

NTSB Identification: **ERA12FA385**

14 CFR Part 91: General Aviation

Accident occurred Thursday, June 07, 2012 in Lake Wales, FL
Aircraft: PILATUS AIRCRAFT LTD PC-12/47, registration: N950KA

Injuries: 6 Fatal.

This is preliminary information, subject to change, and may contain errors. Any errors in this report will be corrected when the final report has been completed.

On June 7, 2012, about 1235 eastern daylight time, a Pilatus PC-12/47, N950KA, registered to and operated by Roadside Ventures, LLC, departed controlled flight followed by subsequent in-flight breakup near Lake Wales, Florida. Instrument meteorological conditions prevailed at the altitude and location of the departure from controlled flight and an instrument flight rules (IFR) flight plan was filed for the 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 91 personal flight from St. Lucie County International Airport (FPR), Fort Pierce, Florida, to Freeman Field Airport (3JC), Junction City, Kansas. The airplane was substantially damaged and the certificated private pilot and five passengers were fatally injured. The flight originated from FPR about 1205.

According to preliminary Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) air traffic control information, after departure, air traffic control communications were transferred to Miami Air Route Traffic Control Center (Miami Center). While in contact with that facility, about 1229, the flight was cleared to flight level (FL) 250. At about 1230, the controller cleared the flight to FL260, which the pilot acknowledged. At about 1232, the controller advised the pilot of a large area of precipitation northwest of Lakeland, with moderate, heavy and extreme echoes. The controller asked the pilot to look at it and to advise what direction he needed to deviate, then suggested deviation right of course until north of the adverse weather. The pilot responded that he agreed, and the controller asked the pilot what heading from his position would keep the airplane clear, and the pilot responded 320 degrees. The controller cleared the pilot to fly heading 320 degrees, and to deviate right of course when necessary, and when able proceed direct to Seminole, which he acknowledged. There was no further recorded communication from the pilot with the Miami Center.

According to preliminary radar data, between 1232:37, and 12:33:25, the airplane proceeded in a west-northwesterly direction, and climbed from 24,700 to 25,100 feet, then maintained that altitude for the next 12 seconds; however, a change in direction to the right was noted. Between 1233:37, and 1233:49, the airplane descended from 25,100 to 24,200 feet, and turned to the right, and between 1233:49, and 1234:01, the airplane descended from 24,200 to 22,500 feet, and continued the right turn. Between 1234:01 and 1234:37, the airplane descended from 22,500 to 10,700 feet, and turned to a southerly heading. Between 1234:37, and 1234:49, the airplane turned left and proceeded on a northeasterly heading. Between 1234:49, and 1235:37 (last secondary return at 1,300 feet), the airplane continued on a northeasterly heading.

The pilot of a nearby airplane reported to FAA air traffic control and NTSB hearing a

Mayday call about 1 minute before hearing the sound of an emergency locator transmitter (ELT) signal.

A witness who was located about 1.5 nautical miles and 193 degrees from the crash site reported that on the date and time of the accident, he was inside his house and first heard a sound he attributed to a propeller feathering or later described as flutter of a flight control surface. The sound lasted 3 to 4 cycles of a whooshing high to low sound, followed by a sound he described as an energy release. He was clear the sound he heard was not an explosion, but more like mechanical fracture of parts. He ran outside, and first saw the airplane below the clouds (ceiling was estimated to be 10,000 feet). He noted by silhouette that parts of the airplane were missing, but he did not see any parts separate from the airplane during the time he saw it. At that time it was not raining at his location. He went inside his house, and got a digital camera, then ran back outside to his pool deck, and videotaped the descent. He reported the airplane was in a spin but could not recall the direction. The engine sound was consistent the whole time; there was no revving; he reported there was no forward movement. He called 911 and reported the accident.

Another witness who was located about .4 nautical mile and 125 degrees from the crash site reported hearing a boom sound that he attributed to a lawn mower, which he thought odd because it had just been raining. He saw black smoke trailing the airplane, which was spinning. He ran to the side of their house, and noted the airplane was still spinning. His brother came by their back door, they heard a thud, and both ran direct to the location of where they thought the airplane had crashed. When they arrived at the wreckage, they saw fire in front of the airplane, which one individual attempted to extinguish by throwing sand on it, but he was unable. The other individual reported the left forward door was hard to open, but he pushed it up and then was able to open it. Both attempted to render assistance; one individual called 911 to report the accident and then guided local first responders to the accident site.

Preliminary examination of the accident site revealed the wreckage consisting of the fuselage and sections of both wings came to rest upright in an open field. Sections of both wings, and also the horizontal stabilizer and elevator were separated. The separated components consisting of sections of both wings, the horizontal stabilizer, and elevator were located, tagged as to their location, and secured with the main wreckage.

The pilot, age 45, held a private pilot certificate with airplane single engine land, and instrument airplane ratings.