



PA46 History: Exoneration of the PA46 Airframe Following Special NTSB Investigation

Between 1989 and 1991, the PA46 was involved in seven fatal accidents worldwide following departures from controlled flight. In 1990, following the fourth U.S. fatal accident, the FAA issued an emergency airworthiness directive and NTSB initiated an investigation into the accidents. The special investigation included a review of the relevant design features of the Malibu and Mirage, including structural integrity, flight control systems, and operating limitations. The investigation also looked at the flight experience and training of the pilots, particularly as related to flying in IMC at and above freezing levels with relatively sophisticated integrated flight guidance and control systems.

After an exhaustive investigation, the NTSB issued its report on July 21, 1992. An excerpt:

The probable causes of the five fatal accidents that occurred in the United States are include in the report. The investigation analysis of the relevant data indicate that the causes of the accident involved failure to use pitot heat in freezing IMC, possible misuse of the integrated flight guidance and control systems, loss of control, and in-flight airframe failures due to loads and stresses that substantially exceeded design limits.

When the NTSB launched its special investigation into the cause of the four fatal U.S. crashes, a group of concerned owners formed the Malibu Coalition whose members comprised of Don Jacobson, Lee Morse, Michael Alper and John Foster. The Coalition participated in the NTSB review, bringing onboard former FAA administrator Langhorn Bond and human factors investigator Dr. Fred Hyman. The Coalition participated in the entire FAA/NTSB review, which led to the rescinding of the emergency AD and exonerated the integrity of the PA46 airframe. The NTSB made several safety recommendations concerning modifications to the aircraft's flight manual and for the improvement to initial pilot training.

Following the investigation's conclusion, the Malibu Coalition was dissolved and remaining funds were disbursed to the fledgling Malibu Mirage Owners and Pilots Association, which would continue to carry the banner in the name of safety for PA46 owners.