

Brief of Accident

Adopted 05/11/2011

ERA10CA417  
File No. 28011                      08/12/2010                      St. Petersburg ,FL                      Aircraft Reg No. N254AB                      Time (Local): 18:43 EDT

Make/Model: Piper/PA-25-260  
Engine Make/Model: Lycoming / O-540-G1A5  
Aircraft Damage: Substantial  
Number of Engines: 1  
Operating Certificate(s): None  
Type of Flight Operation: Banner Tow  
Reg. Flight Conducted Under: Part 91: General Aviation

	Fatal	Serious	Minor/None
Crew	0	0	1
Pass	0	0	0

Last Depart. Point: St. Petersburg, FL  
Destination: Local Flight, FL  
Airport Proximity: Off Airport/Airstrip

Condition of Light: Day  
Weather Info Src: Weather Observation Facility  
Basic Weather: Visual Conditions  
Lowest Ceiling: None  
Visibility: 10.00 SM  
Wind Dir/Speed: 250 / 010 kts  
Temperature (°C): 31  
Precip/Obscuration:

Pilot-in-Command                      Age: 25  
Certificate(s)/Rating(s)  
Commercial; Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land

Flight Time (Hours)  
Total All Aircraft: 488  
Last 90 Days: 35  
Total Make/Model: 35  
Total Instrument Time: 87

Instrument Ratings  
Airplane

\*\*\* Note: NTSB investigators used data provided by various entities, including, but not limited to, the Federal Aviation Administration and/or the operator and did not travel in support of this investigation to prepare this aircraft accident report. \*\*\*

According to the pilot, he departed with the airplane's fuel tank full (75 gallons) for the local banner towing flight. He flew for about 3 hours and 30 minutes and then initiated a return to the airport. During the return flight, at an altitude of approximately 1,000 feet, the airplane's engine lost power. Just prior to the power loss, while the airplane was in a climb, the pilot noted that the fuel gauge indicated 30 gallons of fuel remained. The pilot released the banner and performed a forced landing on a road.

A postaccident examination of the airplane by a Federal Aviation Administration inspector revealed approximately 8-10 ounces of fuel remained in the single main fuel tank. The main fuel feed line at the bottom of the fuel tank fuel valve contained a few ounces of fuel. The fuel tank was filled with 30 gallons of fuel to test the accuracy of the fuel gauge, which read 33 gallons of fuel. The engine was test run on the airframe. It started and ran at full power with no anomalies noted. According to the airplane's Operating Handbook, the engine burns an average of 14-16 gallons of fuel per hour, at power settings likely used by the pilot. The fueler who fueled the airplane stated that he filled the airplane to a capacity of 68 gallons of fuel, which is what the pilot specifically requested. The examination revealed no evidence of a mechanical malfunction.

Brief of Accident (Continued)

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Updated at May 11 2011 12:56PM

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OCCURRENCES

Enroute-cruise - Loss of engine power (total)  
Emergency descent - Off-field or emergency landing  
Landing-landing roll - Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

FINDINGS

Aircraft-Fluids/misc hardware-Fluids-Fuel-Fluid level - C  
Personnel issues-Task performance-Planning/preparation-Fuel planning-Pilot - C

Findings Legend: (C) = Cause, (F) = Factor

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The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident as follows:  
The pilot's improper fuel management, which resulted in a loss of engine power due to fuel exhaustion.