



Aviation Investigation Preliminary Report

Location:	Venice, FL	Accident Number:	ERA23FA079
Date & Time:	December 3, 2022, 19:38 Local	Registration:	N4676F
Aircraft:	Piper PA28	Injuries:	3 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

On December 3, 2022, at 1938 eastern standard time, a Piper PA-28-151, N4676F, was substantially damaged when it was involved in an accident near Venice, Florida. The private pilot and two passengers were fatally injured. The airplane was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)* Part 91 personal flight.

Preliminary Automatic Dependent Surveillance - Broadcast (ADS-B) data revealed that the airplane departed St. Pete-Clearwater International Airport (PIE), St. Petersburg, Florida, on the afternoon of the accident and flew to Venice Municipal Airport (VNC), Venice, Florida. The accident occurred during takeoff on the return flight to PIE while the airplane was operating under visual flight rules.

The airplane departed runway 23, which was 5,000 ft long. The track data suggested that the airplane lifted from the runway at 1937:44, about 4,100 ft beyond the approach end of the runway at 88 knots (kts) groundspeed. Over the remaining 900 ft of runway, the airplane accelerated to 90 kts groundspeed and climbed to about 50 ft. Over the next four seconds, the track data showed two plots, both at an altitude of 75 ft and groundspeeds of 91 kts and 94 kts, respectively, before the airplane descended. At 1938:00, the final plot depicted the airplane at 0 ft and 109 kts groundspeed about 1,800 ft beyond the departure end of runway 23.

Dark night conditions prevailed around VNC at the time of the accident. The reported weather included wind from 070° at 7 knots, a broken ceiling at 5,000 ft above ground level (agl), and 7 statute miles visibility.

Airport surveillance video from the time of the accident depicted an airplane departing runway 23 with little to no angle of climb into a dark sky over dark water with no discernable horizon.

Figure 1 shows preliminary flight track information in relation to the runway 23, with estimated altitudes and groundspeeds.



Figure 1. Preliminary ADS-B flight track information

The pilot held a private pilot certificate with a rating for airplane single-engine land. His most recent Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) third-class medical certificate was issued January 27, 2022, and he declared 10 total hours of flight experience on that date. The pilot’s logbook was not recovered.

The pilot conducted his flight training and rented the accident airplane from the same operator. An FAA aviation safety inspector reviewed the pilot’s rental and instruction record, which revealed that the pilot had accrued 74.2 total hours of flight experience, of which 67.6 were in the accident airplane make and model. The pilot obtained his private pilot certificate on July 31, 2022, and he had accrued 13.5 hours of flight experience since that date.

According to FAA and maintenance records, the airplane was manufactured in 1976 and was powered by a Lycoming O-320-E3D 150-horsepower engine. The airplane’s most recent 100-hour inspection was completed on November 2, 2022, at 7,653 total aircraft hours.

Local emergency services and a commercial ocean salvage operator recovered most of the wreckage from the floor of the Gulf of Mexico, beneath about 15 ft of water. The engine, with propeller, engine mounts, firewall, and instrument panel attached, was found separated from the airplane and recovered as one piece. The cabin, containing the 2nd row seat, and the empennage with tail section attached, was raised along with both wings; attached by torn metal, control cables, and wires. Both wings displayed uniform crushing along their respective leading edges. The crushing displayed signatures consistent with hydraulic deformation. The

wreckage was moved to a secure facility for examination. Control continuity was confirmed from the flight controls, through cuts made by recovery personnel, to all control surfaces.

About 4 feet of the fuselage between the instrument panel and the main wing spar box, which contained the main cabin door, the front seats, and the fuel selector valve, was separated from the airframe and not recovered.

Visual examination of the engine revealed only minor impact damage to the intake and exhaust stacks, mufflers, and ignition P-leads; the carburetor mount was fractured. The carburetor remained attached by the throttle and mixture cables. The engine rocker box covers were removed to facilitate the examination. The propeller was rotated by hand and continuity was established through the powertrain to the valvetrain and the accessory section. Compression was confirmed on all cylinders using the thumb method. The magnetos were removed, flushed with alcohol, dried, and produced spark at all terminal leads when rotated.

The carburetor was disassembled. Examination revealed that the floats were intact, and no anomalies were noted. The oil suction screen was clean, unobstructed, and absent of debris. The engine exam revealed no pre-impact mechanical anomalies that would have prevented normal operation.

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N4676F
Model/Series:	PA28 151	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Amateur Built:			
Operator:		Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Designator Code:			

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	VMC	Condition of Light:	
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KVNC, 19 ft msl	Observation Time:	19:35 Local
Distance from Accident Site:	1 Nautical Miles	Temperature/Dew Point:	23°C / 16°C
Lowest Cloud Condition:		Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	7 knots / , 70°
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 5000 ft AGL	Visibility:	7 miles
Altimeter Setting:	30.28 inches Hg	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Departure Point:	Venice, FL	Destination:	St. Petersburg, FL (PIE)

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Unknown
Passenger Injuries:	2 Fatal	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:		Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	3 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	27.063183,-82.450583 (est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Rayner, Brian
Additional Participating Persons:	Rulon Vilcan; FAA/FSDO; Tampa, FL Troy Helgeson; Lycoming Engines; Williamsport, PA Damien Galbraith; Piper Aircraft; Vero Beach, FL
Note:	