

National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Aviation Safety

Washington, DC 20594



WPR24FA035

FIELD NOTES SUMMARY

November 17, 2023

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A. ACCIDENT

Location: Provo, Utah
Date: November 14, 2023
Time: 1008 Mountain standard time (MST)
1708 Coordinated Universal Time (UTC)
Airplane: N3971L

B. FIELD NOTES SUMMARY

Investigator in Charge	Eleazar Nepomuceno National Transportation Safety Board Prescott, Arizona
Investigator	Scott Johnson National Transportation Safety Board Federal Way, Washington
Inspector	Gordon Behunin Federal Aviation Administration Salt Lake City, Utah
Party Coordinator	Ricardo Asensio Textron Aviation Wichita, Kansas
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C. SUMMARY

On November 14, 2023, about 1008 Mountain standard time (MST), a Cessna 172G, N3971L, was substantially damaged when it was involved in an accident near Provo, Utah. Both pilots were fatally injured, and the passenger sustained serious injuries. The airplane was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 personal flight.

The Civil Air Patrol received an emergency locator transmission the day of the accident, about 1117 MST. A search by a local law enforcement agency ensued and the airplane wreckage was discovered on a rising face of Slate Canyon about 2,000 ft below the summit, about 6 nm northeast of Spanish Fork Municipal Airport/Woodhouse Field (KSPK), Spanish Fork, Utah.

The passenger reported that they were on a multi-legged cross-country flight from KSPK to Driggs airport (KDIJ), Driggs ID. According to Automatic Dependent Surveillance Broadcast (ADS-B) data revealed that shortly after departure, the airplane maneuvered north and east of Provo Municipal Airport (KPVU), outside of the Class-D airspace and entered Slate Canyon towards rising terrain (figure 1). The passenger added that he does not know why the pilot turned toward the canyon. He further added that he noted windy conditions, heard the stall warning horn and, that the airplane was in a nose high attitude prior to impacting trees.

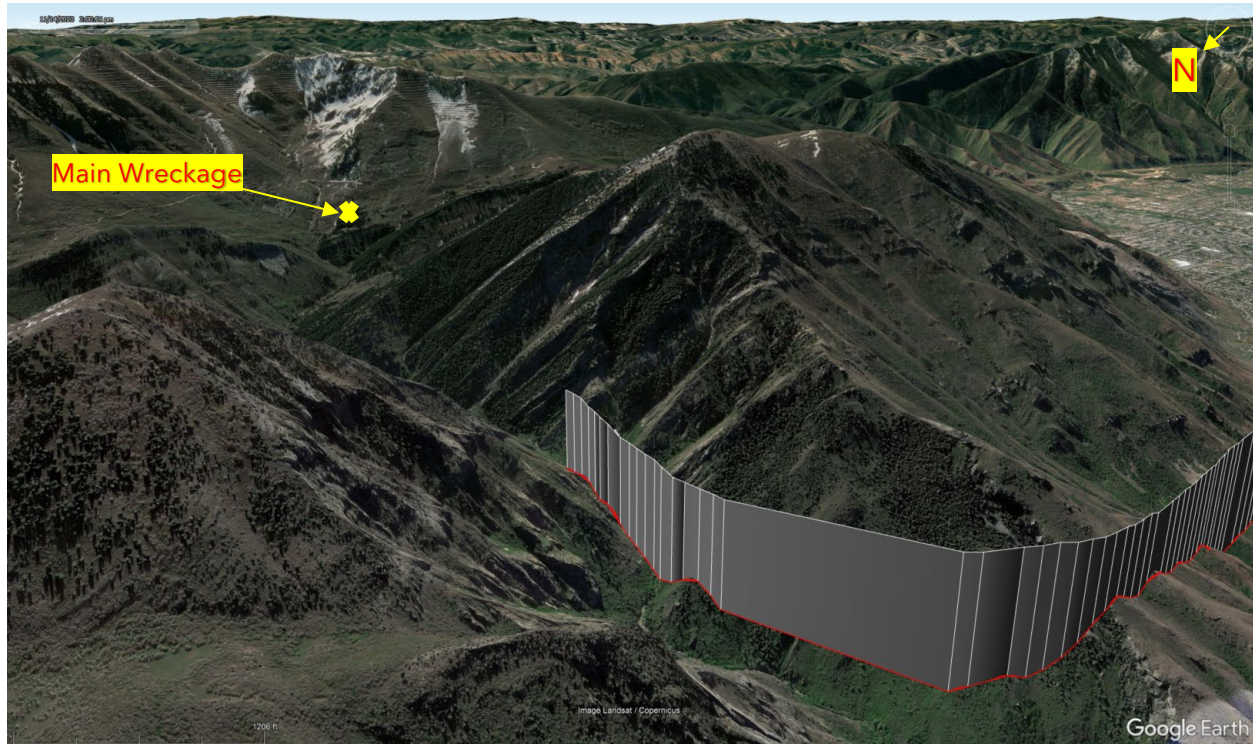


Figure 1. View of location of main wreckage in relation to ADS-B data track in Google Earth.

The airplane and engine were recovered to a secured location in Phoenix, Arizona for further examination.

D. DETAILS OF THE INVESTIGATION

1.0 Accident Site

The wreckage was located on a mountain side at a field elevation of about 7,900 ft mean sea level (msl). The airplane came to rest on a slope (figure 2) and was oriented on a heading of 050° magnetic. The first identified point of contact (FIPC) was identified by a severed branch of 70-foot-tall aspen trees and several broken tree branches. A debris path was marked with subsequent tree strikes that began about 80 ft forward of the FPI and oriented on a heading of 280° magnetic. The main wreckage marked the end of the debris path and was located about 170 ft beyond

the FIPC. All major structures necessary for flight were accounted for at the accident site.



Figure 2. View of accident airplane which came to rest nose down.

2.0 Airframe Observations

2.1 Fuselage

The fuselage came to rest nose down against aspen trees. The windscreen was damaged and both forward door posts were separated from the forward section of the cabin roof. The cabin roof remained attached to the upper aft section of the fuselage. The aft fuselage remained attached and sustained heavy compression damage consistent with impact. Flight control cable continuity was established to the cockpit to all surfaces.

2.2 Empennage

The empennage came to rest on aspen trees. The left and right horizontal stabilizer remained attached to elevator and sustained leading edge damage consistent with impact. The vertical stabilizer remained attached and displayed leading edge damage. The rudder remained attached and sustained impact damage. The elevator trim actuator could not be examined due to the position of the

wreckage. The elevator actuator was measured at 1.4" with equates to 5-degree tab up position.

2.3 Wings

The right wing remained attached to its respective anchor points. The right wing displayed compression damage which spanned the wing's leading edge and was swept aft consistent with impact damage. The lift wing strut remained attached and sustained impact damage. The flaps and ailerons remained attached to its respective mounting points. The flaps were found in the UP position.

The left wing separated from its wing root forward attachment point and was swept aft consistent with a tree strike. Leading edge compression was observed about midspan consistent with a tree strike. The outer 3 ft of the left wing folded aft consistent with impact damage.

2.4 Landing Gear

The nose landing gear was folded underneath the fuselage. The main landing gear remained attached to its mounting points.

2.5 Cockpit

Both front seats were removed by rescue personal during occupant recovery. The airspeed indicator was found at zero, the pitch and roll attitude indicator was found damaged. The altimeter showed an elevation of 7,900 ft. The altimeter was set to 30.18. The turn coordinator level indicator and ball were deflected to the left. The heading indicator was set to 085° with the heading "bug" indicator undetermined. The vertical speed indicator's value could not be determined. The communication and navigation radios, to include the transponder were impact damaged and their settings could not be determined. The master battery switch electrical switch was in the OFF position. The master alternator switch was in the OFF position.

The Hobbs meter was at 3309.8. The tachometer hours displayed 762.8 hours. The manifold pressure was at 45. The oil pressure, oil temperature, exhaust gas temperature, cylinder head temperature, fuel pressure, fuel flow, ammeter, and voltmeter values or positions were undetermined. The throttle was in the IDLE position, the mixture and propeller controls were in the full forward position.

2.6 Survivability

The airplane was equipped with four 2-point restraint type systems. Each restraint was attached at its respective anchor point with the copilot restraint strap cut by rescue personnel.

The emergency locator transmitter was armed and activated.

2.7 Fuel/Fuel System

Fuel odor was detected on site. First responders reported that fuel was leaking out of the fuel tanks during recovery. The fuel selector handle was separated from the fuel selector valve during impact. The position of the fuel selector valve could not be determined.

3.0 Engine

An STC Lycoming engine remained attached to the airframe. The engine truss sustained impact damage. All four cylinders remained attached. The oil sump remained attached. The fuel filter bowl was secured and removed. Fuel was observed inside the bowl, the filter screen was free of debris. All engine accessories remained attached to their respective mounting pad.

4.0 Propeller

A STC Hartzell 2-bladed constant speed propeller remained attached to the engine. Both blades were observed with some leading and trailing edge damage, gouging, and polishing.

5.0 Meteorological Information

Provo (KPVU) reported, about the time of the accident, winds from 120° at 9 knots, visibility of 10 statute miles, few clouds at 9000 ft, temperature of 52°F and dewpoint of 23°F, with a barometric setting of 30.19 inHg.

Submitted by:

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