

National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Research and Engineering

Washington, DC 20594



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MEDICAL

Specialist's Factual Report

February 6, 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A	ACCIDENT.....	3
B	MEDICAL SPECIALIST.....	3
C	DETAILS OF THE INVESTIGATION	3
1.0	PURPOSE	3
2.0	METHODS.....	3
D	FACTUAL INFORMATION.....	3
1.1	FAA Medical Certification File.....	3
1.2	Post-Accident Medical Records	3
1.3	Toxicology	4
1.3.1	Hospital Drug Testing	4
1.4	FAA Toxicology	4
1.5	Description of Detected Substance	4
E	SUMMARY OF MEDICAL FACTS.....	5

A ACCIDENT

Location: Clay, Kentucky
Date: March 8, 2024
Time: About 11:15 PM Local Time

B MEDICAL SPECIALIST

Specialist JE Tuttle MD MHA FACS
National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, DC

C DETAILS OF THE INVESTIGATION

1.0 Purpose

This investigation was performed to evaluate the pilot for potentially impairing medical conditions and substances.

2.0 Methods

The pilot's Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) medical certification file, and post-accident medical records were reviewed. Toxicology testing results were also reviewed of specimens collected from the pilot at the hospital and tested at the FAA Forensic Sciences Laboratory. Selected investigator reports and relevant regulation and medical literature were also reviewed.

D FACTUAL INFORMATION

1.1 FAA Medical Certification File

According to the pilot's FAA medical certification file, the 33-year-old male pilot's last aviation medical examination was November 9, 2021. At that time, he reported 73 total civilian flight hours. He was 70 inches tall and weighed 183 pounds. He reported no active medical issues and no medication use. He was issued a first-class medical certificate with no limitations. At the time of the accident, this medical certificate had not yet expired for operations requiring third-class medical certification.

1.2 Post-Accident Medical Records

Following the accident, the pilot was admitted to a hospital for treatment of injuries. Selected records from this hospitalization were reviewed. According to

hospital records, the crash site and pilot were not located by local law enforcement until around 10 AM on March 9 (the day after the crash). The pilot could not recall any details of the accident. Reviewed hospital records did not document other significant medical history or findings of natural disease.

1.3 Toxicology

1.3.1 Hospital Drug Testing

A hospital alcohol test of a serum specimen collected at 10:45 AM March 9 detected alcohol at 0.06 g/dL. A hospital drug screen of a urine specimen collected at 12:11 AM March 10 was negative for tested-for substances.¹

1.4 FAA Toxicology

The FAA Forensic Sciences Laboratory performed toxicological testing of hospital specimens from the pilot.² Ethanol was detected at 0.04 g/dL in blood collected at 10:45 AM March 9. Ethanol was detected at 0.05 g/dL in serum collected at 10:45 AM, March 9. Sertraline was detected at 27 ng/mL and desmethylsertraline was detected at 66 ng/mL in blood collected at 6:23 AM, March 10. Sertraline was detected at 478 ng/mL and desmethylsertraline was detected at 478 ng/mL in urine collected at 12:11 AM, March 10. Doxylamine was not detected in blood collected at 10:45 AM March 9, and was detected in urine collected at 12:11 AM, March 10.

1.5 Description of Detected Substance

Ethanol is a type of alcohol. It is the intoxicating alcohol in beer, wine, and liquor, and, if consumed, can impair judgment, psychomotor performance, cognition, and vigilance.³ FAA regulation imposes strict limits on flying after consuming ethanol, including prohibiting pilots from flying with a blood ethanol level of 0.04 g/dL or greater.⁴

¹ The pilot's urine was screened for tetrahydrocannabinol, cocaine, opiates, benzodiazepines, amphetamines, and phencyclidine.

² The FAA Forensic Sciences laboratory has the capability to test for around a thousand substances including toxins, prescription and over-the-counter medications, and illicit drugs.

³ Cook CCH. Alcohol and aviation. *Addiction*. 1997;92(5):539-555.

⁴ Code of Federal Regulations. Alcohol or Drugs. 14 Code of Federal Regulations §91.17. <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-14/chapter-I/subchapter-F/part-91/subpart-A/section-91.17>. Last amended December 15, 2026. Accessed January 15, 2026.

Sertraline is a prescription selective serotonin-reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) medication commonly used to treat depression, anxiety, panic disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorders.⁵ A pilot on sertraline (not in combination with other psychiatric drugs) may be considered for FAA medical certification via an Authorization for Special Issuance, depending on a detailed evaluation of the individual pilot's condition, including assessment of the pilot's response to treatment.⁶ Desmethylsertraline is a metabolite of sertraline.

Doxylamine is a sedating antihistamine medication that is available over the counter as a sleep aid and as an ingredient in various cold and allergy products. Sedating antihistamines can cause cognitive and psychomotor slowing and drowsiness, and products containing doxylamine may carry a driving warning.⁷ The FAA states that pilots should not fly within 60 hours of using doxylamine, to allow time for the drug to be cleared from circulation.⁸

E SUMMARY OF MEDICAL FACTS

According to the FAA medical certification file, the 33-year-old male pilot's last aviation medical examination was November 9, 2021. At that time, he reported no active medical issues and no medication use. At the time of the accident, this medical certificate had not yet expired for operations requiring third-class medical certification.

The pilot was involved in an airplane accident just before midnight March 8. The crash site and pilot were discovered the next day at around 10:00 AM. He was admitted to the hospital for treatment of his injuries. Reviewed hospital records did not document other significant medical history or findings of natural disease.

⁵ National Institute of Health. National Library of Medicine. Zoloft Hydrochloride. DailyMed. <https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/drugInfo.cfm?setid=fe9e8b7d-61ea-409d-84aa-3ebd79a046b5>. Updated January 15, 2023. Accessed January 13, 2026.

⁶ Federal Aviation Administration. Guide for Medical Examiners: Decisions considerations – aerospace medical dispositions. Item 47. Psychiatric Conditions- use of antidepressants. https://www.faa.gov/ame_guide/app_process/exam_tech/item47/amd/antidepressants. Updated April 24, 2024. Accessed August 2, 2024.

⁷ National Institute of Health. National Library of Medicine. Doxylamine succinate. DailyMed. <https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/drugInfo.cfm?setid=96a7c284-4666-4dac-b71e-9433f62580ad>. Updated arch 18, 2025. Accessed January 15, 2026.

⁸ FAA. Guide for Aviation Medical Examiners: Allergy-Antihistamine and Immunotherapy medication. https://www.faa.gov/ame_guide/media/AllergyAntihistamineImmunotherapyMedication.pdf. Updated October 10, 2022. Accessed February 3, 2026.

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Submitted by:

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