

National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Aviation Safety

Washington, DC 20594



WPR24FA150

ACCIDENT SITE SURVEY

May 15, 2024

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A. ACCIDENT

Location: Thurlow, Montana
Date: May 14, 2024
Time: 0715 MDT
Airplane: Piper PA-18 / N14323

B. ACCIDENT SITE SURVEY

IIC	Fabian Salazar National Transportation Safety Board Federal Way, Washington
FAA	John Cosenza Federal Aviation Administration Salt Lake City, Utah
Party Member	Jonathan Hirsch Piper Aircraft Vero Beach, Florida
Party Member	Mark Platt Lycoming Engines Phoenix, Arizona

C. SUMMARY

On May 14, 2024, about 0715 mountain daylight time, a Piper Aircraft PA-18-150 Super Cub airplane, N41323, was substantially damaged when it was involved in an accident near Thurlow, Montana. The pilot and passenger received fatal injuries. The airplane was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 personal flight.

D. ACCIDENT SITE

The accident was located on private property described as the Cross Four Ranch. The wreckage was located at N 46° 19' 44.1" 106° 22' 29.0" at an elevation of 2,620 ft mean sea level (msl). The terrain was hilly and rocky with short, inconsequential vegetation.

The airplane came to rest on the engine nacelle that was displaced upward significantly, which resulted in the empennage oriented straight up. The heading was about 040° magnetic. Fragments of the red and green navigation lights were

discovered imbedded in the terrain and aided in determining that the heading at impact was about 310° magnetic. The airplane then rotated clockwise about 90°.



Figure 1. N14323, at rest on a heading of about 040°. The image is looking 310° magnetic, the impact heading.



Figure 2. Google Earth image showing the impact heading and the estimated location of the navigation light fragments.

The airplane came to rest near the top of a hill. There were no indications that the airplane travelled in any direction after impact, other than rotating about 90° clockwise.

The first point of probable impact was a gouge in the terrain directly underneath the wreckage. The gouge was consistent with one propeller blade cutting smoothly into the soil.



Figure 3. Image showing the first point of probable impact. The propeller is positioned for scale.



Figure 4. Image showing the top of the hill.



Figure 5. Image showing the airplane and the hilly terrain.

Multiple shotgun shells were observed inside and outside of the airplane. Three weapons were recovered from the cabin. The first was a 12-gauge semi-automatic shot gun manufactured by Heckler & Koch (H&K), serial number: M209004. A red shotgun shell was found inside the chamber. The second weapon was a 12-gauge single-shot shotgun manufactured by Harrington & Richardson (H&R), serial number: AM389717. A red shell was observed in the chamber. A 22-caliber pistol was recovered from the cabin. The pistol was loaded with cartridges. All weapons were identified as being owned by the pilot and were subsequently turned over to the family, as were the shotgun shells.



Figure 6. Semi-automatic H&K shotgun recovered from cabin. Note the red shotgun shell in the chamber.



Figure 7. Single-shot H&R shotgun recovered from the cabin. The red shotgun shell was removed from the chamber.



Figure 8. .22-caliber pistol recovered from the cabin.

A Garmin 496 GPS, serial number: 19712680, was recovered from the cabin. The GPS was retained for further examination.



Figure 9. Garmin 496 GPS unit.

The pilot and the pilot-rated-passenger's cell phones and wallets were recovered. All were examined for factual data and turned over to the Sheriff's department.

Submitted by:

Fabian Salazar
IIC