

**Wreckage Examination
NTSB Accident Number
ERA23FA103**

ACCIDENT

Location:	Suffolk, VA
Date:	January 7, 2023
Time:	1213 EST
Aircraft:	Piper PA-28-140
Registration	N592FL

PARTICIPANTS (On Scene)

Robert J Gretz
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Eastern Region Aviation

Christopher Freeze
Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Eastern Region Aviation

Jay Venerable
Aviation Safety Inspector
FAA Richmond FSDO

Winston Chelf
Aviation Safety Inspector
FAA Richmond FSDO

HISTORY OF FLIGHT

On January 7, about 1213 eastern standard time, a Piper PA-28-140, N592FL, was destroyed when it was involved in an accident near Suffolk, Virginia. The pilot and passenger were fatally injured. The airplane was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 personal flight.

The pilot owned the airplane and based it at the departure airport, Northeast Regional Airport (EDE), Edenton, North Carolina. According to family members, the accident flight was a short (40 nautical miles) cross-country flight to get lunch at a restaurant at Suffolk Executive Airport (SFQ), Suffolk, Virginia.

According to a mechanic at EDE, the pilot contacted him on January 1, 2023, to inform him that the rpm drop was excessive during a magneto check and that he had parked the airplane in front of the mechanic's hangar for further evaluation. The mechanic looked at the airplane on January 4th, 2023. He removed the spark plugs, cleaned them, and checked for resistance. He found that two spark plugs had very high resistance and one spark plug fired a little weak. The mechanic replaced those three spark plugs and reinstalled the five other spark plugs in the engine.

Wreckage Examination NTSB Accident Number ERA23FA103

The pilot arrived later that day, before the mechanic had a chance to perform a ground engine run as he was busy working on another airplane. The pilot asked if he could perform a ground run of the engine and the mechanic said yes, because he could listen to the engine from his hangar. As soon as the pilot ran the engine, the mechanic new “right away” that the new spark plugs did not correct the problem as the engine was “skipping.” The pilot shut down the engine and the mechanic informed the pilot that the airplane was not to be flown until he could investigate further, and he would most likely be able to do it on Monday January 9, 2023. At the time of the accident on January 7, 2023, the airplane had not been released from maintenance as the mechanic had not had an opportunity to further investigate the engine anomaly.

According to preliminary information from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the airplane was approaching SFQ, in cruise flight at 1,000 ft, about 5 miles south of the airport. The airplane then descended rapidly and impacted terrain. A witness reported that she was a front seat passenger in a car and first observed the airplane in a nosedive. At that time, there were two spiral trails of black smoke, about 5 to 10 ft behind the airplane; however, she did not observe any fire from the airplane.

PERSONNEL INFORMATION

Pilot information provided to NTSB IIC by FAA inspector Jay Venerable. A request was made to the pilot’s family for his pilot logbook.

AIRCRAFT INFORMATION

The airplane was manufactured in 1971 and equipped with a Lycoming O-320, 150-hp engine, driving a two-bladed McCauley fixed pitch propeller. The mechanic stated that the maintenance logbooks were usually kept in the back of the airplane and likely destroyed in the postcrash fire; however, a request was made to the pilot’s family for aircraft logbooks.

METEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION

KSFQ 071715Z AUTO 24006KT 10SM CLR 09/00 A3026

COMMUNICATIONS

The airplane was not in radio contact with air traffic control. FAA ADS-B data for the flight has been obtained and plotted.

FLIGHT RECORDERS

N/A

WRECKAGE AND IMPACT INFORMATION

The airplane impacted nose-down in a marshy field and no debris path was observed. The wreckage came to rest upright and was oriented south. A section of engine cowling was located about 50 ft south of the main wreckage. A postcrash fire consumed the majority of the wreckage, with the exception of the wings and engine.

**Wreckage Examination
NTSB Accident Number
ERA23FA103**



The aileron remained attached to the left wing, but the flap had separated and was consumed by fire. The left wing exhibited leading edge damage, buckling, and thermal damage. The aileron and flap remained attached to the right wing and the flap was in the retracted position. The right wing exhibited leading edge damage, buckling, and thermal damage. Flight control cable continuity was confirmed from both wing ailerons to the cockpit area. Due to impact and thermal damage, continuity could not be confirmed for the elevator and rudder, nor could an elevator trim setting be determined.

The engine was buried nose first in approximately 3 ft of mud. Further examination of the engine was planned following wreckage recovery.

MEDICAL AND PATHOLOGICAL INFORMATION

TBD.

WITNESS STATEMENTS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

One eyewitness statement obtained.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Wreckage Recovery: Anglin Aircraft Recovery