



AVIATION



HIGHWAY



MARINE



RAILROAD



PIPELINE

Aviation Investigation Preliminary Report

Location:	Dunlap, TN	Accident Number:	ERA25FA239
Date & Time:	June 24, 2025, 18:23 Local	Registration:	N28DR
Aircraft:	Piper J3C-65	Injuries:	1 Fatal, 1 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Instructional		

On June 24, 2025, about 18:23 central daylight time, a Piper J3C-65, N28DR, was substantially damaged when it was involved in an accident near Dunlap, Tennessee. The commercial pilot was fatally injured and the passenger was seriously injured. The airplane was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 instructional flight.

According to the passenger, the purpose of the flight was to continue instructional training that he had started a couple of days prior to the accident. Regarding the accident flight, he recalled that they were at a nearby airstrip about 7 miles north of the accident location. He does not recall departing that airfield, the accident flight, or the accident events.

The accident site was located at the airplane owner's private airstrip, about 40 feet to the left side of the runway. The runway heading was 240° and the airplane came to rest on a 335° heading. The airplane came to rest mostly upright in a hay field. A ground scar was observed directly in front of the airplane's engine and was 8 inches deep. The scar was centered with the airplane and protruded to the airplane's right by 2 feet. The right main landing gear collapsed, and the airplane was partially resting on the right wing. The cockpit instrumentation, firewall, and engine were displaced upwards from the fuselage.

Witnesses that responded to the accident site confirmed that the fuel selector was in the "both" position. One witness reported that the forward occupant was wearing the installed four-point harness, and the aft seat occupant was not wearing a harness or lap belt, but that the lap belt was in close proximity to the occupant. A second witness recalled that the aft seat occupant had the lap belt secured, but the shoulder harnesses were not utilized. First responders that documented the scene noted several broken tree limbs with yellow paint transfer about 113ft from the main wreckage.

A postaccident examination of the airframe and engine was conducted. There were no preaccident mechanical malfunctions or failures found with the engine that would have

precluded normal operation. An examination of the airframe revealed damage to the left-wing leading edge with tree foliage found underneath the damaged skin, consistent with the tree foliage at the location of the broken tree limbs exhibiting yellow paint transfer. A puncture hole through the top and bottom of the left wing forward and at the outboard side of the left aileron was observed.

A Garmin GPSmap396 was recovered and retained.

The grass runway measured 40ft in width. A clearing at the beginning of the runway measured about 100ft wide and was about 50ft from the cut grass on the runway. According to the Federal Aviation Administration, the airstrip was about 2,100ft in length.



Figure 1: Main Wreckage Location in Proximity to the Private Airstrip and Broken Tree Limbs

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N28DR
Model/Series:	J3C-65	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:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	CHA,688 ft msl	Observation Time:	18:53 Local
Distance from Accident Site:	20 Nautical Miles	Temperature/Dew Point:	34°C /22°C
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Few / 6000 ft AGL	Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	6 knots / None, 20°
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 25000 ft AGL	Visibility:	10 miles
Altimeter Setting:	30.17 inches Hg	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	NONE
Departure Point:		Destination:	Dunlap, TN

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	1 Serious	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:		Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal, 1 Serious	Latitude, Longitude:	35.340055,-85.378639

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Enders, Ryan
Additional Participating Persons:	Robert Mullins; FAA/FSDO; Nashville, TN Jonathan Hirsch; Piper Aircraft Corporation; Vero Beach, FL
Investigation Class:	Class 3
Note:	