

Aaron Sauer
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Office of Aviation Safety - Central Region

Date: 08/11/2023

Subject: ANC23FA061

Contact: Joshua (Josh) Hendricks - Hunter

According to Mr. Hendricks, on Sunday, August 6th, the accident pilot Jason, his friend Nick, and he flew in the pilot's Cessna 206 airplane from Big Lake Airport, Big Lake, Alaska, to the Dillinger River area to scout for a hunting location and a suitable landing area for the Jason's PA-18 airplane. This scouting flight was the first flight for Josh and Nick with the accident pilot. Josh and Nick felt they had a good plan for their upcoming hunting trip following the scouting flight. Josh stated that Nick was handling the payment with Jason for all the flights, which he believed to be about \$600 per flight hour. They planned to split the payment once the final bill was received.

On August 9th, the day of the accident, Nick and Josh met Jason at the Big Lake Airport for their planned hunting trip. They departed in Jason's Cessna 206 airplane about 0845 to a staging area near a location referred to as Donkey Creek. The three arrived at Donkey Creek and unloaded their hunting gear (food and gear for a planned 8 to 10 day hunt) and 20 gallons of fuel (reserve fuel for the PA-18). Jason then departed back to Big Lake in the Cessna 206 and returned to Donkey Creek in the PA-18 (Super Cub) about 1 hour and 45 minutes later.

Jason and Nick then loaded some hunting gear in the Super Cub and departed the airstrip about 1150 en route to the Dillinger River area, in which the planned route was via Shellabarger Pass. No fuel was added to the PA-18 prior to the accident flight. Josh stated the weather (clouds) appeared to be lifting when looking up towards Shellabarger Pass. Jason had previously indicated to Nick and Josh that if the weather was not good, they would possibly have to wait until the next day to fly to the camp area.

Jason told Josh that he could expect him back in about 2 hours after shuttling Nick to the camp. About 1500, Josh became slightly worried that Jason had not arrived back but thought maybe something was not quite right with the planned landing area near the Dillinger River or possibly some weather may have delayed the return flight. To Josh's knowledge, each person was equipped with a Garmin inReach satellite communicator device.

After 1600, Josh made several attempts to contact various persons, including Jason and Nick, via his Garmin inReach. Some contact was made with family members, and no one was certain what was going on with the flight. Josh spent the night at the Donkey Creek location and was picked up by one of Jason's friends later that afternoon.

Josh stated that he had a couple of photographs that were taken at the Donkey Creek location and a cell phone video of the takeoff from Donkey Creek of the accident flight. The photographs and video were sent to the NTSB investigator-in-charge and National Park Service representatives.

--END OF CONVERSATION--