

[REDACTED]

Here is my account of the events at IAH today. If you have any additional details in question please don't hesitate to ask.

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5-17-12

KIAH

Approx. 7:15am

The chain of events started when the fuel truck arrived before the freight. The standing fuel order for the IAH-AUS run is 2400lbs and this is the fuel load that was completed. When the freight arrived, it was found that taking all the freight with our current fuel load would put us ~60 pounds over weight at the end of the runway. We decided that we could burn that additional 60 pounds of fuel off during our taxi.

- Engine Start -

During the taxi the power levers were kept higher than normal and the brakes were used to maintain a slow safe speed. The first indication of a problem with the airplane was a right yawing motion in which the tail seemed to pivot around the nose wheel. The yawing motion was accompanied by a roughness that was immediately identified as a symptom of a flat tire. The power levers were immediately retarded to the idle position and the airplane was coming to a stop with the nose wheel on the taxiway center line. I believe the left main deflated first, causing the yawing motion.

Within 3 or 4 seconds of feeling the distinct "flat tire feeling," the crew of an aircraft behind us notified us over the radio that the right main tire was on fire and producing large flames. I looked out the right side window of the cockpit and saw no flames but large billows of black smoke. I responded over the radio that we were going to exit the aircraft and Jim simultaneously shut down the engines. I very quickly thought through the Shutdown Checklist to make sure everything was turned off. I noticed out loud that the batteries and electrical master were still on and Jim promptly turned them off. As we exited the aircraft we each grabbed a fire extinguisher and went to the right side of the aircraft.

The first thing I saw as I came around the nose of the airplane was a puddle of burning fluid encircling the tire about four feet in diameter. It is impossible to know but after our extinguishers were emptied it seemed as though two or three more similarly sized fire extinguishers may have done the job.

With our available efforts expended and ourselves safely out of the aircraft we retreated to the edge of the taxiway. Almost instantaneously it seemed we were surrounded by Airport Operations and the Airport Rescue and Fire Fighters. They went straight to work on foaming the airplane and extinguished the flames very quickly. The first Airport Operations officer on the scene offered Jim and I a seat in his SUV to soak in what had just happened. After we had caught our breath we approached the Fire Fighter Chief and began discussing aircraft systems (fuel especially), where they were located, and how much fuel was on board.

The FAA investigator arrived sometime around 9:45am and Jim and I gave a combined interview on how everything happened. Jim and I stayed with the aircraft until approximately 10:30am at which time we went to go for the drug/alcohol test.

Matt Erwin