



# National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Preliminary Report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| <b>Location:</b>               | Half Moon Bay, CA                    | <b>Accident Number:</b> | WPR19LA238 |
| <b>Date &amp; Time:</b>        | August 19, 2019, 17:54 Local         | <b>Registration:</b>    | N134P      |
| <b>Aircraft:</b>               | Beech 36                             | <b>Injuries:</b>        | 2 None     |
| <b>Flight Conducted Under:</b> | Part 91: General aviation - Personal |                         |            |

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On August 20, 2019, at 1754 Pacific daylight time, Beech A36 airplane, N134P, descended into the Pacific Ocean about 7 nautical miles (nm) southwest of Half Moon Bay, California. The private pilot and passenger were not injured; the airplane sank and was destroyed. The airplane was registered to the pilot who operated it as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 personal flight. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed, and no flight plan was filed for the local flight which departed from Reid-Hillview Airport of Santa Clara County (RHV) San Jose, California at 1722.

About 1520, the day before the accident, the pilot added 66 gallons of fuel at North Las Vegas Airport, Las Vegas, Nevada. Thereafter, he flew to RHV and landed, and then continued to Hayward Executive Airport, Hayward, California (HWD). He estimated that the flight was about 2-2.5 hours and recalled having to use the electric boost pump (on the "LO" setting) during the climb out of RHV which he attributed to needing because of the hot outside air temperatures. After landing at HWD about 2030, he refueled the airplane, filling the main fuel tanks by adding 20 gallons (the tip tanks were empty).

The morning of the accident the pilot performed a preflight inspection of the airplane. During the preflight he recalled sumping both the left and right fuel tanks (could not remember if he used the sump in the nose). He had to sump each tank 4 to 5 times before the fuel was clear from "flakey black sediment." He thought this was more debris than usual but was not alarmed because he was finally able to sump clean fuel.

The pilot tookoff and landed at RHV to pick up a passenger and departed about 1125, landing at Monterey Regional Airport, Monterey California about 1200. During the departure from RHV, the pilot observed the fuel flow gauge showing an unstable flow oscillating and decreasing from 16 to 11 gallons per hour (gph). He switched the fuel boost to "LO" which appeared to alleviate the problem. The pilot departed Monterey about 1550 and landing at 1600 on the turf runway at Monterey Bay Academy Airport, Watsonville, California. He departed about 1630 and landed at RHV to drop off one of his passengers. That passenger, who was also a pilot, was planning to fly a Cessna 182, in tandem with the accident airplane with the purpose of them taking pictures of one another.

A review of the Federal Aviation Administration Air Traffic Control (ATC) transcripts revealed that the airplane departed RHV about 1722 as a flight of two with the Cessna. At 1725 a discussion transpired between an air traffic controller and the pilot of the Cessna about the transponder problems he was experiencing. They decided that the accident airplane would use a discrete squawk. The airplane continued west over the Norman Y Mineta San Jose International Airport, San Jose, California and were advised to maintain a heading of 270° and an altitude at or below 2,500 ft mean sea level (msl). At 1742, the Cessna pilot advised the controller that they were planning to descend below 1,000 ft msl and may lose radio contact, to which he replied that radar services were terminated and instructed the pilot to squawk VFR.

The accident pilot stated that he was making a descending left turn when at about 3,000 ft msl, the engine became quieter and stopped producing power. The JPI Engine Monitor Display 700 indicated the exhaust gas temperatures (EGTs) were declining to 0° and the fuel flow was 0 gph. He switched the boost pump to "LO" for several seconds and then "HI" and then switched it back off. He manipulated the throttle, propeller, and mixture controls full forward and about 500 ft agl, he positioned the fuel selector from the left to the right tank. The engine revved up momentarily and quit again. He stated that the propeller was windmilling and the engine was not producing power, which he described as the momentum of the turning propeller was causing the engine cylinders to keep moving, but not producing power. He stated there were no unusual vibrations, sounds, or odors.

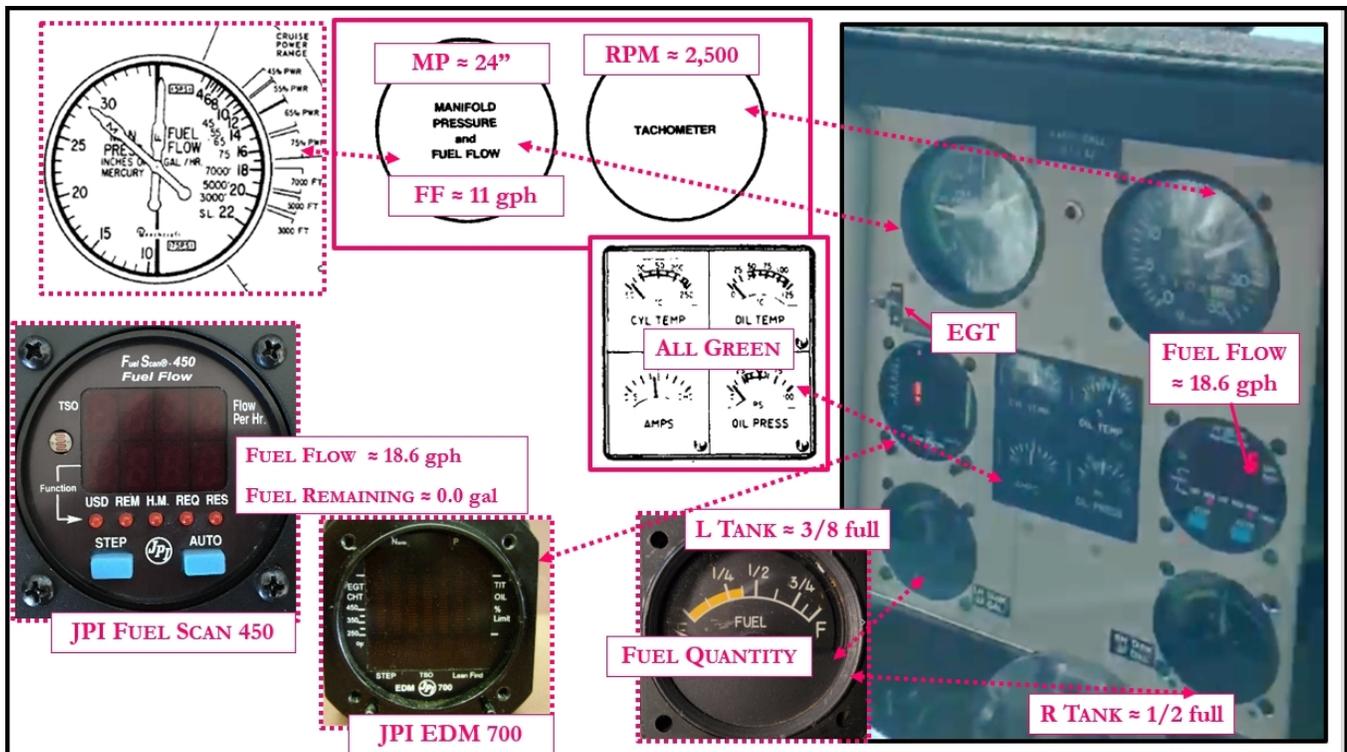
The pilot further stated that he communicated with the pilot of the Cessna about the engine failure and he opted to ditch with the landing gear and flaps in the retracted position. He configured the airplane into a level attitude at about 10 ft above the water surface and waited for it to settle into the water. Immediately after impact, he and the passenger egressed the airplane with several items they wanted to salvage from the cockpit and stood on the wing until the airplane sank (an estimated 40 to 50 seconds).

Just prior to the engine anomaly, the passenger took two cell phone videos, both of which were posted to the social media platform Instagram. The last video was started at 1735:26 (at a location 3 nm north of the accident site) and captured 16 seconds showing the pilot making the left turn just prior to the engine losing power (reference picture 01).



Picture 01: Accident Site in Reference to Departure Airport

A review of the video disclosed that the JPI Fuel Scan 450 instrument showed a 18.6 gph flow; that the left wing tank contained about 3/8 full fuel; the right tank was 1/2 full, and a manifold pressure of 24 inches (reference to picture 02).



Picture 02: Cockpit Instruments Prior to Engine Failure

The pilot of the Cessna began taking a video of the accident airplane ditching in the ocean at 1753:44, where the airplane touches down on the surface of the water at 1754:02 and comes to a stop about 1754:15 (reference pictures 03). The pilot began a to take a video of himself and his passenger while they were standing on the wing at 1754:33.



Picture 03: Accident Site in Reference to Last Video

The ATC transcripts reveal that the pilot of the Cessna contacted a controller at 1753 advising him that the accident airplane was going into the water. The Coast Guard rescue helicopters arrived about 1830. The depth of the water is about 145 ft and the airplane wreckage is not expected to be recovered.

The pilot stated that he had recently purchased the Beech A36 airplane, serial number (s/n) E-1527, in June 2019 which was equipped with a Continental Motors IO550,B, s/n 684026. The airplane had recently undergone maintenance including on July 18, 2019, under Supplemental Type Certificate (STC) #SA02722CH, the pilot installed 20-gallon D'Shannon wingtip fuel tank.

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

|                       |         |                                       |          |
|-----------------------|---------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Aircraft Make:</b> | Beech   | <b>Registration:</b>                  | N134P    |
| <b>Model/Series:</b>  | 36 A36  | <b>Aircraft Category:</b>             | Airplane |
| <b>Amateur Built:</b> | No      |                                       |          |
| <b>Operator:</b>      | On file | <b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b> | None     |

**Operator Designator Code:**

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

|   |                      |                                     |                   |
|---|----------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>     | VMC                  | <b>Condition of Light:</b>          | Day               |
| <b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b> | KHAF, 66 ft msl      | <b>Observation Time:</b>            | 01:00 Local       |
| <b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>     | 9 Nautical Miles     | <b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>       | 17°C / 14°C       |
| <b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>          | Clear                | <b>Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:</b> | 10 knots / , 320° |
| <b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>                  | Broken / 1000 ft AGL | <b>Visibility:</b>                  | 10 miles          |
| <b>Altimeter Setting:</b>               | 30.03 inches Hg      | <b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>   | VFR               |
| <b>Departure Point:</b>                 | San Jose, CA (RHV )  | <b>Destination:</b>                 | Half Moon Bay, CA |

## Wreckage and Impact Information

|                            |        |                             |                              |
|----------------------------|--------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Crew Injuries:</b>      | 1 None | <b>Aircraft Damage:</b>     | Destroyed                    |
| <b>Passenger Injuries:</b> | 1 None | <b>Aircraft Fire:</b>       | None                         |
| <b>Ground Injuries:</b>    | N/A    | <b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>  | None                         |
| <b>Total Injuries:</b>     | 2 None | <b>Latitude, Longitude:</b> | 37.357776, -122.512222 (est) |

## Administrative Information

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| <b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>     | Keliher, Zoe   |
| <b>Additional Participating Persons:</b> | David Jensen; Federal Aviation Administration; Oakland, CA |
| <b>Note:</b>                             | The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.     |