



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Office of Aviation Safety
Washington, D.C. 20594

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Radar Graphics

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

WPR18FA073

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A. ACCIDENT

Location: Elko, Nevada
Date: January 11, 2018
Time: 1802 Pacific standard time (PST)¹
0202 coordinated universal time (UTC), January 12, 2018
Airplane: N54857, a Piper PA-23-250

B. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL SPECIALIST

Betty Koschig
Senior Air Traffic Investigator
Operational Factors Division (AS-30)
National Transportation Safety Board

C. SUMMARY

On January 11, 2018, about 1800 Pacific standard time, a Piper PA-23-250 airplane, N54857, collided with mountainous terrain about 42 miles south of Elko, Nevada. The commercial pilot was fatally injured, and the airplane was destroyed. The airplane was registered to Mach Tuck, LLC and operated by Air America Flight Center, LLC as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 positioning flight. Night visual meteorological conditions prevailed, and a visual flight rules (VFR) flight plan was filed for the flight, which departed about 1500 from McClellan Airfield (MCC), Sacramento, California, with a destination of Salt Lake City International Airport (SLC), Salt Lake City, Utah.

D. DETAILS OF THE INVESTIGATION

An onsite investigation was not conducted. The factual information provided in this report was compiled using data obtained from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which included the Salt Lake City air route traffic control center (ARTCC) (ZLC) certified audio recordings²; aircraft accident package #18-001-ZLC³; and FAA certified radar data⁴. The radar source data was obtained from the long-range Battle Mountain (BAM) air route surveillance radar antenna (ARSR-2) located in Battle Mountain, NV.

E. FACTUAL INFORMATION

1.0 Radar Graphics

Figures 1 through 3 are Google earth screenshots illustrating the final portion (approximately 119 nautical miles) of N54857's flight, while in communication with ZLC. Each screenshot contains a legend describing pertinent chart information, and text boxes to highlight specific timeline information.

¹ All times are Pacific standard time (PST) unless otherwise noted.

² See Attachment 1 – ZLC Audio Recording.

³ See Attachment 2 – Aircraft Accident Package.

⁴ See Attachment 3 – Radar Data.

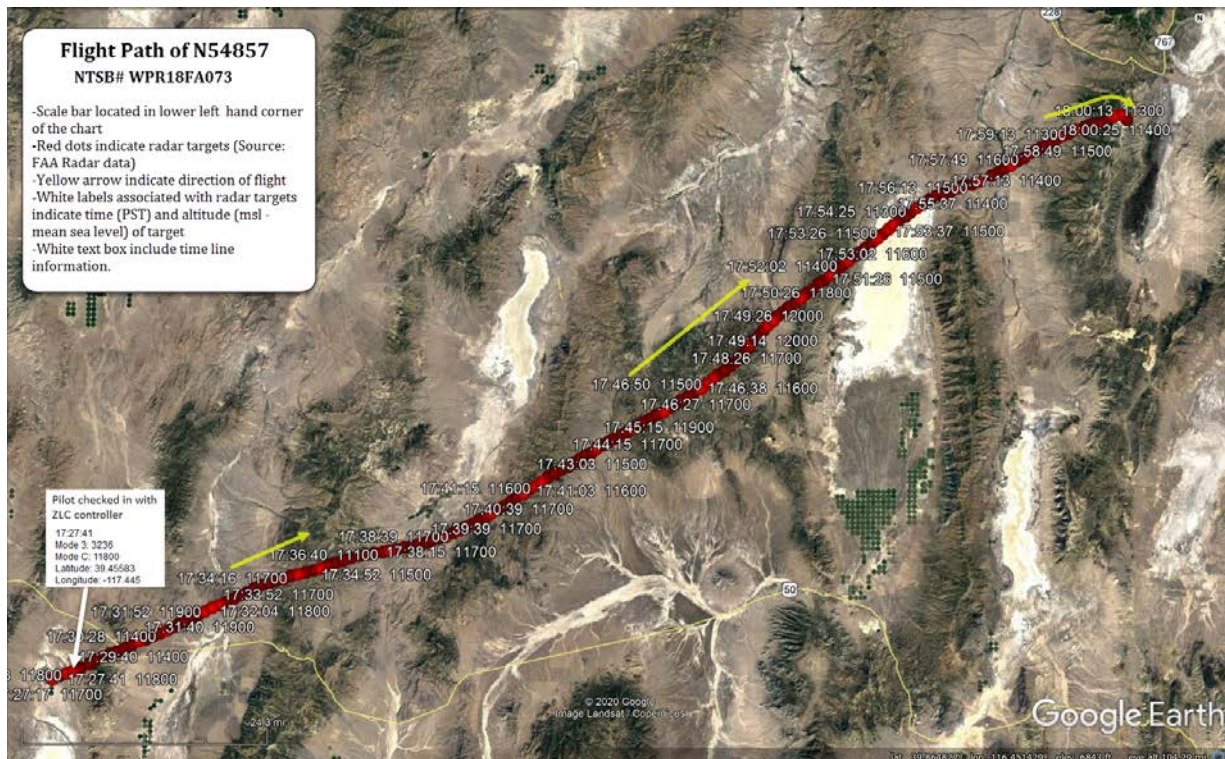


Figure 1. Google earth screenshot illustrates the airplane's flight path and depicts the time and location when the pilot checked in with ZLC.

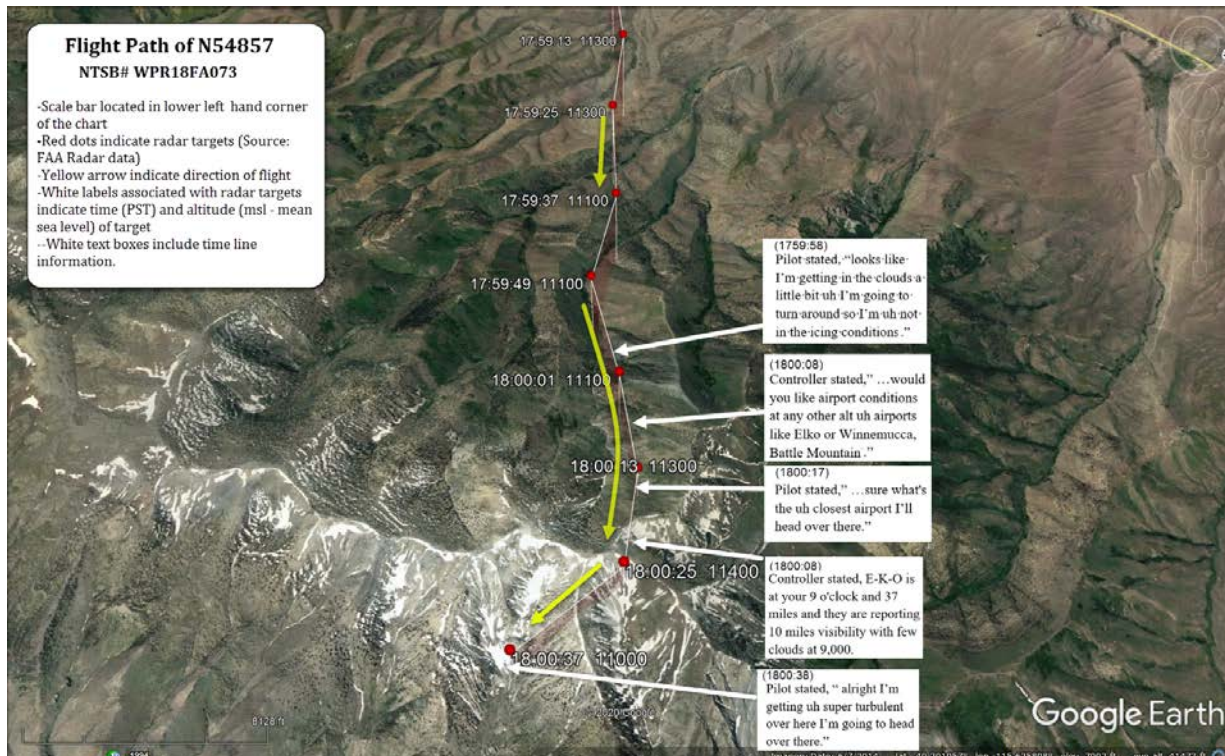


Figure 2. Google earth screenshot depicting the last minute of flight and the timeline of pilot/controller communications.

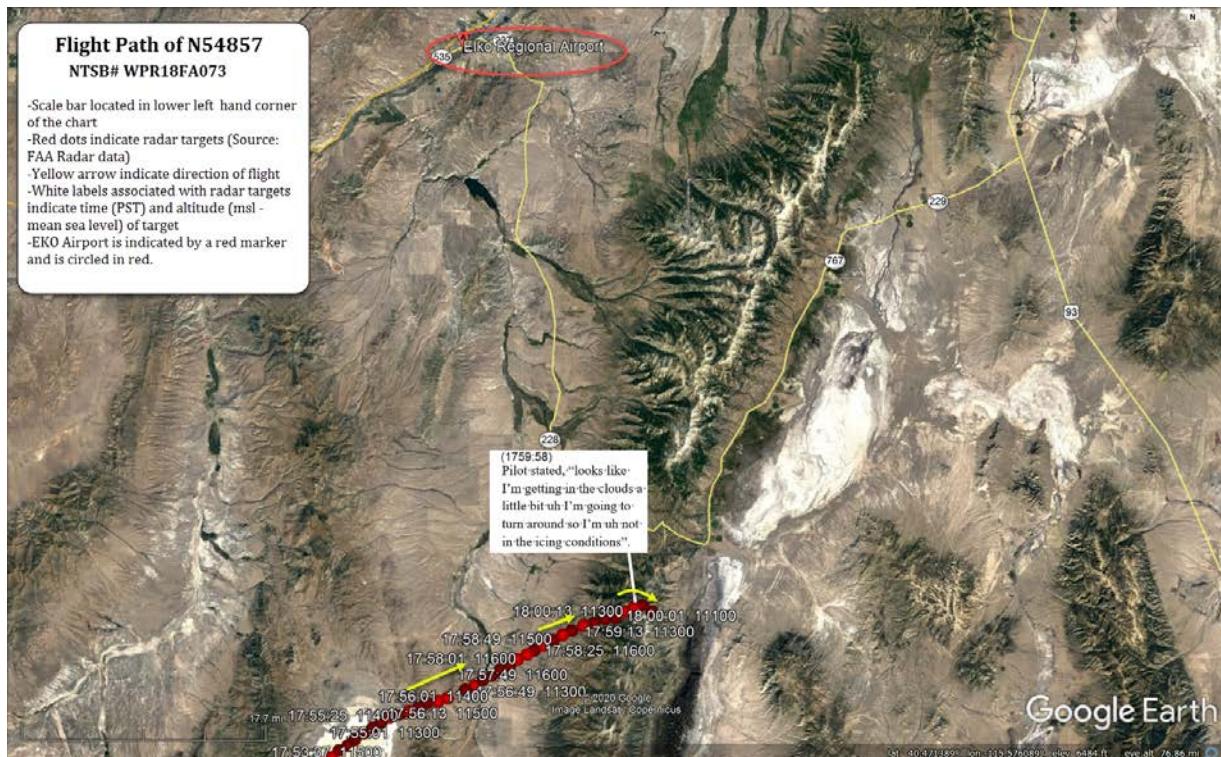


Figure 3. Google earth screenshot depicting the location of Elko Regional Airport (EKO), Elko, Nevada relative to the position of N54857 when the pilot reported “getting in the clouds.”

F. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – ZLC Audio Recording
- Attachment 2 – Aircraft Accident Package
- Attachment 3 – Radar Data

Submitted by:

Betty Koschig
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