



Aviation Investigation Preliminary Report

Location:	MOAB, UT	Accident Number:	WPR24FA002
Date & Time:	October 1, 2023, 20:24 Local	Registration:	N7153R
Aircraft:	Piper PA-28-140	Injuries:	4 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

On October 1, 2023, about 2022 mountain daylight time, A Piper PA28-140, N7153R, was substantially damaged when it was involved in an accident near Moab, Utah. The pilot and three passengers were fatally injured. The airplane was operated as a Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91 personal flight.

A security video recorded the airplane landing at 1747 at the Canyonlands Regional Airport (CNY), Moab, Utah. An employee of the fixed base operator (FBO) observed the pilot at the self-serve fuel island, where he purchased 27 gallons of fuel. The pilot then parked the airplane near the fuel island and borrowed a courtesy car from the FBO before driving away from the airport with the other occupants of the airplane.

Security video captured the four occupants returning and boarding the airplane about 2011. The video then captured the airplane's landing light, navigation lights and anti-collision strobes illuminate and, shortly afterwards, the engine start as evidenced by the propeller spinning. The airplane taxied to runway 21, paused momentarily on the runway, and then departed about 2023. The pilot-controlled runway lights were not illuminated at the time of the takeoff roll.

A witness, located near the departure end of runway 21, reported that it was very dark outside with no moon illumination. He first heard, then saw the airplane take off to the south. As soon as the airplane lifted off, the "white light in the nose" was turned off. The airplane then turned steeply to the right and stayed in the steep bank until "it was parallel with the runway but going in the opposite direction". The witness said the airplane appeared to be losing altitude before he lost sight of it and heard two distinct impacts. Automatic dependent surveillance-broadcast (ADS-B) data recovered from the airport's Virtower equipment was consistent with the witness testimony, showing the airplane climbed to about 200 ft above the ground during the right turn after takeoff and then descended before the data ended at 2024 near the accident site.

The airplane was located about 2,540 ft northwest of the departure end of runway 21 on open hilly terrain at an elevation of 4,590 ft msl. There were two distinct points of impact. The first point of impact was a gouge near a hilltop. A second point of impact was evident on a bearing of 022° magnetic and about 455 ft from the first impact point. The airplane came to rest upright on a second hill about 65 ft beyond the second impact point. Debris, consisting of the nose wheel, left and right main landing gear and fragments of the composite landing gear wheel covers was scattered between the first impact point and the main wreckage.

A postaccident on-site examination of the wreckage revealed flight control continuity from the cockpit to all flight control surfaces. Examination of the engine revealed no mechanical malfunctions or failures that would have precluded normal operations. The airplane was recovered to a secure location.

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N7153R
Model/Series:	PA-28-140	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Amateur Built:			
Operator:	On file	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Designator Code:			

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	VMC	Condition of Light:	NightDark
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KCNY,4551 ft msl	Observation Time:	07:53 Local
Distance from Accident Site:	0 Nautical Miles	Temperature/Dew Point:	12°C /7°C
Lowest Cloud Condition:		Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	11 knots / , 320°
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 11000 ft AGL	Visibility:	10 miles
Altimeter Setting:	29.9 inches Hg	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Departure Point:	MOAB, UT	Destination:	

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	3 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:		Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	4 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	38.7517,-109.76998

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Salazar, Fabian

Additional Participating Persons: Stephen Grover; Federal Aviation Administration; Salt Lake City, UT
Kathryn Whitaker; Piper Aircraft; Phoenix, AZ
Troy Helgeson; Lycoming Engines; Williams Port, PA

Investigation Class: [Class 3](#)

Note: