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Office of Aviation Safety – Western Pacific Region

All persons listed were interviewed by NTSB personnel unless otherwise stated:

The following is a summary of conversations:

██████████ (PAST FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR)

I am emailing in response to an inquiry about my time flying with ██████████ as his CFI. ██████████ was a student that I very much enjoyed working with. He was passionate about learning to fly and eager to continue to grow as a pilot. The loss of both him and his two passengers is a true tragedy.

Over the course of about 12 months we were able to fly roughly 80 hours together while working on his private pilot certificate. Of those 80 hours, about 50 were in a C-172 and the other 30 were in his personal C-182, N2764Q. The majority of our training was located in the Willamette Valley area of Oregon surrounding our home airport of Twin Oaks Airpark (7S3) while working on the basics of the private pilot training. Our cross countries consisted of trips over the coast range, across the cascades over to the Bend, OR area and up north to Friday Harbor, WA. I also went with him to pick up his 182 after he purchased it from down in San Diego and brought it back up to Portland. I primarily did the flying for that trip but used it as an opportunity for him to see and learn about planning a longer trip that took us out of our comfort zone in the PNW. In my relatively short time in his 182, I did not experience any issues with the performance of the airplane. Unfortunately, my time frame as an instructor was coming to an end and I was not able to finish ██████████ Private Pilot but I passed him off to a good friend and a colleague that was able to wrap up ██████████ training shortly after my exit.

██████████ was a dedicated student and a passionate learner. He had experience with running different types of machinery which I believe translated well to him being able to handle the airplane and ultimately becoming a good stick. While he was eager to get his license, he cared more about taking the time necessary to make sure he became a safe pilot. ██████████ came prepared with questions and wanted to leave every day at least a little bit better and more prepared than he was when he showed up that day. He will truly be missed.

If there is any other questions you might have, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Thank you,

██████████ ; ██████████

I live on the airstrip at Seeley Lake, MT and fly into that wilderness regularly. I was flying that day. I left that morning and ended up at Ryan Field(2MT1). I headed back and passed directly under the track the accident airplane took, pic attached. I passed by there at 12:07pm. The sky was clear until about 10 miles SE of Swan Lake. That's where the overcast layer started, bases were at 8,000 MSL. Winds at 8,000 were about 20-25 knots as reported by my Aspen. The accident pilot had light-moderate turbulence at a minimum that close to the peaks at 7,600. I landed at Seeley Lake a few minutes later. The overcast extended well south of Seeley Lake. We did have some smoke in

the air that day like we always do this time of the year but vis was still pretty good at 20+ miles. Normal clear day smoke free vis is 100+ miles.

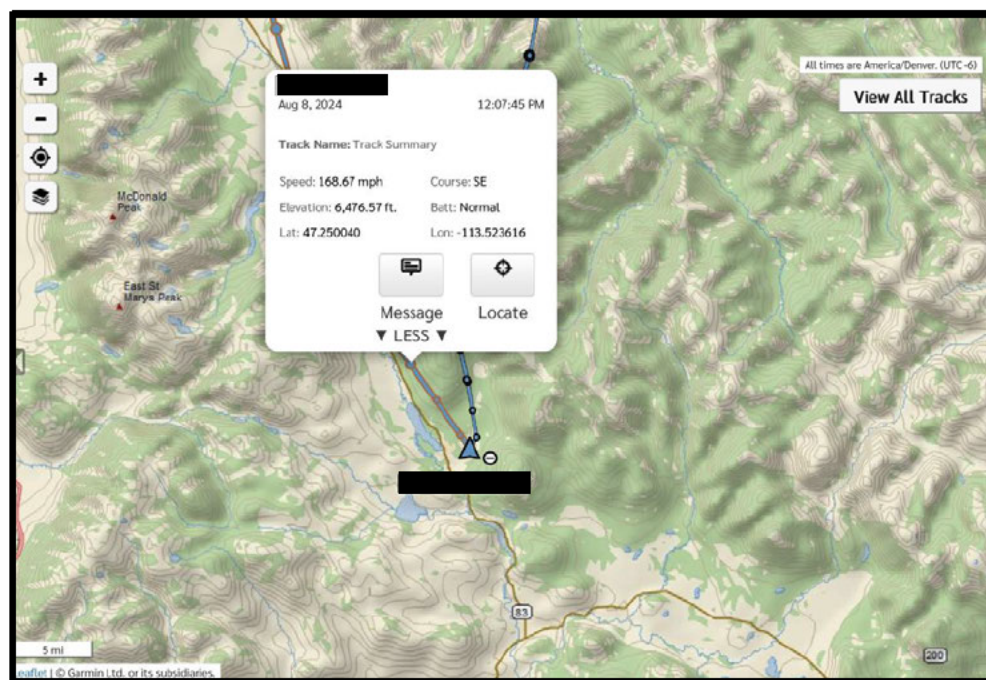
I got a call from Spokane TRACON and talked with the supervisor controller. I am the one who told him about Flight Radar 24, they were using Flight Aware. We have a FR24 receiver on the beacon tower here at Seeley Lake.

The area the accident pilot entered is what we call the Bob, the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Seeley Lake is at the SW corner of the Bob. The ridge lines run generally NW/SE in the Bob. There is not a valley that would run all the way thru the Bob in an east/west direction. There are small portions of his route where you can go east/west over the valley floor.

The headwaters of the South Fork of the Flathead are where the Danaher and Youngs Creek come together.

The Youngs Creek drainage is a flyable low area. <https://fwp.mt.gov/gis/maps/fishingGuide/> You could then turn right at the Danaher and fly that drainage. At the headwaters of the Danaher you can go directly east and pick up the North Fork of the Blackfoot flying generally south and exit the Bob just west of Lincoln. This can be done easily at 5,500-6000. However you'd have to be familiar with the area to know this. There is also a way to get out of the mountains from Benchmark to the north and then over Gibson Reservoir and then heading east thru the natural V in the east face of the mountains. Again that would be local knowledge.

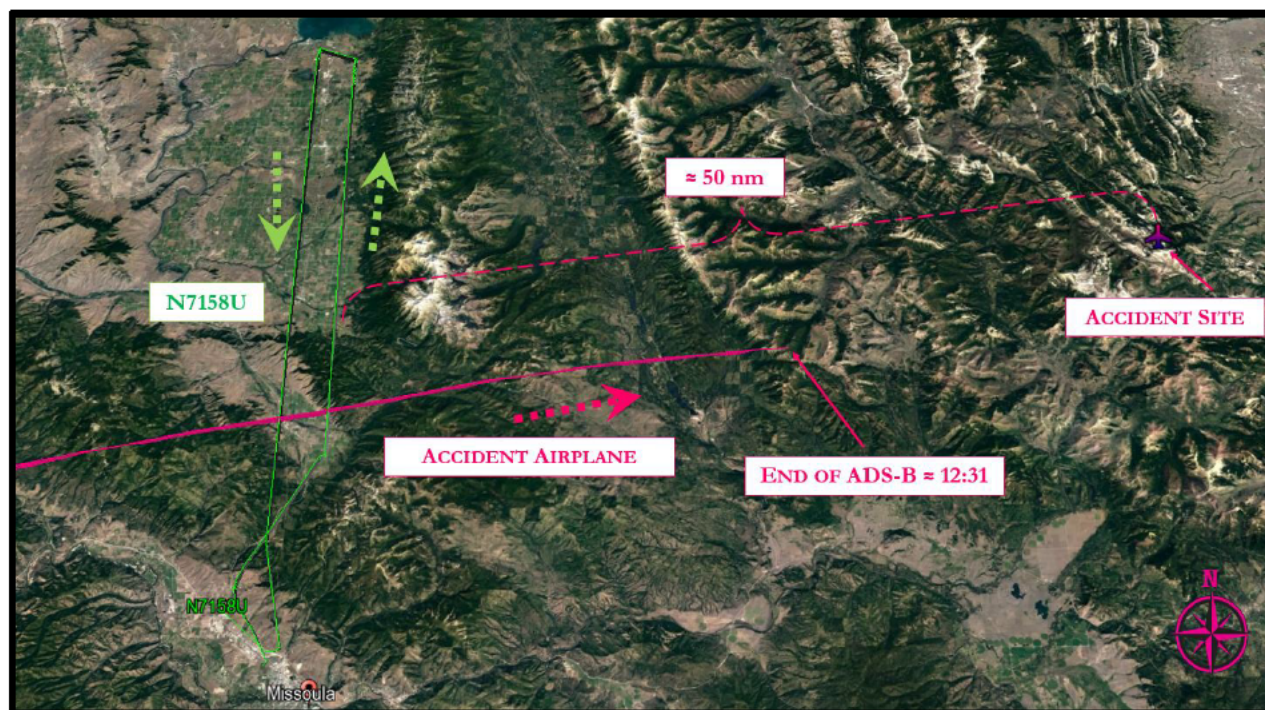
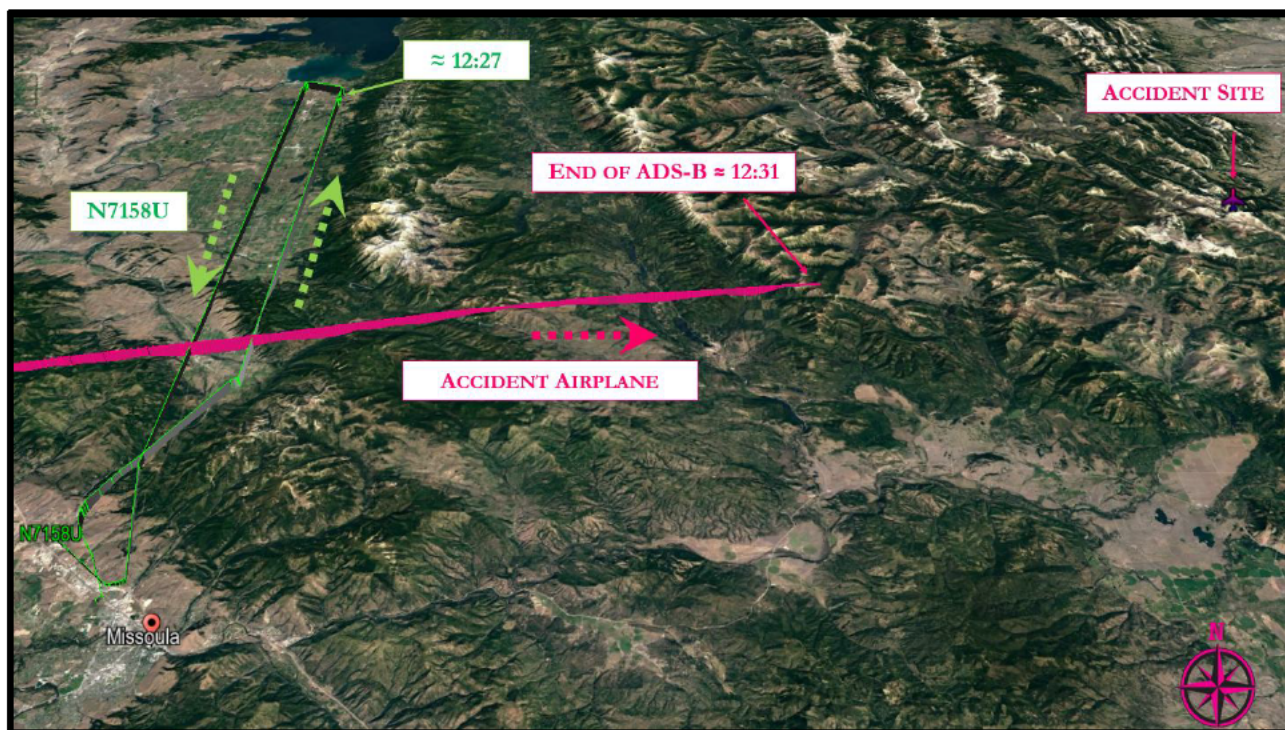
With the cloud bases that day the proper way to get where he was going was to either climb on top, the tops were about 9,000, or if staying lower deviate to the SE of Seeley Lake and in the valley north of Ovando then to Lincoln following Hwy 200 over Rogers Pass and then into the plains.



; N7158U

Weather that day was still VFR but not the greatest compared to other days. We were flying formation with N95203. Visibility was a good 8-10 and ceilings were at around 8000MSL the Mission Mountain range has peaks upwards of 10,000 and most of the higher peaks were obscured by cloud coverage. We were using a prebriefed radio frequency for Air to air comms but I was monitoring both 122.8 and 122.9, which are the two local CTAF

frequencies and never heard anything regarding a distress call. Once we broke off the formation and returned to KMSO, I switched my comm 2 radio to monitor 121.5 and didn't hear any form of ELT or distress signal there.



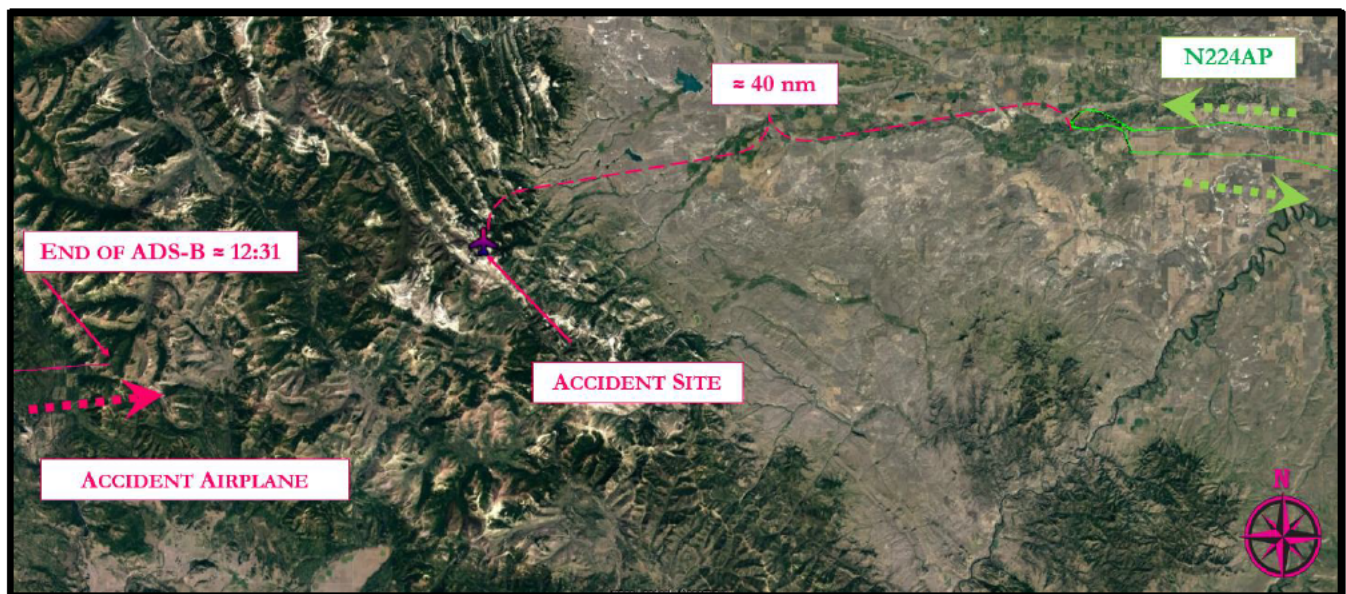
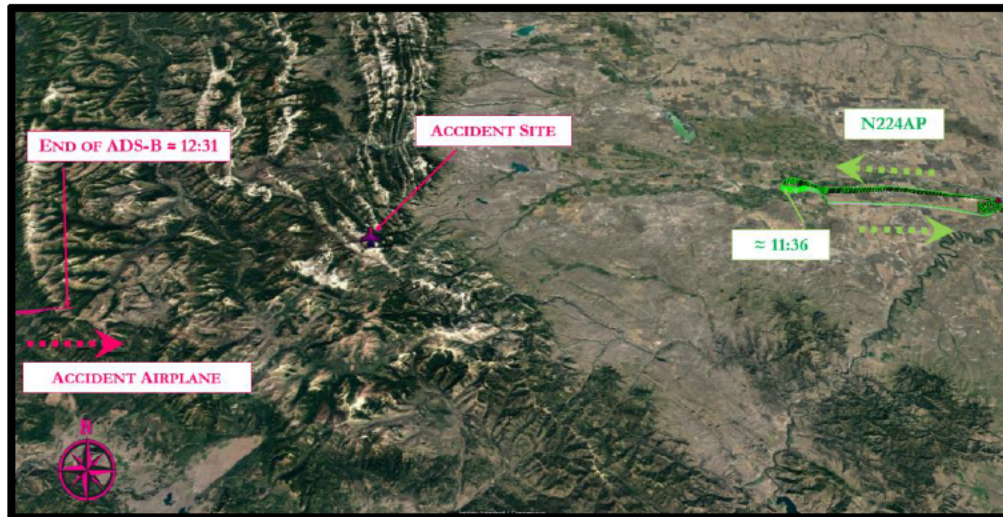
;N224AP

I was up test flying my Marchetti. In the morning, the weather was just starting to break up after a fairly major rain event the day prior. When I took off it was a broken deck with bases between 1500 and 2500 agl, lots of small cumulus build ups 2 to 3 thousand feet tall. An awesome day for flying through, over and around the cloud valleys between puffies. I'm fairly sure they extended all the way west to the Rocky mountain front. I don't know if they went west of the divide. It would have been very easy to get directionally disoriented if you weren't doing

a good job following your nav instruments and trying to stay out of the clouds. I.e. get turned around and fly into rapidly rising terrain.

I flew again after lunch and the air had dried out, just scattered cumulus out over the plains and broken fair weather cumulus over the Rocky Mountain front.

Hope that helps, call if you need more. I'm an ATP, airline pilot, CFI, and an old military fighter pilot so I've got a little experience/perspective.

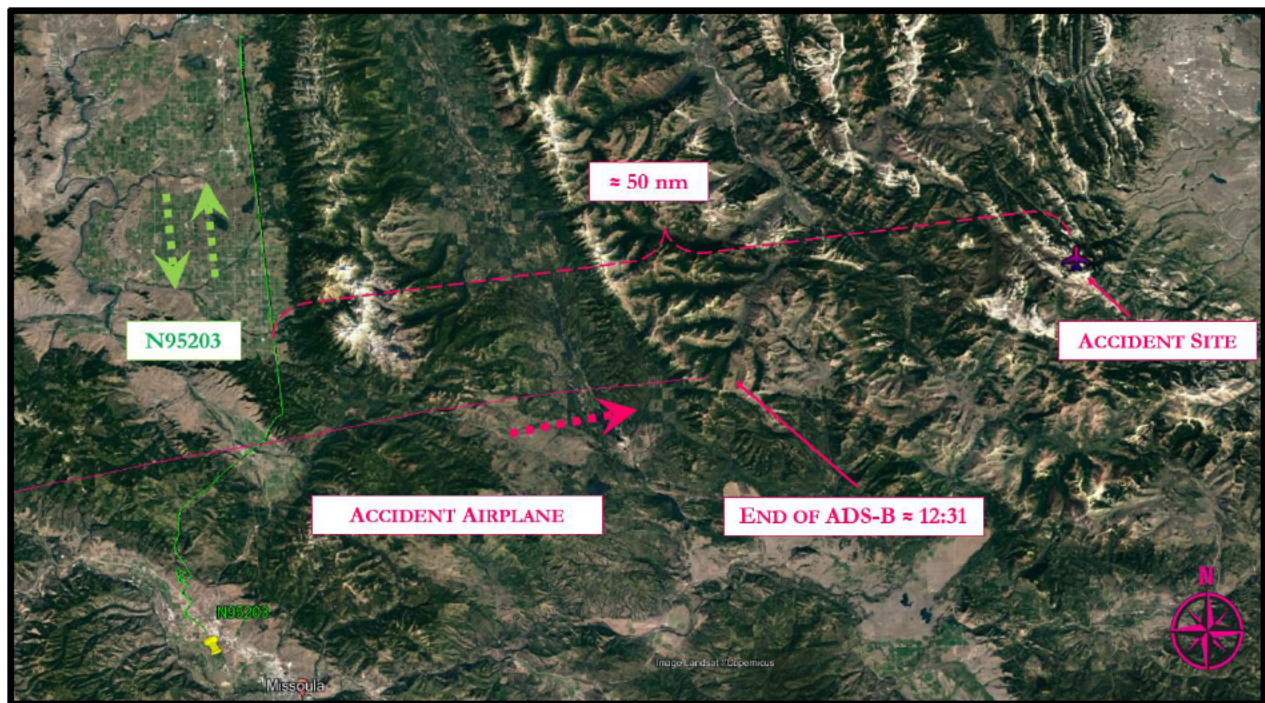
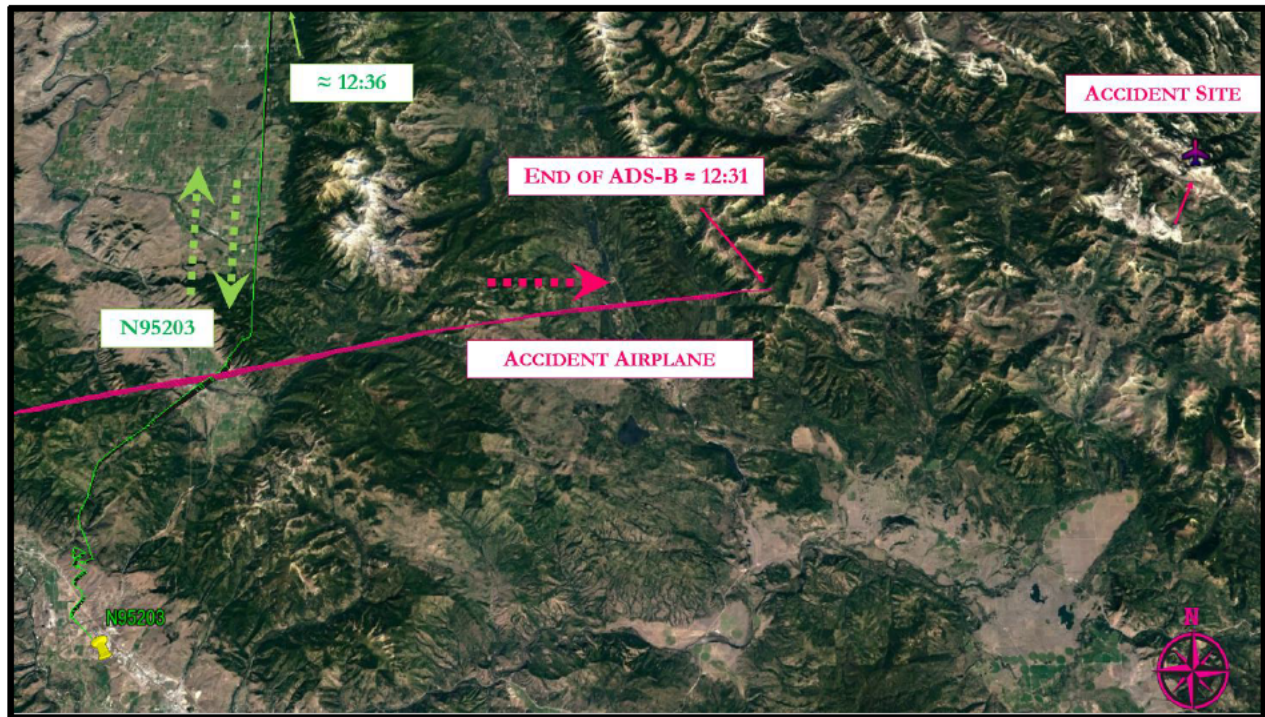


██████████; N95203

Yes, I was the pilot of N95203 during that timeframe.

The weather was fair but there was an overcast cloud layer at approximately 8,000' MSL. I distinctly remember the clouds as I love to fly around the peaks of the Mission Mountain Range but was unable to due to the cloud cover. Visibility was also reduced but still VFR. I would estimate 8-10 statute miles in haze/smoke. Other than that, winds were calm and the air was smooth.

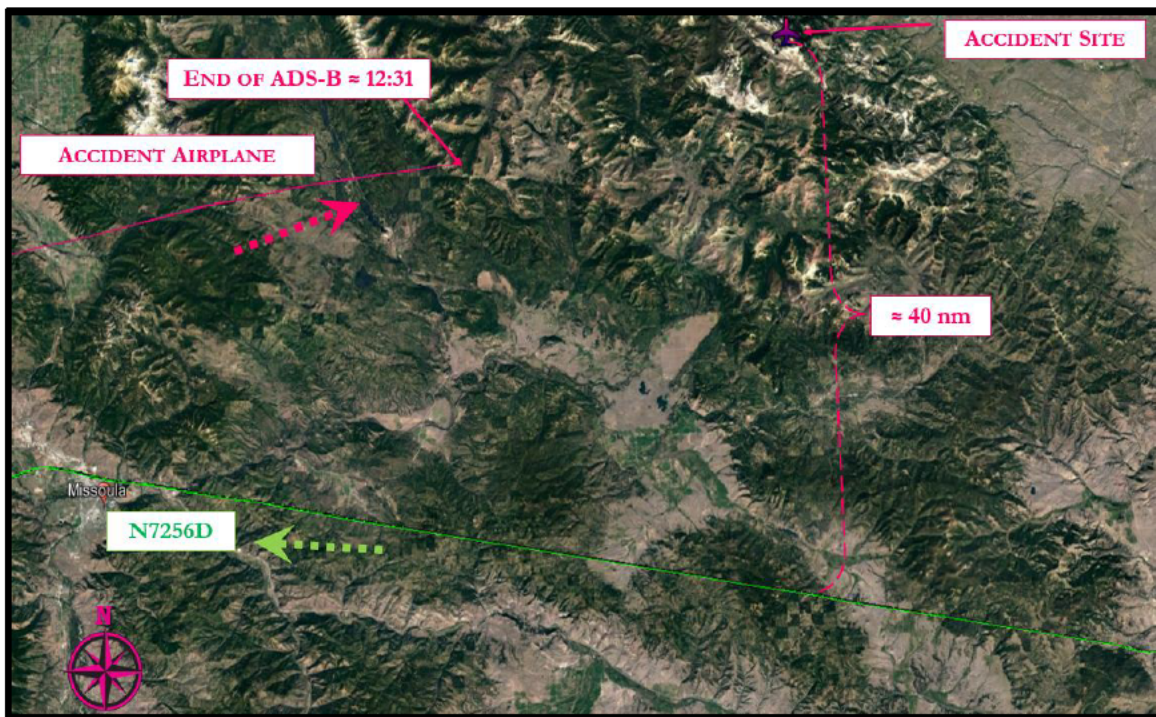
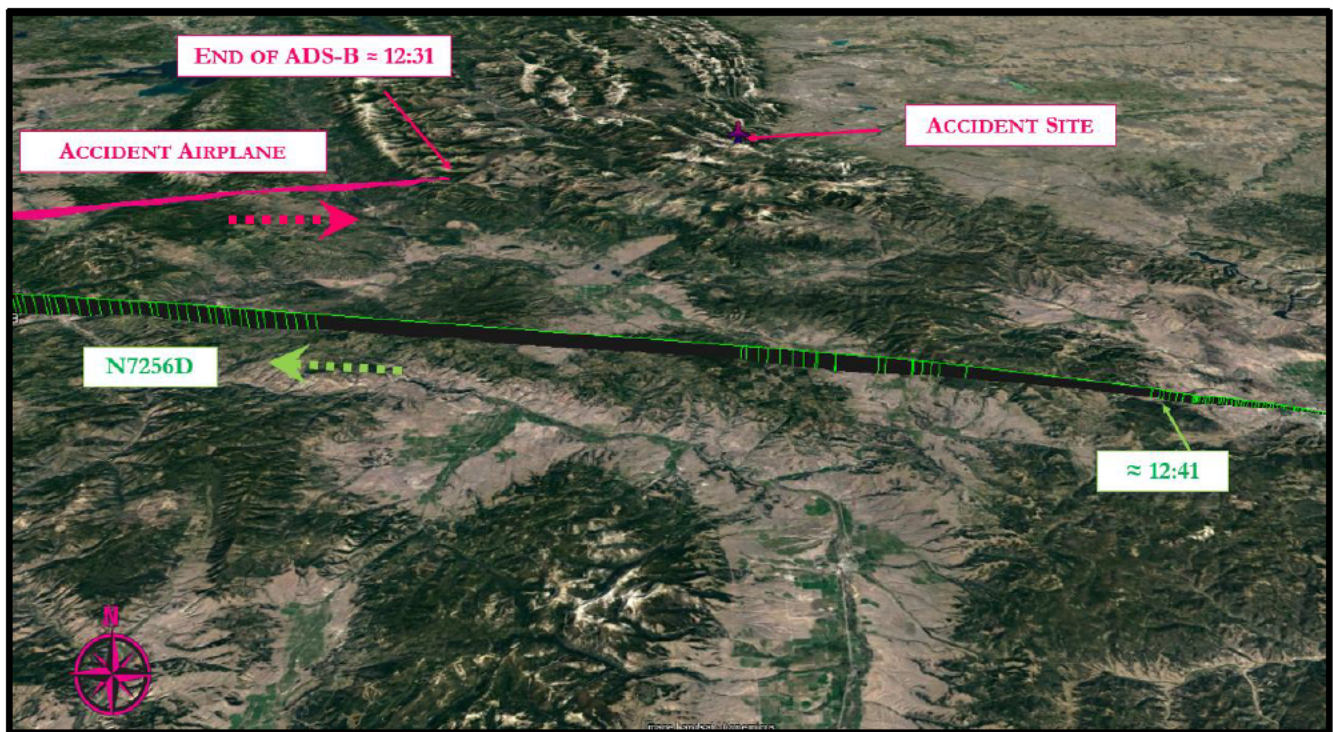
I hope this information helps with your investigation.



; N7256D

Weather on our departure was overcast at 6500-7000msl. Tops were approximately 9500.

This layer extended west approximately 30 nm west of Helena. Not sure how far north it extended be surprised if it persisted towards the crash site. By the time we reached Missoula conditions were VFR - few and scattered clouds ranging from 6000-11000 msl.



Mr. [REDACTED] provided the following information during our conversation regarding the incident on August 8th near Augusta, Montana.

Mr. [REDACTED] was hiking with his father, who was on horseback, on Crown Mountain Trail 235, beginning at the trailhead north near Benchmark Road. As they approached Crown Mountain, they observed smoke rising over

the saddle. Upon reaching the saddle, they noticed a tail section that appeared to be from an airplane on a nearby slope. Initially, they assumed it might be a long-abandoned wreck, but upon closer inspection, they realized it was smoldering. Concerned that there might be survivors, they decided to approach the site.

Mr. [REDACTED] noted that they first observed the plane wreck at approximately 2:50 PM. They had to leave the trail and scramble up a bouldery rock slide to reach the crash site, which was located at an elevation of 7,400 feet. As they approached, they noticed various unscathed items near the wreckage, including an intact backpack and a fire extinguisher. The closest item to the plane was a hat, located about two feet away, with approximately one-quarter of it burned. Glass was scattered up the hill from the crash site, extending about 50 yards.

Regarding the weather conditions at the time, Mr. [REDACTED] described it as incredibly foggy. He noted that the fog would move in and out, often reducing visibility to less than 20 yards. The horizon would intermittently disappear from sight due to the dense fog. Throughout the beginning of their hike, Mr. [REDACTED] and his father remarked on how quiet it was—there was no wind and no animal sounds. The foliage along the trail was damp, causing their clothes to become wet as they passed, although it was not actively raining. Once they reached the saddle, the wind picked up drastically, and they found themselves enveloped in fog.