



# Aviation Investigation Preliminary Report

<b>Location:</b>	Fairbanks, AK	<b>Accident Number:</b>	ANC24FA029
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	April 23, 2024, 10:03 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N3054V
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Douglas C54D	<b>Injuries:</b>	2 Fatal
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	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.

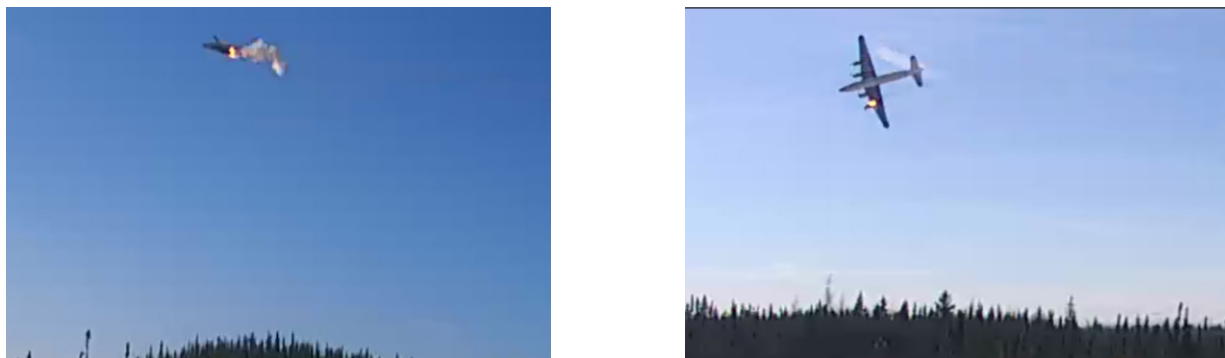


Figure 1. Surveillance Video Clips

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

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

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

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

## Wreckage and Impact Information

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

## Administrative Information

<b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>	Ward, Mark
<b>Additional Participating Persons:</b>	Alan Cruce; Alaska Air Fuel INC ; Wasilla, AK Dustin Hopkins; FAA; Fairbanks, AK
<b>Investigation Class:</b>	<a href="#">Class 3</a>
<b>Note:</b>	