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Survival Aspects

Postaccident photographs showed the fatally injured pilot was found pinned between the seatback and the forward control panel in a compressed “knees-to-chest” position. Postaccident photographs also showed the presence of an unrestrained 80lb. Nissan outboard boat motor in the back of the airplane. The heaviest (above water) portion of the motor was in contact with the back of the front left (pilot) seat. The pilot’s cause of death was multiple blunt force trauma and the autopsy noted that he sustained serious injuries to both his head and torso. The autopsy noted the presence of a right orbital roof/frontal bone fracture and right-sided subarachnoid hemorrhage. Additionally he sustained open and closed bilateral rib fractures including left ribs 3-11 posterior lateral, right ribs 2-7 anterior and right ribs 3-9 lateral (with flail chest area). There was a fracture of the sternum at intercostal space 4 and bilateral hemothoraces (400 mL left and 150 mL right). There were also scattered pulmonary contusions measuring up to 2 inches and a fracture of the lumbar vertebral column at L1.

The occupant in the right, front seat was seriously injured and transported to a local hospital via helicopter for treatment. Her serious injuries included a fractured left clavicle, fractured right ribs 4-7 anterolateral, and left rib 4, anterior. Additionally she sustained nasal fractures, pulmonary contusions, an L1 compression fracture, a sacral fracture and a large, open laceration of the right knee. She was discharged after 6 days in the hospital.

The airplane was equipped with three-point restraints at both forward seating positions and both ceiling-mounted inertia reels were found jammed in place postaccident. The lap belt portions of both restraints were still attached to the floor fittings and were undamaged. The surviving occupant reported being restrained during impact. The pilot’s shoulder harness had a linear separation consistent with having been cut by emergency response personnel.