

NTSB Identification: LAX05FA290

HISTORY OF FLIGHT

On September 7, 2005, at 1228 Pacific daylight time, a Cessna 172RG, N9636B, crashed into the Pacific Ocean about 2 miles from the north end of Catalina Island, Avalon, California. M. I. Air Corporation was operating the airplane under the provisions of 14 CFR Part 91. Two people were on board the airplane. One, an airline transport pilot, was a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) aviation safety inspector (operations), and he sustained fatal injuries. The other occupant was an airline transport pilot rated safety airman, who was also a designated pilot examiner (DPE). The DPE is missing and presumed to have sustained fatal injuries. The airplane sank and is presumed to have been destroyed. The cross-country Event Based Currency (EBC) flight departed Avalon Airport about 1220, with a planned destination of Redlands, California. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed, and no flight plan had been filed. The approximate global positioning system (GPS) coordinates where the airplane impacted the water were 33 degrees 28.832 minutes north latitude and 118 degrees 35.096 minutes west longitude.

According to the FAA, this currency flight was part of the inspector's EBC requirements. The proposed itinerary was to fly from Redlands Airport (L12), where he rented the airplane, to Avalon Airport, and then return to Redlands. The inspector wanted to fly within the route structure, conduct a flight from point-to-point, and also complete in-flight activities, which could all be done over water. The DPE was serving as the safety pilot.

The FAA indicated that the pilot obtained a weather brief from the Riverside automated flight service station (AFSS) about 0905. About 0933, he filed an IFR flight plan. The airplane departed Redlands about 1013, and he received climb instructions from Southern California Terminal Radar Approach Control (SCT). After landing at Avalon, he contacted SCT about 1120, and informed them that the airplane was on the ground. About 1155, he called Riverside AFSS to cancel the return IFR flight plan.

A National Transportation Safety Board specialist plotted and examined the recorded radar data from SCT and the Los Angeles Air Route Traffic Control Center (LAX ARTCC). Avalon airport's elevation was 1,602 feet mean sea level (msl). At 1220:55, there was a target with a secondary 1200 visual flight rules (VFR) beacon code at a mode C reported altitude of 1,800 feet msl just west of the departure end of runway 22. The target climbed on a westerly course, and made a right turn toward the north. After reaching the shoreline, the target turned left toward the northwest, and followed the shoreline. During the last minute of flight, the target's altitude remained at mode C altitudes between 2,600 and 2,800 feet until the target disappeared near the accident site coordinates, which were in line with the target's track.

Two fishermen in a boat reported that they observed the airplane in at least a 45-degree nose low attitude. The attitude rose to 30 degrees nose low just prior to impacting the water. They observed the airplane float at the surface for a few seconds. It sank before they motored to the accident site, which took them approximately 90 seconds. They observed one victim in the water, and pulled him aboard.

PERSONNEL INFORMATION

Pilot

A review of FAA airman records revealed that the pilot held an airline transport pilot certificate with a rating for airplane multiengine land. He had a commercial pilot certificate with ratings for airplane single engine land and sea, and a private pilot certificate with a rating for rotorcraft-helicopter. He held a certified flight instructor (CFI) certificate with ratings for airplane single engine land, multiengine land, and instrument airplane. The FAA reported that the pilot had a total flight time of 6,100 hours.

The pilot had a second-class medical certificate issued in February 2005. It had the limitation that the pilot must have glasses available for near vision.

Safety Pilot

A review of FAA airman records revealed that the safety pilot held an airline transport pilot certificate with a rating for airplane multiengine land. He had a commercial pilot certificate with ratings for airplane single engine land and rotorcraft-helicopter. He held a certified flight instructor (CFI) certificate with ratings for airplane single engine land, multiengine land, instrument airplane, and rotorcraft-helicopter. He had an advanced ground instructor certificate, and was type rated in the Boeing 737 at the ATP level.

The safety pilot had a first-class medical certificate issued in February 2005. It had no limitations or waivers.

The operator reported that the safety pilot had a total flight time of 5,900 hours. He had 25 hours in the last 90 days, and 10 in the last 30 days. He had 500 hours in this make and model.

AIRCRAFT INFORMATION

The airplane was a Cessna 172RG, serial number 172RG0934. The operator reported that the airplane had a total airframe time of 6,247 hours at the last 100-hour inspection on August 30, 2005.

The engine was a Textron Lycoming O-360-F1A6, serial number L2862-36A. Total time recorded on the engine at the last 100-hour inspection was 409 hours.

MEDICAL AND PATHOLOGICAL INFORMATION

The Los Angeles County Coroner completed an autopsy of the pilot, and determined that the cause of death was multiple traumatic injuries. The FAA Bioaeronautical Sciences Research Laboratory, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, performed toxicological testing of specimens of the pilot. Analysis of the specimens contained no findings for volatiles, and tested drugs. They did not test for carbon monoxide or cyanide.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Local and federal law enforcement agencies searched the area for 2 days with sonar and other equipment, but were unable to locate the wreckage or second victim.