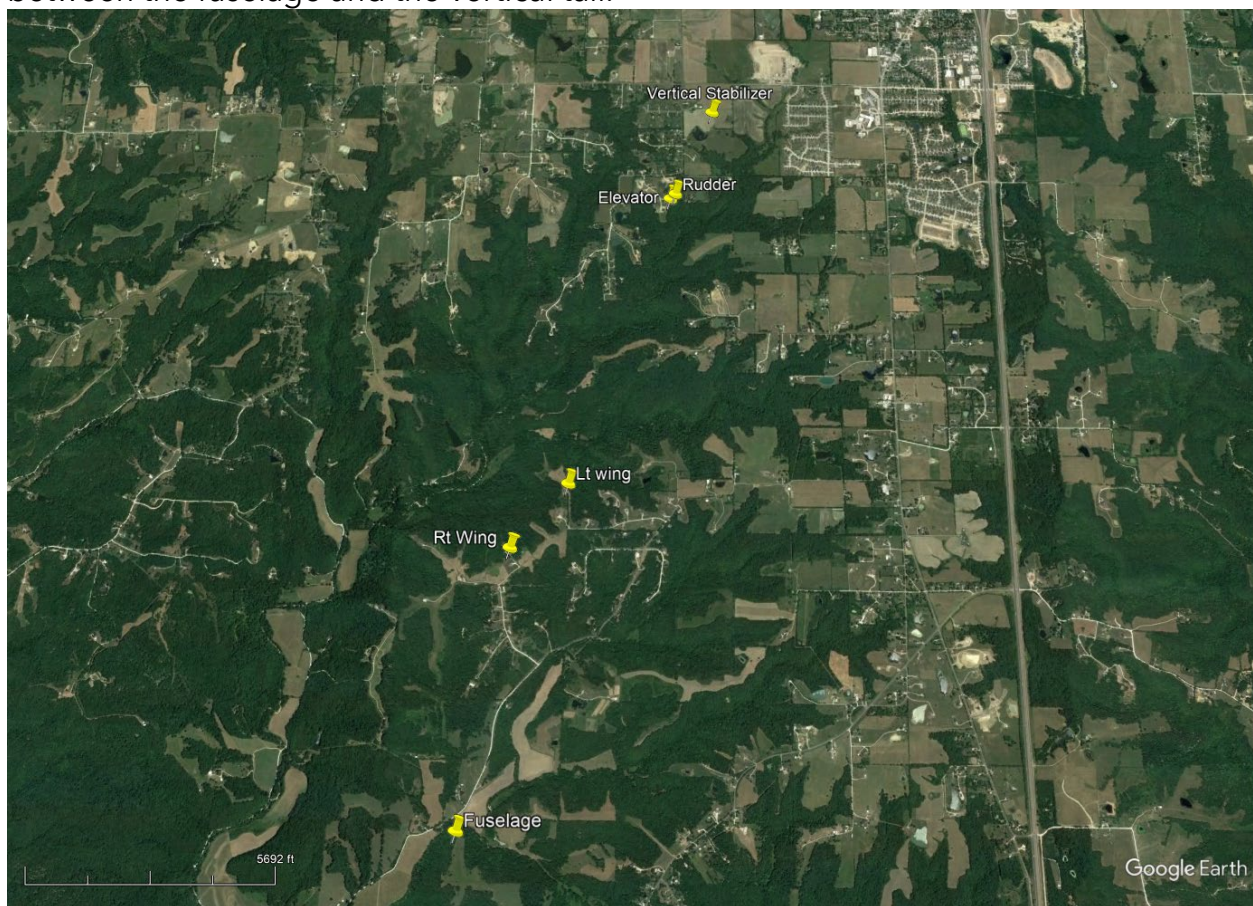
The tail surfaces and both outboard wings had separated from the airplane. The wings, elevator, vertical tail, and the rudder were located along a line extending from the fuselage on an 18° heading for about 3.1 nm. The farthest piece of wreckage

located was the vertical tail of the airplane, with the other pieces between the fuselage and the vertical tail. The horizontal tail pieces were not located.

D. DETAILS OF THE EXAMINATION

1.0 Accident Site

The main wreckage that consisted of the airplane's fuselage was located at coordinates 38°42'55.80"N, 92°18'2.59"W. Several pieces of the airplane, including both wings, the elevator, the vertical tail, and the rudder were located along a line extending from the fuselage on a 18 degree heading for about 3.1 nm. The farthest piece of wreckage located was the vertical tail of the airplane, with the other pieces between the fuselage and the vertical tail.



The fuselage came to rest on a wooded hillside next to a pasture. The tree canopy was mostly undisturbed and the few tree limb breaks suggested a near vertical impact with the ground.

2.0 Airframe Examination

2.1 Fuselage

The entire fuselage was located at the main wreckage site. An impact crater that was about 1.5 ft deep was located about 3 ft. from the spinner of the airplane. The fuselage was resting upright. The engine was pushed rearward and the forward fuselage in the area of the forward baggage compartment exhibited accordion crushing. The inboard about 4 ft of each wing remained attached to the fuselage. The fuselage sides over the wing exhibited little crushing damage. The roof of this area was folded back, presumably by first responders for occupant extraction. The fuselage aft of the front seats to the rear baggage compartment was fragmented. The aft fuselage from the tip forward about 8 ft was predominately intact. No tail surfaces were present at the main wreckage site.

2.2 Empennage

All of the empennage pieces were separated from the fuselage. The rudder, vertical stabilizer, and elevator were located. The left and right horizontal stabilizers were not found.

2.3 Wings

The right wing was found about 1.25 miles and 11 degrees from the fuselage. The inboard about 4 ft remained attached to the fuselage. The remainder was predominately intact, but all flap and aileron controls were separated from it.

The left wing was located about 1.60 miles and 18 degrees from the fuselage. The inboard about 4 ft remained attached to the fuselage. The remainder was predominately intact, but all flap and aileron controls were separated from it.

Both wings exhibited downward bending at the separation points. The plumbing within the wing roots was bent 180 degrees and parallel to the bottom skin of the inboard section that was still attached to the fuselage.

2.4 Landing Gear

Both main landing gear were observed to be in a retracted position inside the wheel wells. The nose landing gear could not be seen.

2.5 Cockpit

The airplane was equipped with a Garmin G1000 system that had 2 PFD units and a centrally mounted MFD. The back cases of the PFDs and the MFD were

retained for possible download of data. The Garmin autopilot control head was retained for possible download of data. The damage to the units precluded functional testing.

2.6 Fuel/Fuel System

The fuel system was not examined at the accident site.

3.0 Engine Examination

The engine was not examined at the accident site; however the propeller hub remained attached to the crankshaft flange and the engine was still located at the forward part of the fuselage. Due to the high speed nature of the accident, the engine was not determined to be a factor in the accident.

4.0 Propeller Examination

The engine had a 3-blade propeller attached. The hub was still attached to the crankshaft flange and one blade was still attached to the hub. The remaining 2 blades were observed withing the impact crater.

5.0 Pilot Information

The pilot held a commercial pilot certificate with AMEL and instrument airplane ratings, with private pilot privileges for ASEL airplanes.

6.0 Post-recovery Examination

After its recovery from the accident site, a second examination of the airplane was conducted on June 25-26, 2024, at Dawson Aircraft located in Clinton, AR. This examination included examination by the NTSB Structures Group as well as follow up examination of the airplane and its systems. Details of the Structures Group examination can be found in a separate report.

The post-recovery examination of the airplane's flight control system was limited due to the extent of damage to the airplane. However, all identified breaks in control system components were consistent with the in-flight separation of the airframe and impact damage. No preexisting control system anomalies were identified.

Submitted by:

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