

July 14 1983

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: October 18, 1982

Forwarded to:

Honorable J. Lynn Helms
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Washington, D.C. 20591

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-82-133 and -134

The National Transportation Safety Board has recently investigated three accidents involving commuter or general aviation aircraft in which the pilots did not designate an alternate airport, as required by 14 CFR 91.83(a)(9), when they filed an instrument flight rules (IFR) flight plan. An alternate airport is required to be designated in the flight plan when weather conditions predicted at the flight's destination airport might preclude landing there.

On December 31, 1981, Sun West Airlines Flight 104, a PA-31, N-41070, crashed during a missed approach at Durango, Colorado. The pilot had filed a "canned" IFR flight plan from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to Durango, Colorado, without specifying an alternate airport, although weather conditions at Durango required the designation of an alternate.

On January 3, 1982, a Cessna 414-A, owned and operated by Ashland Properties, Inc., Ashland, Virginia, crashed in a wooded area adjacent to the Hanover County Municipal Airport, Ashland, Virginia, while attempting a VOR nonprecision instrument approach to runway 16 in instrument meteorological conditions. When the pilot, on the day preceding the accident, made an air traffic control (ATC) reservation for the flight, he did not specify an alternate airport. Similarly, at the time of departure, he did not designate an alternate airport even though the meteorological conditions at his destination required such a designation.

On May 28, 1982, a Beech D95A Travelair, N-187Q, crashed into a house in Columbia, Maryland, while attempting an instrument landing system (ILS) approach to runway 10 at Baltimore-Washington International Airport, Maryland. The pilot had filed an IFR flight plan the previous day, at which time it was not evident that an alternate airport was required. Meteorological conditions at the destination airport deteriorated by the time the pilot departed, but the flight plan was not amended to include an alternate airport.

The Safety Board believes that the failure to designate an alternate airport is a potential safety hazard. ATC assumes that an aircraft will land at its destination airport at its expected time of arrival unless notified otherwise. However, if aircraft radio communications are lost en route and weather conditions preclude landing at the destination airport, ATC will not know the airport to which the aircraft pilot intends to proceed as an alternate.

Further, there is an inadequacy in the IFR flight handling requirements of the Flight Service Handbook, 7110.10F, Change 5, concerning domestic IFR flight plans. The identity of the alternate airport designated by the pilot is not one of the items that is required to be electronically transmitted to the Air Route Traffic Control Center (ARTCC) as part of the IFR flight plan; rather, the information is retained in the Flight Service Station (FSS) to be made available upon request. Accordingly, if communications are lost between an aircraft making a missed approach and the ARTCC, time-consuming and routine-disturbing procedures must be undertaken by the air traffic controller to ascertain the alternate airport from the FSS where the flight plan was originally filed.

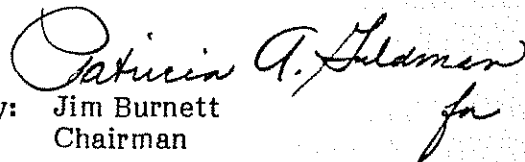
Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

Issue an operations bulletin directing Principal Operations Inspectors and Flight Service Station Specialists to remind operators that 14 CFR 91.83(a)(9) requires positively identifying an alternate airport when they file for an instrument flight rules flight. (Class II, Priority Action) (A-82-133)

Amend the provisions of Flight Service Handbook, 7110.10F, Change 5, concerning domestic instrument flight rules flight plans to require that the alternate airport designated by the pilot be added to the items to be transmitted to the Air Route Traffic Control Center as part of the instrument flight rules flight plan. (Class II, Priority Action) (A-82-134)

BURNETT, Chairman, GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, and McADAMS, BURSLEY, and ENGEN, Members, concurred in these recommendations.

By: Jim Burnett
Chairman



Patricia A. Goldman
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