

National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, DC 20594

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Brief of Accident

Adopted 03/30/2004

SEA03FA110
File No. 15240 06/20/2003 Grants Pass, OR Aircraft Reg No. N863Y Time (Local): 14:25 PDT

Make/Model: Harshbarger W/reed / RV-8
Engine Make/Model: Lycoming / IO-360-A1B6
Aircraft Damage: Substantial
Number of Engines: 1
Operating Certificate(s): None
Type of Flight Operation: Personal
Reg. Flight Conducted Under: Part 91: General Aviation

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

Last Depart. Point: Same as Accident/Incident Location
Destination: Local Flight
Airport Proximity: Off Airport/Airstrip

Condition of Light: Day
Weather Info Src: Weather Observation Facility
Basic Weather: Visual Conditions
Lowest Ceiling: 6000 Ft. AGL, Broken
Visibility: 10.00 SM
Wind Dir/Speed: Variable / 004 Kts
Temperature (°C): 16
Precip/Obscuration:

Pilot-in-Command Age: 81

Certificate(s)/Rating(s)
Private; Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land

Instrument Ratings
None

Flight Time (Hours)

Total All Aircraft: 5380
Last 90 Days: Unk/Nr
Total Make/Model: 98
Total Instrument Time: UnK/Nr

The pilot/builder of the RV-8, in preparation for the sale of the aircraft, had been conducting taxi tests and power checks for several days before the accident. Additionally, the aircraft had not been flown in about a year. On the afternoon of the accident he departed runway 30 and shortly thereafter radioed that he was having engine problems and was going to try to make it back to the airport. Witnesses observed the aircraft midfield on downwind at the time these transmissions were made but the aircraft continued well past the abeam position and did not commence the base turn until about one-half mile beyond the abeam position. The aircraft struck scrub trees at the midspan location of each wing and then crashed in a lightly wooded area approximately 3,300 feet short of the threshold of runway 30. The cockpit interior space sustained no deformation or space reduction with the exception of an impact at the top edge of the aluminum glare shield, and the instrument panel was intact with no broken/cracked instrument glass. The pilot was found with his seatbelt fastened and his shoulder harness unfastened and behind him at the accident site. A review of the pilot's personal medical records revealed that the pilot was taking amitriptyline (a prescription antidepressant also known by the trade name Elavil) for insomnia, and hydrocodone (a prescription narcotic) for chronic abdominal pain. Nortriptyline (a prescription antidepressant and metabolite of amitriptyline) was found at very high levels in the pilot's blood. In addition, a low level of doxylamine (an over-the-counter sleep aid) was detected in the pilots blood and amitriptyline, nortriptyline, doxylamine, hydrocodone, and metabolites of hydrocodone were detected in his urine. Post-crash examination revealed no mechanical malfunction with the aircraft's powerplant, systems or controls with the exception of the aircraft's Bendix fuel servo which, upon disassembly, was found to have extensive internal corrosion and contamination.

Brief of Accident (Continued)

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Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER(TOTAL) - NONMECHANICAL
Phase of Operation: APPROACH - VFR PATTERN - DOWNWIND

Findings

1. (C) FUEL INJECTION CONTROL/SYSTEM - CORRODED
 2. (C) FLUID,FUEL - CONTAMINATION,OTHER THAN WATER
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Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY DESCENT/LANDING

Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY DESCENT/LANDING

Findings

3. (F) OBJECT - TREE(S)
 4. (C) IN-FLIGHT PLANNING/DECISION - DELAYED - PILOT IN COMMAND
 5. (F) IMPAIRMENT(DRUGS) - PILOT IN COMMAND
-

Occurrence #4: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings

6. TERRAIN CONDITION - GROUND

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

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident as follows.
Corrosion and contamination within the fuel servo unit and the pilot's delayed turn back to the runway. Contributing factors were trees and the pilot's impairment due to prescription medication.