

Adopted January 10, 1944

File No. 2795-43

REPORT OF THE CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD
on the
Investigation of an Accident Involving Aircraft
During a Crop Dusting Flight

Pilot Benjamin Franklin Austin was fatally injured in an accident which occurred near Litchfield, Arizona, at approximately 8:00 a.m. on July 13, 1943. Austin, age 40, held a commercial pilot certificate with single-engine land, 0-330 h.p. and flight instructor ratings. He had accumulated approximately 1141 hours of flight time, about 134 of which were in the type of aircraft involved. The aircraft, a Stearman C-3-P, NR 658K, owned by Quick Aviation Company, received major damage.

Austin took off from the Goodyear Airport at approximately 7:40 a.m. with 600 pounds of sulphur dust for the purpose of dusting a cottonfield about 2 miles north of the airport. About 20 minutes later, while Austin was on his third circuit of the field, witnesses observed the plane fly directly into a three-wire power line 35 feet high which bordered the north end of the field being dusted. The landing gear contacted the wires with sufficient force to pull up two supporting poles and drag the wires over a second power line about 100 feet beyond. The plane turned over during its fall to the ground and came to rest in an inverted position.

Investigation revealed no evidence of failure of any part of the aircraft prior to collision with the wires. Weather conditions were favorable with unlimited ceiling and visibility and a west wind of 2 m.p.h.

Austin was employed by the Quick Aviation Company as a crop duster about six weeks prior to this accident. The subject flight was the first crop dusting flight he had made for the Company as he had been working as a mechanic helping to get the equipment in condition. His crop dusting experience could not be ascertained. However, he had represented himself to his employer as an experienced crop dusting pilot. Before taking off on this dusting flight Austin had made an aerial inspection of the field to be dusted.

It is apparent that this accident was caused by failure of the pilot to pull up in time to avoid obstructions in his flight path.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Fred A. Toombs
Secretary