

Don't Second-Guess

More From the NTSB:

Witnesses observed the Beech A36 Bonanza exiting the low cloud ceiling halfway down the runway during an instrument approach. The cloud ceiling was about 200 feet agl. The pilot did not execute the published missed approach procedure. Instead, he maneuvered the airplane in the vicinity of the airport at a low altitude and entered the right downwind leg of the traffic pattern for the runway. Witnesses observed the airplane turn to the right toward the runway, pitch nose up, bank to the left, stall and enter an uncontrolled descent.



A post-accident examination of the airframe and engine revealed no evidence of any pre-impact failure or malfunction. The circling approach weather minimums were a 700-foot-agl ceiling and one-mile visibility. Based on the witness reports and examination of the impact damage, it is likely the pilot inadvertently stalled the airplane at a low altitude during the downwind-to-base turn.

The NTSB's probable cause: "The pilot's inadequate airspeed while maneuvering at low altitude, which resulted in an aerodynamic stall. Contributing to the accident was the pilot's decision to not execute a missed approach in weather conditions below minimums."

Once you reach the missed approach point and determine you're not in position to land, fly the procedure to completion or until given an amended clearance by Air Traffic Control. There is ample evidence that many missed approach accidents occur when the pilot appears to have begun the missed and then attempts some fairly radical maneuvering to land.

One theory is that the pilot does not see the runway environment until after he/she advances power to begin the missed approach, but then sees the runway shortly afterward. Even just seconds after beginning the missed approach climbout, the airplane may no longer be in a position to make a normal descent to the runway with sufficient runway remaining to land. In the process of trying to turn, slip, circle or dive to the runway the pilot loses control and crashes. These events are almost always fatal.

The lesson learned is that once you begin the missed, fly the missed. If conditions that caused the miss are transient, then you might try the approach a second time. But don't attempt any radical maneuvering to get down if the runway comes into view after you initiate the missed approach procedure.