

National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Aviation Safety

Washington, DC 20594



WPR24FA040

ACCIDENT SITE SURVEY

May 14, 2024

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A. ACCIDENT

Location: Mertzon, Texas
Date: November 25, 2023
Time: 18:35
Airplane: Piper Aircraft 28-180 / N7763W

B. ACCIDENT SITE SURVEY

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FAA	Aspen Perrin Federal Aviation Administration Lubbock, TX
Party Member	Kathryn Whitaker Piper Aircraft Vero Beach, FL
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C. SUMMARY

On November 25, about 1835 central standard time, a Piper PA-28-180 Cherokee, N7763W, was substantially damaged when it was involved in an accident near Mertzon, Texas. The pilot and two passengers were fatally injured. The airplane was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 personal flight.

D. DETAILS OF THE INVESTIGATION

1.0 Accident Site

The accident occurred about 27 nautical miles northeast of the Reagan County Airport (E41) Big Lake, Texas, and about 26 nautical miles west of San Angelo Regional Airport / Mathis Field (SJT), San Angelo, Texas. It is undetermined if SJT was the next destination; however, it was the next nearest airport with services in the general direction the airplane was travelling.

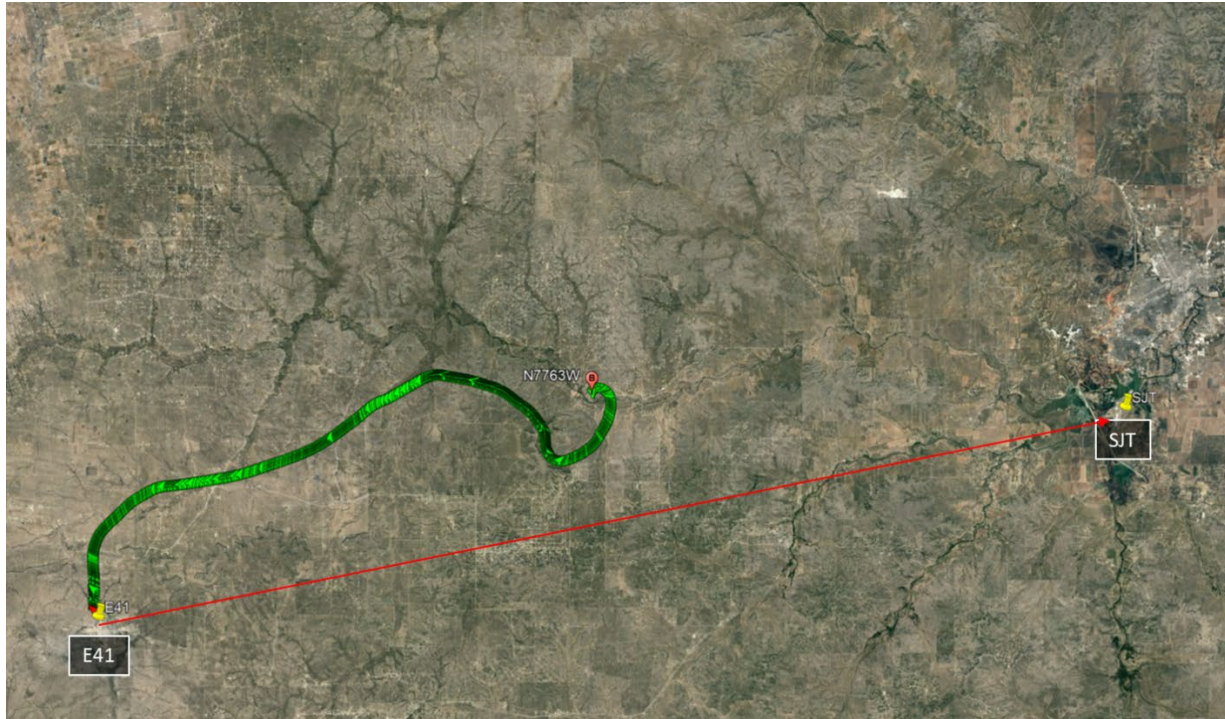


Figure 1. Google Earth image showing the location of the accident site in relation to E41 and the next nearest airport with services, SJT. The red arrow indicates a direct path from E41 to SJT.

The accident scene was in an open, hilly, and unpopulated terrain covered with cactus and scrub oak of about 2 ft to 15 ft tall. The ground was hard and rocky. Power distribution lines were located about 830 ft northeast of the accident site; however, there was no damage to the power lines or poles. Figure 2 shows the location of the main wreckage, and the first point of probable impact (FPPI). The dashed white arrow indicates the estimated direction of travel.



Figure 2. Overhead image showing the main wreckage and the FPPI. Photograph courtesy of the Sheriff's Department.

The airplane came to rest inverted at 31°22'47.40" N 101°0'5.44" W at an elevation of about 2,227 ft mean sea level (msl), on a heading of about 299° magnetic. Figure 3.

The last ADS-B data point recorded the airplane, about 2,200 ft msl or about 0 ft agl, about 288 ft northeast of the accident site.



Figure 3. Google Earth image showing the location of the last ADS-B data point, the FPPI, and the airplane wreckage.



Figure 4. Image of the accident airplane.

A line of disturbed vegetation extended back from the wreckage by about 186 ft on a bearing of about 033° magnetic (213° from FPPI to wreckage). Fragments of the airplane including the wings and propeller were strewn about the area. The FPPI was a scrub oak tree located at 31°22'48.93" N 101°0'4.25" W at an elevation of about 2,234 ft msl. A section of the left wing remained lodged in the scrub oak tree.



Figure 5. Image showing the FPPI and the wreckage in the background.

Submitted by:

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IIC