

May 19, 1936

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF AIR COMMERCE
Washington

STATEMENT OF PROBABLE CAUSE CONCERNING AN ACCIDENT WHICH
OCCURRED TO A COMMERCIALY OWNED AIRPLANE AT DETROIT,
MICHIGAN, ON APRIL 26, 1936

To the Secretary of Commerce.

On April 26, 1936, at approximately 6.30 p.m., a commercially owned airplane crashed within the city limits of Detroit, Michigan, with resultant death to the pilot and passenger and the complete destruction of the aircraft.

The airplane, a Fleet, model 2, bore Department of Commerce license number NC-797V and was owned by the Michigan Aero Club, Inc., Detroit, Michigan. The pilot, Leo F. Hickey, held a Department of Commerce private pilot's license. The passenger, William Madyck, held a Department of Commerce amateur pilot's license.

Shortly after taking off from the Detroit City Airport, the airplane was seen by several witnesses looping and going through various other acrobatic maneuvers at an altitude of approximately 1000 feet over a district where there were scattered houses. Altitude was gradually lost in the performance of these maneuvers. From approximately 500 feet, the airplane was seen to make a long dive, was pulled up, half rolled and another dive started. Near the bottom of this dive a guy wire on a public service electric light pole was struck, throwing the airplane on its back, in which position it hit the ground about 100 feet from the pole and bounced about fifty feet where it came to rest, the engine falling out about midway between these two points of contact.

Examination of the wreckage bore out the statements of witnesses as to the manner in which the airplane struck. Dual controls were connected and it was impossible to determine which man was actually in control of the airplane at the time of the accident. Before the take-off, however, Madyck, supposedly the passenger, was heard to state that he intended to "put on a real show for Hickey."

It is the opinion of the Bureau of Air Commerce that the probable cause of this accident was carelessness and negligence on the part of the pilot in performing acrobatic maneuvers at a dangerously low altitude and over a residential section.

Corrective measures for accidents of this nature exist in the Air Commerce Regulations. The Bureau of Air Commerce wishes to call attention to the regulations violated in this flight which invited just such an accident.

1. Performing acrobatic maneuvers below the minimum prescribed altitude of 1500 feet.
2. Performing acrobatics over a congested area.
3. Doing an act with an aircraft which is contrary to public safety.

Respectfully submitted,

Eugene L. Vidal
Director of Air Commerce