



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Preliminary Report

Location:	Castalia, NC	Accident Number:	ERA19FA188
Date & Time:	06/07/2019, 1333 EDT	Registration:	N709CH
Aircraft:	Piper PA46	Injuries:	4 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation - Personal		

On June 7, 2019, about 1333 eastern daylight time, a Piper PA 46-350P, N709CH, broke up in flight following an encounter with weather near Castalia, North Carolina. The private pilot, a pilot-rated passenger, and two other passengers were fatally injured. The airplane was destroyed. The airplane was registered to the pilot and was operated under the provisions of 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 as a personal flight. Day, instrument meteorological conditions prevailed in the area, and an instrument flight rules flight plan was filed for the flight. The flight originated at Naples, Florida (APF) and was destined for Easton Airport (ESN), Easton, Maryland.

According to preliminary air traffic control radar and voice communication information from the Federal Aviation Administration, the flight was on a northeasterly ground track at flight level (FL) 270 over eastern North Carolina when the pilot reported that there was weather ahead on his radar. After discussing the weather with the controller and reviewing options, the flight was eventually cleared direct to the Franklin VOR. About two minutes prior to the accident, the pilot reported that they were entering an area of rain. The airplane was then observed climbing to FL273, followed by a rapidly descending right turn and loss of radio and radar contact. The controller made numerous attempts to contact the pilot, to no avail. A postaccident review of recorded weather radar data indicated that the airplane was in the vicinity of heavy rain and thunderstorms at the time of the accident.

The airplane impacted wooded terrain about 4 miles northeast of the town of Castalia. The outboard sections of the wings and a section of the elevator were found about 1.4 miles northeast of the main wreckage. Several components of the empennage have not been located due to the dense forest in the area. The main wreckage consisted of the entire fuselage and the inboard sections of the wings. The fuselage was found inverted on a heading of 045°. There was no fire.

The pilot, seated in the left cockpit seat, was also the registered owner and operator of the airplane. He held a private pilot certificate with an airplane single-engine land rating. He did not hold an instrument rating. A review of his pilot logbook revealed that he had logged about 312 hours total flight time, including 147 hours in the accident airplane. His latest flight review was recorded on October 3, 2017.

The pilot-rated passenger, seated in the right cockpit seat, held a private pilot certificate with an airplane single-engine land rating. He held an instrument rating. A review of his pilot logbook revealed that he had logged about 1,062 hours total flight time, including 173 hours in the accident airplane. His most recent flight review was recorded on April 14, 2017. He had not logged any actual instrument time or instrument approaches during the 12 months prior to the accident.

The low wing, retractable tricycle landing gear airplane was manufactured in 2007. In 2017, the original reciprocating engine was removed and a Pratt and Whitney PT6A-35 turboprop engine was installed per a JetProp LLC supplemental type certificate. An annual inspection was completed on April 29, 2019. The total time on the airframe at the time of the accident was 1,449 hours and the engine had accumulated 226 hours time in service since new.

The wreckage was retained for further examination.

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N709CH
Model/Series:	PA46 350P	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Amateur Built:	No		
Operator:	On file	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	RWI, 157 ft msl	Observation Time:	1353 EDT
Distance from Accident Site:	18 Nautical Miles	Temperature/Dew Point:	27° C / 22° C
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Few / 3600 ft agl	Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	Calm / ,
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 9000 ft agl	Visibility:	9 Miles
Altimeter Setting:	29.84 inches Hg	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	IFR
Departure Point:	Naples, FL (APF)	Destination:	Easton, MD (ESN)

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	3 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	4 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	36.137222, -77.995833 (est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Ralph E Hicks
Additional Participating Persons:	John Combrinck-Graham; FAA/FSDO; Greensboro, NC Jonathan Hirsch; Piper Aircraft; Vero Beach, FL
Note:	The NTSB traveled to the scene of this accident.