



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

**Office of Aviation Safety
Western Pacific Region**

SITE and ON-SCENE INFORMATION (Rev B)

**NTSB Accident: WPR19FA080
Accident Date: February 5, 2019**

Examination Dates: February 6 & 7, 2019

This document contains 34 embedded images

Images courtesy NTSB, Textron Aviation (Cessna), and Riverside County Sheriffs Office

A. ACCIDENT

Location: Desert Hot Springs, California
Date: February 5, 2019
Aircraft: Cessna 172M, N20556, Serial # 1726139
NTSB IIC: Michael Huhn

B. EXAMINATION PARTICIPANTS:

Michael Huhn
Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Federal Way, WA

Robert Michaelson
Air Safety Inspector
Federal Aviation Administration
Riverside, California

Rick Hernandez
Air Safety Inspector
Federal Aviation Administration
Riverside, California

Henry Soderlund
Air Safety Investigator
Textron Aviation
Wichita, Kansas

C. SUMMARY

On February 5, 2019, about 1815 Pacific Standard time, a Cessna 172M airplane, N20556, impacted mountainous terrain near Desert Hot Springs, California while on a cross-country flight to North Las Vegas Airport (VGT), Las Vegas, Nevada. The commercial pilot and his non pilot-rated passenger received fatal injuries, and the airplane was destroyed. The airplane was registered to Flying Academy Los Angeles (FALA), and was being operated as a 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91 personal flight. Undetermined night meteorological conditions existed at the impact location at the time of the accident. The accident flight leg had originated from San Gabriel Valley Airport (EMT), El Monte, California.

No evidence consistent with in-flight fire or in-flight structural failure was observed.

D. RESPONSE and SITE LOCATION INFORMATION

1.0 Background and Response

- The pilot was conducting a VFR flight to North Las Vegas Airport (VGT) from the LA Basin
- He was using FAA flight following services and had been assigned a discrete beacon code
- The FAA controller was in voice communications with the pilot, and was receiving the secondary radar returns from the airplane
- The pilot advised the controller that he planned to follow a road and remain at an altitude of 3,500 ft (msl) for the entire flight

- Voice communications and radar returns from the airplane were lost about 1815
- An FAA ALNOT was issued at 1843
- Riverside Sheriffs Department personnel located the wreckage in the evening of February 5
- Their initial assessment was that the pilot, believed to be the sole person on board, was fatally injured
- FAA inspectors from Riverside FSDO arrived in the morning of February 6
- NTSB IIC arrived the afternoon of February 6
- The Textron Aviation representative arrived the morning of February 7

2.0 Location, Site Condition, and Ground Scar Information

- The accident site coordinates were 34.02574 N, -116.58775 W
- The accident site elevation was about 2,465 ft, above and west of the road that the pilot was believed to be following
- The wreckage was about 800 ft west of the north-south road, which was a paved 4-lane highway (CA Rte 62) that was situated in the river/wash valley that formed a pass through a small mountain range
- The wreckage was on steep, unstable terrain about 300 ft above the road
- The wreckage was observed to be precariously situated on the mountain slope, which limited the extent of the examination of the wreckage in situ
- Only a very few items (lower cowl, windscreen fragments, left and right navigation light lens fragments, right-side cabin door, and one MLG tire) were separated from the main wreckage
 - The lower cowl and the nav light lens fragments were found about 30 ft above the main wreckage; this is considered to be the impact point
 - The terrain at the impact point and between that and the wreckage was steeper than the terrain where the wreckage came to rest
 - The observed ground scars (disturbed soil & rocks) were consistent with the airplane then falling/sliding down to its final resting location
 - The relative locations of the left and right lens fragments were congruent with the airplane being upright when it struck the mountain face
- The forward section of the airplane was upright, and partially covered with soil/rocks that had slid downhill
- The fuselage was severely crushed and torn, and the wings and empennage were severely torn and deformed
- The approximate orientation of the wreckage was on a heading of approximately 230° True
 - The mountain impact face and wreckage distribution were consistent with this also being the approximate ground track at the time of impact
- There was no indication of fire, either inflight or post impact
- First responders reported that the airplane was "covered in fuel" when they arrived at the wreckage (about 0050 February 6)

E. WRECKAGE INFORMATION

1.0 In-Situ Examination

- The engine and propeller were nearly completely obscured by the wreckage and/or terrain debris that slid downhill onto the wreckage
- The engine appeared to be upright
- The cabin was crushed, torn and deformed, and unrecognizable except by its location
- The MLG carry-through structure, including the two MLG legs, was inverted and translated up and forward from its normal location
- The aft fuselage was folded over, up, and forward of its normal position; it was also rotated about 90° (top surface to airplane left) about its longitudinal axis
- The horizontal stabilizer was mostly intact, but mostly separated from the aft fuselage
- Both elevators remained attached to the horizontal stabilizer, and the pitch trim tab remained attached to the right elevator
- The fin remained attached to the aft fuselage, and the rudder remained attached to the fin
- Both wings were upright, but crushed, torn, and swept aft about 45°
- Both wings had LE aft crushing continuously across their full spans
- Both ailerons remained attached to the wings
- Both flaps remained attached to their wings, and appeared to be fully retracted
- Both fuel caps were observed installed securely in their respective filler necks
- All flight control surface balance weights appeared to be present
- Multiple control cables were visible, but their routing and continuity could not be determined due to the level of damage
- Only a portion of one individual, a male, was able to be seen at first; the total number of occupants was initially unable to be determined, due to the condition of the wreckage
- Some personal items and luggage was able to be accessed from the wreckage while it was on the hillside
 - The items included the reported pilot's wallet with his pilot and medical certificates
 - A small piece of hand luggage appeared to belong to a female, and when it was opened, it contained female clothing and accessories
- The luggage indications prompted further attempts to locate additional victims in the wreckage, and another person (likely female) was detected

2.0 Post-Hillside Recovery

- The condition and location of the wreckage warranted its extraction by helicopter
- The helicopter crew packaged and recovered the wreckage to a clearing about a mile from the accident site
- The two (and only) victims were recovered from the wreckage
- The wreckage was partially examined and photographed and loaded onto a truck for transport to a secure facility where it could be examined in detail
- The all metal fixed pitch two blade propeller was fracture-separated from the engine at its attach flange

- The onboard clock was stopped at 0115:47 (consistent with being set to UTC time, equivalent to 1815:47 PST)
- The artificial horizon was fracture-separated from the instrument panel
 - It was date stamped January 2, 2019
- No other useful instrument or control indications were able to be made at this time

F. ACCIDENT LOCATION IMAGES



Figure 1 - Overview of Route and Accident Location



Figure 2 - Closer View of Site Location (pilot reportedly following CA-62)



Figure 3 - Site Relative to Road & Terrain

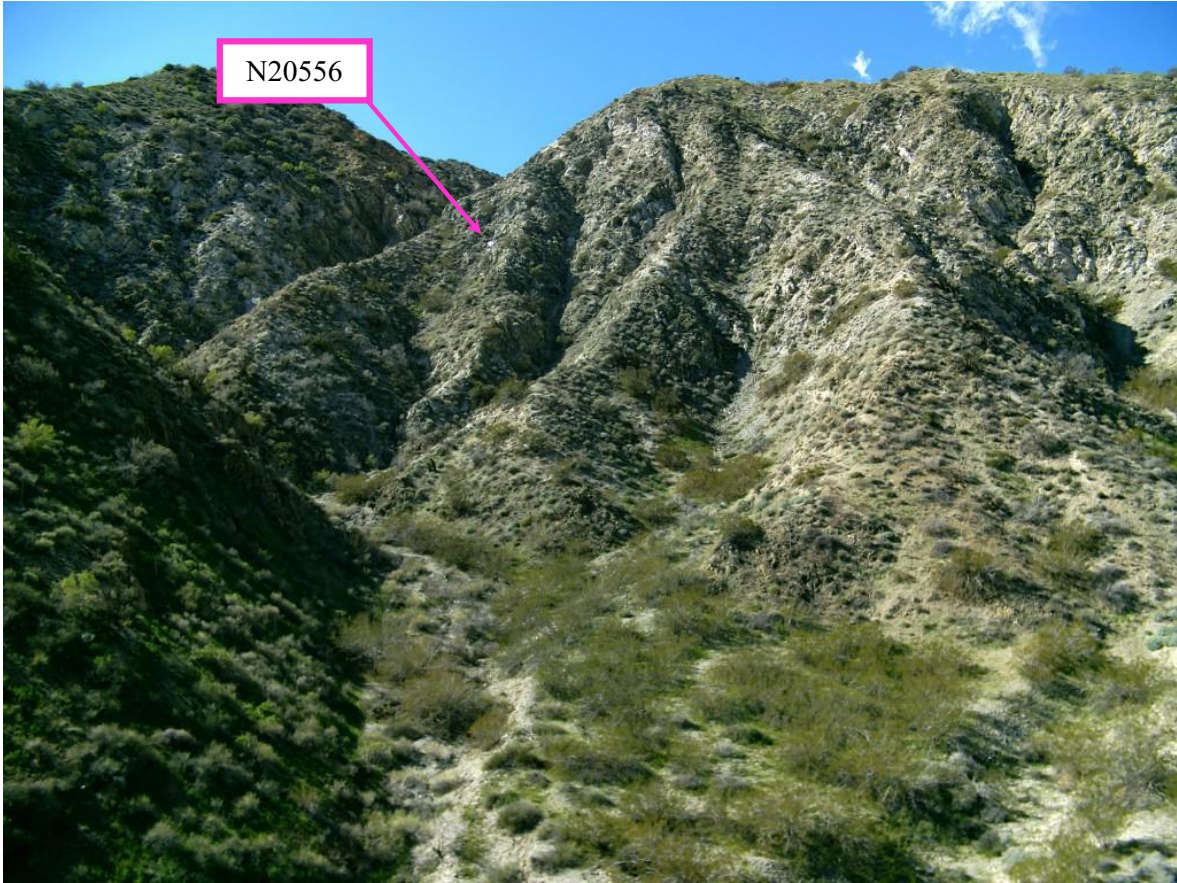


Figure 4 - Site Location as Seen from Road

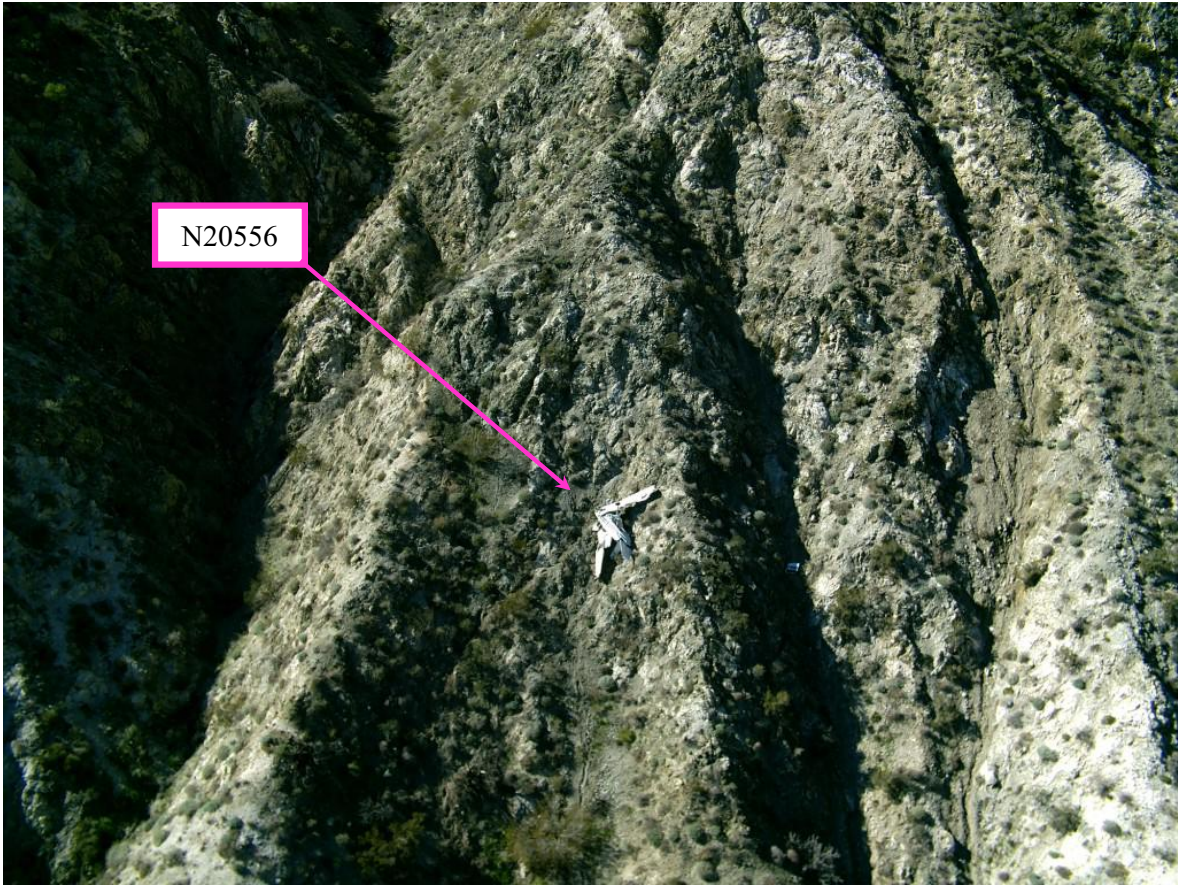


Figure 5 - Impact Location

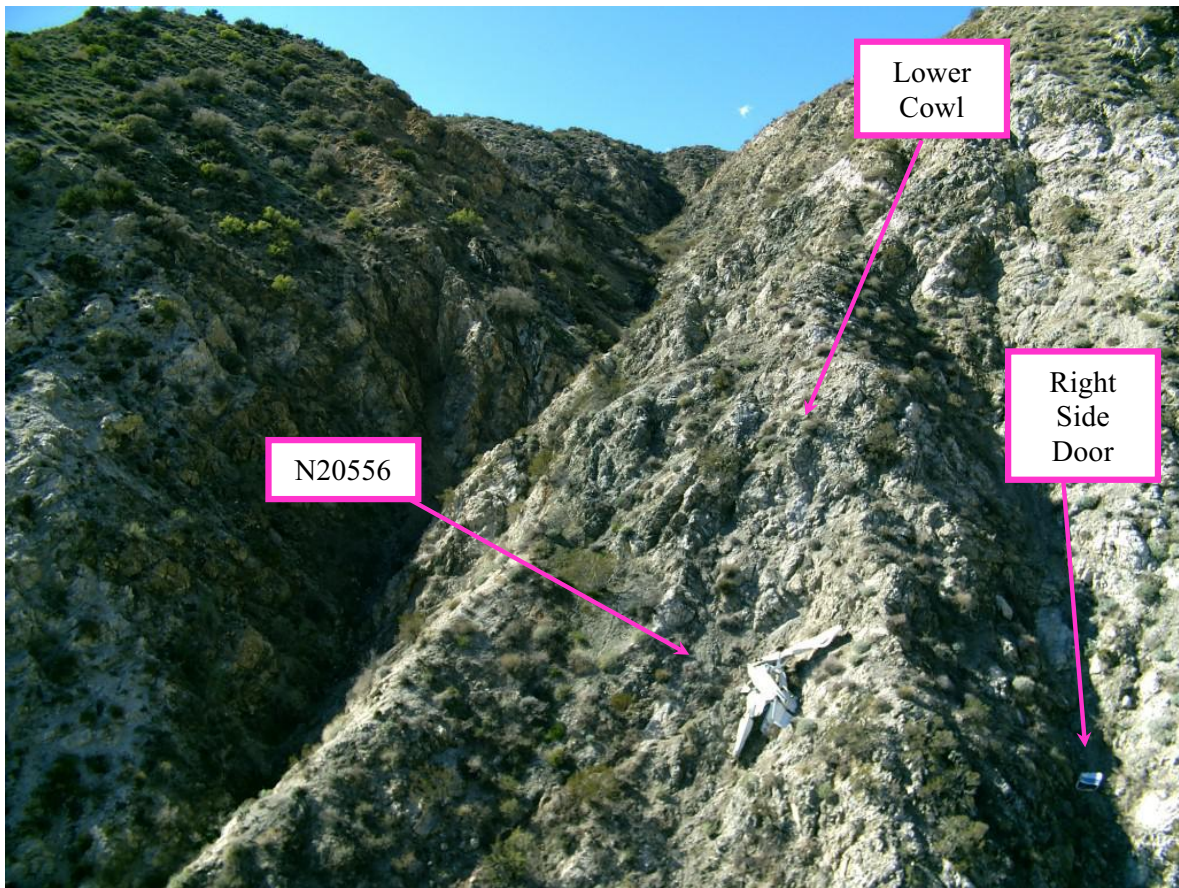


Figure 6 - Wreckage on Steep Terrain

G. WRECKAGE IMAGES

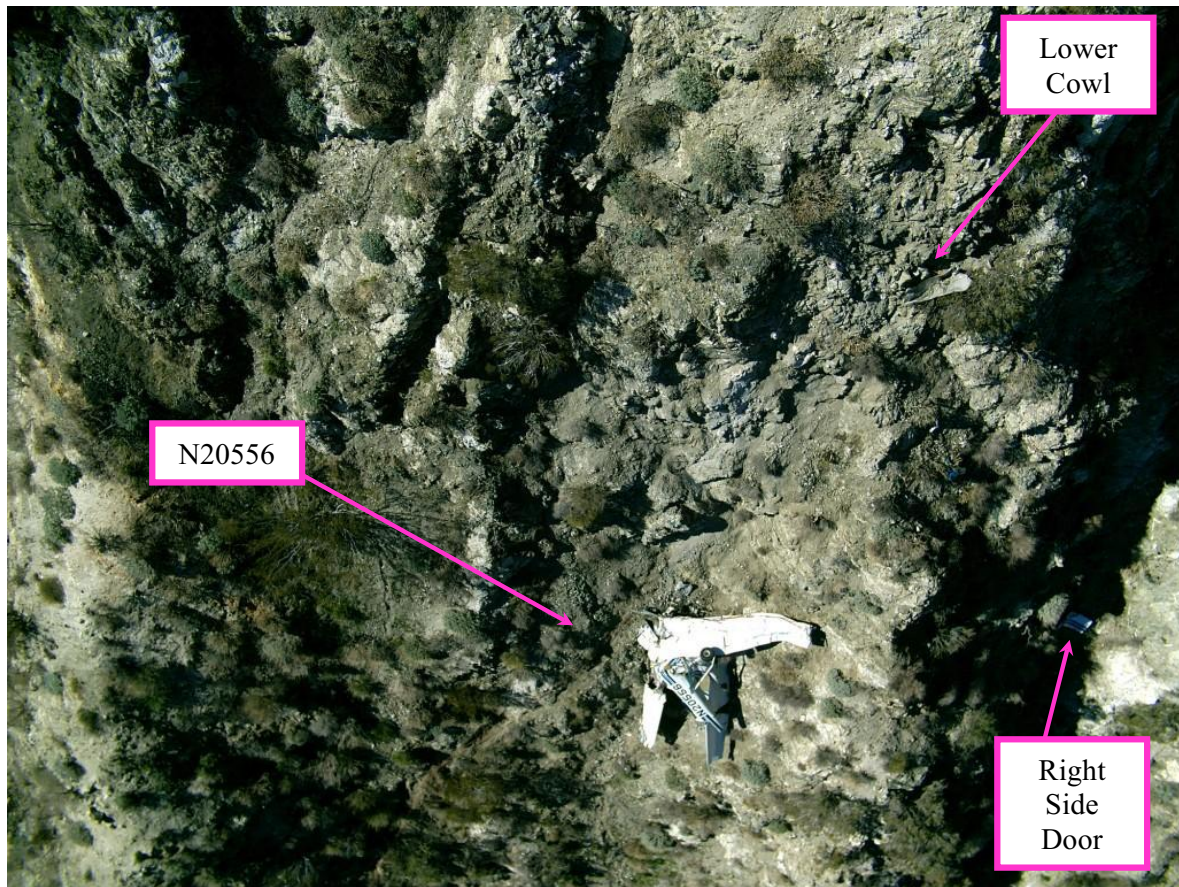


Figure 7 - Wreckage Overview

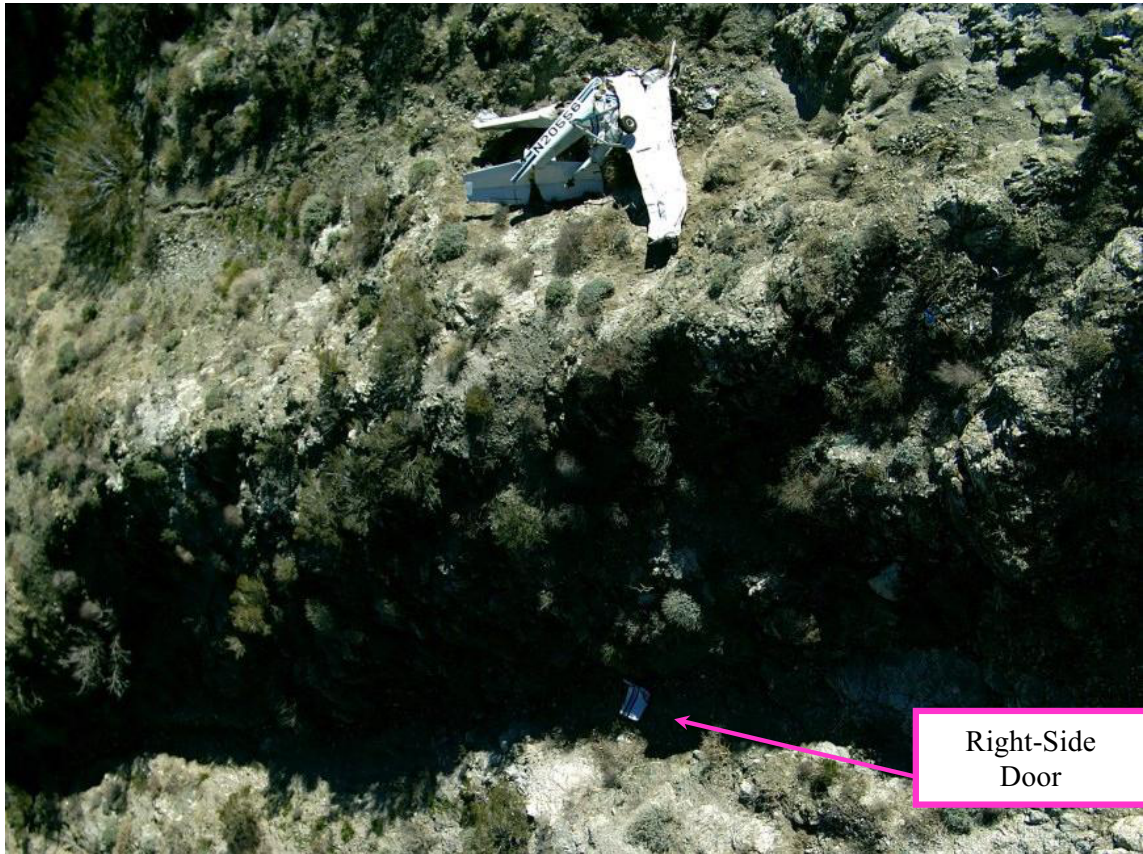


Figure 8 - Wreckage Overview



Figure 9 - Right-Side Door



Figure 10 - Top View of Wreckage



Figure 11 - Wreckage On-Site



Figure 12 - Cockpit/Cabin Area



Figure 13 - Right Side View



Figure 14 - Right Wing & Fuel Cap



Figure 15 - Left Wing LE Crush Damage



Figure 16 - Right Wing LE Crush Damage



Figure 17 - Upper Fuselage



Figure 18 - Cockpit/Cabin



Figure 19 - Horizontal Stabilizers and Elevators



Figure 20 - Aft Right View of Cabin



Figure 21 - Main Wreckage Aerial Extraction



from

Figure 22 - Front View



Figure 23 - Front View



Figure 24 - Fin and Rudder



Figure 25 - Propeller Flange & Engine



Figure 26 - Engine



Figure 27 - Artificial Horizon

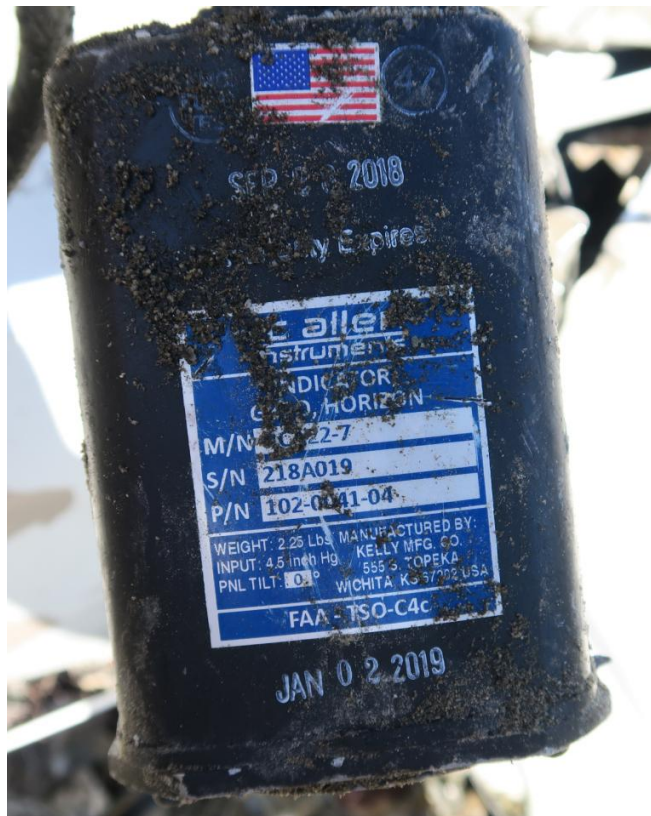


Figure 28 - Artificial Horizon



Figure 29 - Pilot-Side Instrument Panel



Figure 30 - Clock Indicating Accident Time



Figure 31 - Propeller



Figure 32 - Blade Deformation



Figure 33 - Blade Deformation

I. UNITED STATES OF AMERICA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION - FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION ii. TEMPORARY AIRMAN CERTIFICATE						iii. CERTIFICATE NO. [REDACTED]	
THIS CERTIFIES THAT		iv. JUNGHO JU v. [REDACTED] SEOUL 02951 KOREA, REPUBLIC OF					
DATE OF BIRTH	HEIGHT	WEIGHT	HAIR	EYES	SEX	NATIONALITY	
[REDACTED] 1987	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	KOREA, REPUBLIC OF	
ix. [REDACTED] has been found to be properly qualified and is hereby authorized in accordance with the conditions of issuance on the reverse of this certificate to exercise the privileges of COMMERCIAL PILOT							
RATINGS AND LIMITATIONS xii. AIRPLANE SINGLE ENGINE LAND; AIRPLANE MULTIENGINE LAND; INSTRUMENT AIRPLANE; [LIMITATIONS]: ENGLISH PROFICIENT							
xiii. THIS IS ☐ AN ORIGINAL ISSUANCE ☒ A REISSUANCE OF THIS GRADE OF CERTIFICATE							
DATE OF SUPERSEDED AIRMAN CERTIFICATE						11/15/2018	
BY DIRECTION OF THE ADMINISTRATOR						EXAMINER'S DESIGNATION NO. OR INSPECTOR'S REG. NO.	
x. DATE OF ISSUANCE		xi. SIGNATURE OF EXAMINER OR INSPECTOR				[REDACTED]	
01/07/2019 10:24:28 AM		ALAN LEROY HAALAND				DATE DESIGNATION EXPIRES	
		IACRA E-SIGNED APPLICATION - SO15				5/31/2019	
FAA Form 8060-4 (8-76) USE PREVIOUS EDITION				Application Number: 1975360		IACRA Equivalent	
XIV. CONDITIONS OF ISSUANCE This is an interim certificate issued subject to the approval of the Federal Aviation Administration pending the issuance of a certificate of greater duration. It becomes void -							
1. Upon the receipt of a certificate of greater duration to replace it; 2. Upon a finding by the FAA that an error has been made in its issuance; 3. Upon a finding by the FAA that it was issued illegally or as the result of fraud or mis-representation; 4. Upon the refusal or failure by the holder to accomplish a flight check by a Flight Standards Inspector if so requested; and 5. In any case, at the expiration of 120 days from date of issuance.							

Figure 34 - Pilot's Certificate