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Subject: CEN25FA047

Surviving Pilot-Rated Passenger Interview
Summary

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The surviving pilot-rated passenger was interviewed by the NTSB IIC. The passenger's name was [REDACTED] Cell Phone [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]. He was interviewed at the Medical Center of the Rockies, Loveland, Colorado. Mr. [REDACTED] holds a private pilot certificate, with SEL, MEL airplane instrument ratings and about 1,600 hours of flight time.

He stated that he was seated in right front seat, and his role was mission observer, which was standard for this flight. His responsibilities were generally radio communications with CAP mission base and basic navigation. The purpose of the mission was to photograph the area for use by the Red Cross in the event of a real emergency. The flight was a training flight. The flight originated from FNL about 0930. The briefings and pre-flight were normal. As a team, the pilot, mission observer and photographer briefed the flight.

The beginning of the flight consisted of large circles over mountain roads and a valley. That part of the flight was normal. And the photography mission was completed. There were normal communications between the mission observer, pilot, and CAP base. He stated that the airplane and engine were operating normally throughout the flight.

Then, the pilot flew the airplane south of the mission area. The observer thought that the pilot was returning to the FNL base. The observer stated that the airplane was maneuvering over trees, about 1,500 AGL, heading toward higher terrain (a ridgeline). Within a few seconds, the observer heard the pilot say, "Oh Sh_t". The pilot lowered the nose and started to turn. The airplane seemed to drop, and the observer said that the airplane probably encountered a downdraft. He heard the airplane hitting trees. This all happened quickly, within seconds. The next thing that he remembered was being on the ground and was thinking about trying to help the pilot and photographer and was worried about a fire.

Because of the impact, his cell phone called 911 automatically and connected him to a

dispatcher. The observer was rescued by helicopter. The helicopter flight nurse stated that the winds were swirling.
