



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

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|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Location:</b>               | FT. GRANT, Arizona                         | <b>Accident Number:</b> | LAX92FA136         |
| <b>Date &amp; Time:</b>        | March 4, 1992, 19:15 Local                 | <b>Registration:</b>    | N350AH             |
| <b>Aircraft:</b>               | AEROSPATIALE AS-350D                       | <b>Aircraft Damage:</b> | Destroyed          |
| <b>Defining Event:</b>         |  | <b>Injuries:</b>        | 2 Fatal, 1 Serious |
| <b>Flight Conducted Under:</b> | Part 91: General aviation - Other work use |                         |                    |

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## Analysis

AFTER RECEIVING THE REQUEST FOR A MEDICAL EVACUATION MISSION, THE CREW CHECKED WEATHER WITH AN FAA FSS TO DETERMINE IF THE MISSION WOULD BE ACCEPTED. GROUND CLUTTER ON THE WEATHER RADAR PREVENTED A COMPLETE WEATHER BRIEF FOR ENROUTE MOUNTAINOUS AREAS. THE PILOT GOT WEATHER FOR HIS DEPARTURE POINT. THE PILOT TOLD FSS '...I THINK I CAN MEANDER MY WAY THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS ON THAT ONE.' THE PILOT ACCEPTED THE MISSION. AFTER TAKEOFF THE PILOT WAS TOLD BY FAA DEPARTURE CONTROL THERE WAS 'WEATHER' ON HIS ROUTE OF FLIGHT 'BUT THE INTENSITY IS UNKNOWN.' RADAR SERVICE WAS TERMINATED AND THE CREW CONTINUED. THE SURVIVING CREWMEMBER STATED THAT AS THE FLIGHT PROGRESSED, EVERYTHING GOT 'BLACK.' HE SAID HE COULD NOT SEE OUTSIDE THE AIRCRAFT. HE SAID ABOUT 5 MINUTES BEFORE THE CRASH, THE PILOT TOLD THE CREW '...WE ARE GOING INADVERTENT.' MEANING, THEY WERE GOING INTO THE CLOUDS AND HE WOULD BE FLYING BY INSTRUMENTS. THE SURVIVOR SAID HE HEARD THE 'ALTITUDE BUZZER,' FOLLOWED BY THE IMPACT.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: 1) THE PILOT INADEQUATELY EVALUATING THE ENROUTE WEATHER CONDITIONS, AND, 2) THE PILOT MAKING THE INFLIGHT DECISION TO CONTINUE VFR FLIGHT INTO ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS. FACTORS IN THIS ACCIDENT WERE THE INABILITY OF THE PILOT TO SEE THE MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN DUE TO THE AMBIENT LIGHT CONDITIONS, CLOUDS, AND SNOW.

## Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: CRUISE - NORMAL

### Findings

1. (F) LIGHT CONDITION - DARK NIGHT
2. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - CLOUDS
3. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - SNOW
4. (C) WEATHER EVALUATION - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
5. (C) IN-FLIGHT PLANNING/DECISION - POOR - PILOT IN COMMAND
6. (C) VFR FLIGHT INTO IMC - ATTEMPTED - PILOT IN COMMAND
7. TERRAIN CONDITION - MOUNTAINOUS/HILLY

## Factual Information

### Pilot Information

|                                  |   |  |               |
|----------------------------------|---|--|---------------|
| <b>Certificate:</b>              | Airline transport   | <b>Age:</b>                              | 32, Male      |
| <b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>       | Single-engine land; Multi-engine land   | <b>Seat Occupied:</b>                    | Right         |
| <b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b> | Helicopter  | <b>Restraint Used:</b>                   |               |
| <b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>     | Airplane  | <b>Second Pilot Present:</b>             | No            |
| <b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>     | None  | <b>Toxicology Performed:</b>             | Yes           |
| <b>Medical Certification:</b>    | Class 1 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.  | <b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>            | July 24, 1991 |
| <b>Occupational Pilot:</b>       | Yes   | <b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b> |               |
| <b>Flight Time:</b>              | 5750 hours (Total, all aircraft), 250 hours (Total, this make and model), 5700 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft) |  |               |

### Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

|                                      |  |                                       |                          |
|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Aircraft Make:</b>                | AEROSPATIALE                                     | <b>Registration:</b>                  | N350AH                   |
| <b>Model/Series:</b>                 | AS-350D AS-350D                                  | <b>Aircraft Category:</b>             | Helicopter               |
| <b>Year of Manufacture:</b>          |  | <b>Amateur Built:</b>                 |                          |
| <b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>    | Normal   | <b>Serial Number:</b>                 | 1478                     |
| <b>Landing Gear Type:</b>            | Skid   | <b>Seats:</b>                         | 6                        |
| <b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b> | February 7, 1992 100 hour                        | <b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>       | 4300 lbs                 |
| <b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>   | 34 Hrs   | <b>Engines:</b>                       | 1 Turbo shaft            |
| <b>Airframe Total Time:</b>          | 2183 Hrs   | <b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>           | LYCOMING                 |
| <b>ELT:</b>                          | Installed, activated, aided in locating accident | <b>Engine Model/Series:</b>           | LTS 101-600A3            |
| <b>Registered Owner:</b>             |  | <b>Rated Power:</b>                   | 615 Horsepower           |
| <b>Operator:</b>                     |  | <b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b> | On-demand air taxi (135) |
| <b>Operator Does Business As:</b>    |  | <b>Operator Designator Code:</b>      | EJYA                     |

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

|                                  |                     |                                      |             |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| Conditions at Accident Site:     | Instrument (IMC)    | Condition of Light:                  | Night/dark  |
| Observation Facility, Elevation: |                     | Distance from Accident Site:         |             |
| Observation Time:                |                     | Direction from Accident Site:        |             |
| Lowest Cloud Condition:          | Unknown             | Visibility                           |             |
| Lowest Ceiling:                  |                     | Visibility (RVR):                    |             |
| Wind Speed/Gusts:                | /                   | Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:     | /           |
| Wind Direction:                  | 0°                  | Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual: | /           |
| Altimeter Setting:               |                     | Temperature/Dew Point:               |             |
| Precipitation and Obscuration:   | N/A - None - Snow   |                                      |             |
| Departure Point:                 | TUCSON , AZ (38E )  | Type of Flight Plan Filed:           | Company VFR |
| Destination:                     | SAFFORD , AZ (NONE) | Type of Clearance:                   | None        |
| Departure Time:                  | 18:35 Local         | Type of Airspace:                    | Class G     |

## Airport Information

|                      |   |                           |      |
|----------------------|---|---------------------------|------|
| Airport:             |   | Runway Surface Type:      |      |
| Airport Elevation:   |   | Runway Surface Condition: |      |
| Runway Used:         | 0 | IFR Approach:             | None |
| Runway Length/Width: |   | VFR Approach/Landing:     | None |

## Wreckage and Impact Information

|                     |                    |                      |                            |
|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Crew Injuries:      | 2 Fatal, 1 Serious | Aircraft Damage:     | Destroyed                  |
| Passenger Injuries: |                    | Aircraft Fire:       | None                       |
| Ground Injuries:    | N/A                | Aircraft Explosion:  | None                       |
| Total Injuries:     | 2 Fatal, 1 Serious | Latitude, Longitude: | 32.430171,-109.880882(est) |

## Administrative Information

**Investigator In Charge (IIC):** Childress, Richard

**Additional Participating Persons:** WAYNE MCKINNEY; SCOTTSDALE , AZ  
MAC CHILDERS; SCOTTSDALE , AZ  
G. E SEMPREBON; STRATFORD , CT  
DEL LIVINGSTON; GRAND PRAIRIE , TX

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**Note:**

**Investigation Docket:** <https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=27409>

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), established in 1967, is an independent federal agency mandated by Congress through the Independent Safety Board Act of 1974 to investigate transportation accidents, determine the probable causes of the accidents, issue safety recommendations, study transportation safety issues, and evaluate the safety effectiveness of government agencies involved in transportation. The NTSB makes public its actions and decisions through accident reports, safety studies, special investigation reports, safety recommendations, and statistical reviews.

The Independent Safety Board Act, as codified at 49 U.S.C. Section 1154(b), precludes the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an incident or accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report. A factual report that may be admissible under 49 U.S.C. § 1154(b) is available [here](#).