



Aviation Investigation Preliminary Report

Location:	Fairbanks, AK	Accident Number:	ANC24FA029
Date & Time:	April 23, 2024, 10:03 Local	Registration:	N3054V
Aircraft:	Douglas C54D	Injuries:	2 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Business		

On April 23, 2024, about 1003 Alaska daylight time, a Douglas C54D (DC-4) airplane, N3054V, was destroyed when it was involved in an accident near Fairbanks, Alaska. The two pilots were fatally injured. The airplane was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 91 flight.

The accident airplane, owned and operated by Alaska Air Fuel, Inc., was transporting 3,400 gallons of unleaded fuel and two 100-gallon propane tanks. The airplane departed from the Fairbanks International Airport (FAI) at about 0955 Alaska daylight time (AKDT) with a destination of the Kobuk Airport (OBU) Kobuk, Alaska. Shortly after takeoff an eyewitness reported seeing the airplane flying to the west, with the far left engine (No. 1) not running. The witness also noticed a small, white plume of smoke coming from that engine. The witness reported the airplane began a turn to the south at which point he noticed the engine was on fire. Recovered surveillance video shows white smoke behind the number one engine, followed by flames. The video also revealed that seconds later a bright white explosion is seen just behind the number one engine followed by fragments of airplane wreckage falling to the ground. See figure 1.

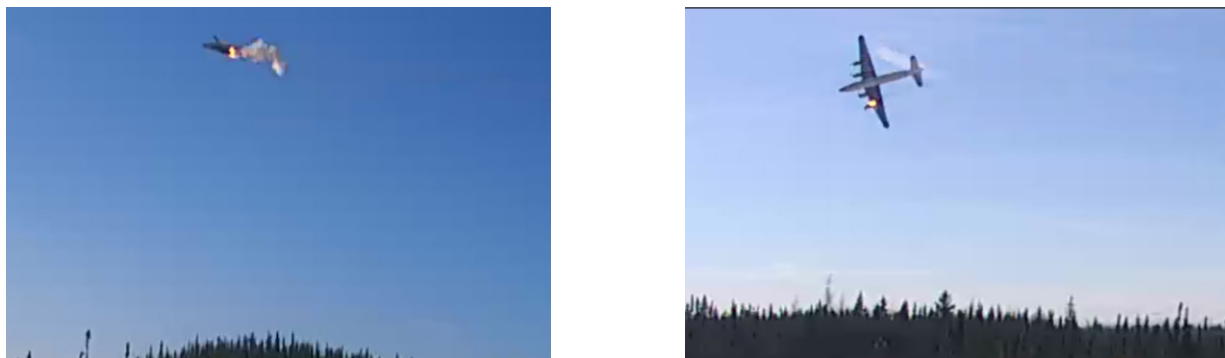


Figure 1. Surveillance Video Clips

The airplane then begins an uncontrolled descending left turn into terrain. The No. 1 engine separated from the wing about 100 ft above the ground and eventually came to rest on the frozen Tanana River.

A preliminary review of archived voice communication information from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) revealed that shortly after departure from FAI at 1,000, the pilot contacted the departure air traffic control (ATC) specialist on duty, stating that there was “a fire on board” and that they needed to return to the airport.

The accident airplane was equipped with Automatic Dependent Surveillance–Broadcast (ADS–B), which provides aircraft position information via satellite navigation or other sensors and periodically broadcasts it, enabling the aircraft to be tracked. The information can be received by air traffic control ground stations as a replacement for secondary surveillance radar, as no interrogation signal is needed from the ground.

According to archived FAA ADS-B data, after the airplane departed FAI, it initially proceeded southwest, then it turned westbound. The airplane then began a left turn back to FAI. The ADS-B data eventually stopped near where the witness observed the accident airplane impact terrain.

The accident airplane was also equipped with Spidertracks. Spidertracks enables real-time flight tracking, automated flight watch, two-way communication, and flight data monitoring (FDM) for aircraft. The operator’s archived Spidertracks data has been collected for further analysis.

A large postcrash fire ensued, which incinerated much of the airplane's structure. See figure 2.



Figure 2. N3054V accident site. (Alaska State Trooper Photo)

The No.1 engine was recovered, and a detailed engine examination is pending.

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Douglas	Registration:	N3054V
Model/Series:	C54D	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Amateur Built:			
Operator:	ALASKA AIR FUEL INC	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Designator Code:			

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	VMC	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	PAFA,430 ft msl	Observation Time:	10:53 Local
Distance from Accident Site:	6 Nautical Miles	Temperature/Dew Point:	7°C /-2°C
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Few / 11000 ft AGL	Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	/ ,
Lowest Ceiling:		Visibility:	10 miles
Altimeter Setting:	29.92 inches Hg	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	Company VFR
Departure Point:	Fairbanks , AK (FAI)	Destination:	Kobuk, AK (OBU)

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	2 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	In-flight
Ground Injuries:		Aircraft Explosion:	In-flight
Total Injuries:	2 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	64.745345,-148.07959

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Ward, Mark
Additional Participating Persons:	Alan Cruce; Alaska Air Fuel INC ; Wasilla, AK Dustin Hopkins; FAA; Fairbanks, AK
Investigation Class:	Class 3
Note:	