

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

FOR RELEASE: 6:30 P.M., E.D.T., JULY 19, 1976

(202) 426-8787

ISSUED: July 19, 1976

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Forwarded to:

Honorable John L. McLucas  
Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
Washington, D. C. 20591  
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SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-76-95 and 96

On March 12, 1976, the pilot of N4368Q, a Cessna 172, made an emergency landing on a plowed field about 2 miles northeast of Garrett County Airport, Oakland, Maryland; the engine had failed because of fuel exhaustion. During the landing, the airplane struck a large tree and an occupant in the left front seat was killed. 1/

The National Transportation Safety Board's investigation of this accident revealed that the pilot had attempted to land at another airport while he had sufficient fuel aboard to complete a landing. During this landing attempt in instrument meteorological conditions, the pilot made reference to the radio beacon, and the controller interpreted the word "beacon" to mean rotating beacon. Consequently, the controller cleared the airplane to "circle the airport and land" rather than to approach utilizing the applicable radio beacon.

The Safety Board is pleased that the Federal Aviation Administration has begun to alert controller personnel and pilots to the misunderstanding between the controller and the pilot which contributed to this accident. We are also pleased with the recent publication of the Pilot/Controller Glossary, which was compiled to promote a common understanding of terms used in the air traffic control system.

However, the Glossary associated the word "beacon" only with the word "radar." In the May 1976, Airman's Information Manual, Part 1, the word "beacon" is used with several other words -- radio beacon (page 1-1), marker beacon (page 1-4), radar beacon (page 1-10), aeronautical (light) beacon (page 1-13), rotating beacon (page 1-13), and airway beacons (page 1-14).

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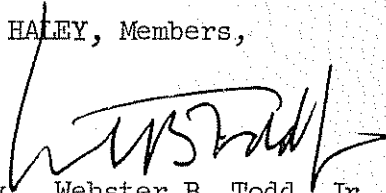
1/ A complete Aircraft Accident Report will be published on this accident in the near future.

In order to further improve communications between pilots and controllers and thereby enhance safety, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

Assure that the word "beacon" is accompanied by a qualifying word whenever it is used in the Air Traffic Control System. (Class, II, Priority followup) (A-76-95)

Include all of the various meanings of the word "beacon" in a revision to the Pilot/Controller Glossary. (Class III, Longer Term followup.) (A-76-96)

TODD, Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, BURGESS, and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendation.

  
By: Webster B. Todd, Jr.  
Chairman

THIS RECOMMENDATION WILL BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC ON THE ISSUE DATE SHOWN ABOVE. NO PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE MADE PRIOR TO THAT DATE.