



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy N. Sorensen
Aviation Accident Investigator
Central Region

Date: November 5, 2015
Person Contacted: Rami Alnaser
NTSB Accident Number: CEN15FA427 – Lexington, Texas

Narrative:

Mr. Alnaser reported that he had trained with the accident pilot. Mr. Alnaser was training to be a reserve jump pilot at the skydive center. His training was conducted over two weekends in August 2015. The first weekend consisted of ground training and observing the accident pilot complete jump flights from the ground. He subsequently flew with the accident pilot as an observer. At the end of the day, he flew as the jump pilot under the supervision of the accident pilot. There were no skydivers/passengers onboard this flight. On the second weekend, at the end of the day, he flew as a jump pilot with skydivers onboard. The accident pilot again supervised as an observer pilot during this flight.

Mr. Alnaser noted that after his training, the skydive center did not call to request his assistance. He knew that the accident pilot was full-time and assumed that they didn't have a need for a reserve pilot during that timeframe.

Mr. Alnaser recalled thinking that the accident pilot was a "safe pilot." The accident pilot was "particular" in his approach to flying and was diligent in his use of the checklist. He never observed the accident pilot execute a low pass/approach prior to landing. On one occasion, he did observe the accident pilot exit the airplane with the engine running. The airplane wheels were not chocked at the time, rather the accident pilot used a "lip" on the concrete ramp to restrain the airplane.

Mr. Alnaser explained that the accident pilot would typically refuel after every third flight. He added that a piece of wood marked in 3 – 5 gallons increments (notches) was used to determine the amount of fuel added. The accident pilot would typically add 3-1/2 increments (notches) worth of fuel each time. A typical jump flight would last 20 – 25 minutes.

Mr. Alnaser noted that the livestock on the property could be a concern during landing. He commented that the runway was "not the best." It was one-half to three-quarters paved, with the remained consisting of gravel.

----- End of entries -----



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy N. Sorensen
Aviation Accident Investigator
Central Region

Date: November 3, 2015
Person Contacted: Caleb Jones
NTSB Accident Number: CEN15FA427 – Lexington, Texas

Narrative:

Mr. Jones flew as a jump pilot over a total of three weekends from October 2014 until January 2015. He noted that he had some friends that worked there, which is the reason he originally started flying for the skydive center. However, it was a two hour drive from his home, which is why he ultimately stopped flying for them. Mr. Jones did not know the accident pilot and he never flew the accident airplane.

Mr. Jones characterized the operator as a “regular skydive operation.” He noted that new pilot training consisted of a briefing on regulations related to skydiving operations, observation of five or six jump flights, and flying as the pilot on five or six jump flights under the supervision of another jump pilot.

----- End of entries -----



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy N. Sorensen
Aviation Accident Investigator
Central Region

Date: November 5, 2015
Person Contacted: Frank Newkirk
NTSB Accident Number: CEN15FA427 – Lexington, Texas

Narrative:

Mr. Newkirk is a reserve pilot at the skydive center. He is a former Air Force pilot and a retired Southwest Airlines pilot. He has been associated with the skydive center for about seven years.

Mr. Newkirk had not personally met the accident pilot. He had filled in for him as a jump pilot on occasion, but had coordinated the substitute flying via email or text messages. Based on comments from people at the skydive center, his impression was that the accident pilot was competent and dependable.

Mr. Newkirk had flown the accident airplane, but the most recent time was last spring. The accident airplane was down for a period of time for an engine overhaul. He commented that the accident airplane was generally well maintained.

Mr. Newkirk explained that pilot training normally consisted of having the new pilot observe onboard a few jump flights. Then the new pilot would fly a few jump flights under the supervision of a more experienced jump pilot. Once it was determined that the new pilot proficient, he/she would be released to conduct jump flights on his/her own. Mr. Newkirk noted that the flight profile for repeated jump flights can get a little routine and boring.

Mr. Newkirk commented that the skydive center will try to get the most out of the pilots if skydivers are looking to jump, continuing right up until dark. He has flown up to 14 flights in one day, with a typical jump flight being 20 to 25 minutes. He normally carried enough fuel for two flights with reserves and planned for a full load of jumpers on each flight in order to be conservative from a weight and balance/performance perspective.

----- End of entries -----



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy N. Sorensen
Aviation Accident Investigator
Central Region

Date: November 4, 2015
Person Contacted: Lyndon Nugent
NTSB Accident Number: CEN15FA427 – Lexington, Texas

Narrative:

Mr. Nugent has been associated with the Austin/Texas Skydive Center for the past 15 or 16 months; since about August 2014. He skydives on the weekends and has occasionally flown the jump airplane. Mr. Nugent is a professional pilot and an FAA designated pilot examiner. He is a former Army pilot and has about 30 years of total flying experience.

Mr. Nugent explained that the runway consisted of a 100-acre field composed of grass, dirt, and gravel. In addition, there is some livestock on the property. As a result, he noted that it is prudent to make a low pass over the field to confirm that the landing area is clear. He described the maneuver as a go-around and a return for landing.

Mr. Nugent recalled that the accident pilot came to work at the skydive center in April. His initial flights were as a skydiver, with the accident pilot as the jump pilot. Mr. Nugent noted that they had subsequently flown together as pilots to Florida and to the Mexican border. He mentored the accident pilot and estimated that they logged about 20 hours together, which consisted of helping the accident pilot transition to multi-engine flying.

Mr. Nugent noted that “fundamentally [the accident pilot] had the basics down.” They discussed “finer points” of flying. Mr. Nugent added that he never personally observed the accident pilot do anything “foolhardy” or “negligent.” Mr. Nugent stated that when flying to altitude as a skydiver, the accident pilot always flew the airplane in a professional manner. Mr. Nugent commented that he had observed the accident pilot make a low pass, go-around maneuver in the past. However, he never observed the accident pilot execute a steep turn after the low pass. Mr. Nugent added that he observed the accident pilot land downwind in a 4 or 5 knot wind. The accident pilot explained that he had accepted the light tailwind on landing in order to avoid some skydivers. Mr. Nugent recalled thinking that seemed reasonable and prudent.

----- End of entries -----

Sorensen Tim

From: Lyndon Nugent [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, November 05, 2015 7:30 AM
To: Sorensen Tim
Subject: Re: CEN15FA427 -- Lexington, TX (Cessna 182A ~ N3921D)

Mr. Sorensen:

I think this reflects our discussion in all material respects. However, there are two things that I did want to emphasize and which we discussed.

The first is the subject of training. I am not personally aware of any significant formal training that occurs between the drop zone owner and the pilots. By that I mean I do not think there is a two-week program of instruction with a mixture of classroom and aircraft training platforms. There is, however, a good degree of formal training that does occur. From what I have seen, that is in a written format, although I do not possess a copy of it, and I have known both the drop zone owner, as well as the individual jump masters, to spend time with each pilot.....both initially (as it relates primarily to the owner), and certainly on all jumps of which I have been a part (as it relates to the jump masters and pilot). The lines of communication between the individual skydivers and the pilots have always been open and well-utilized, and think that has contributed to the overall safety at this drop zone.

As you know, the C182 is a ubiquitous airframe, and most pilots have at least some sort of experience in it or its smaller stablemate, the C172. As such, the bulk of the training that I have witnessed has been more so with respect to the uniqueness of flying skydivers and flying in and out of a soft field environment. It has been my experience as an examiner that while all pilots are trained to fly in and out of soft fields, most have never done so. As such, there has always been a fair amount of discussion between the pilots on the better techniques to use for this particular location. I know I have advised this, as has the owner, that each new pilot make several take offs and landings into this particular field until that pilot is comfortable and before any passengers are carried.

The second issue, which sort of follows from the first, is the concept of down wind landings. At first glance that sort of a statement can be a bit eyebrow-raising as pilots are taught that it is better to land into the wind as opposed to down wind for several reasons (which I realize you are all too familiar with).

This particular field is unique for a number of reasons. I believe it is just over 5,500' in length and runs generally north to south. The field itself sits on approximately 100 acres whose dimensions are 5,500' long by 800' wide.

The northern 10% of the drop zone/field encompasses the approach end to let's call it Runway 17, plus the administrative area, primary landing area (for parachutists), packing room, etc. The southern 90% is essentially a flattened open area which encompasses the majority of the runway's length.

With respect to making low passes, I have found that prudent in the past (as I think many of the pilots have) to ensure that there are no wandering livestock. Once the animals figure out the airplane is going to be running they tend to stay away from the strip anyway, so it is usually the first flight of the day that this occurs, if at all.

With respect to landing down wind, I have personally only seen this occur on calm wind days where while the wind might have some minimal sort of impact, it is probably not that substantial in the big scheme of

things. The benefit to be gained from landing to the north is that there are less obstacles, less people, no wires of which I am aware, and no people (skydivers, spectators, etc.).

So while I would always prefer to land into the wind and would always caution to evaluate that as the first option, there are some definitely some advantages to landing to the north as opposed to the south and that in making that sort of decision, I honestly believe that the pilots do that after considering all relevant factors and considering that the better course of action as opposed to doing it for foolhardy reasons.

I thank you for your time yesterday. If there is anything else I can do to assist you and/or the NTSB, I remain available at your convenience.

Respectfully submitted,

Lyndon Nugent

On Wed, Nov 4, 2015 at 7:10 PM, Sorensen Tim [REDACTED] wrote:

Mr. Nugent,

Attached is a summary of our conversation from earlier today. Please review the record at your earliest convenience and advise if it is complete and accurate. If not, kindly provide any additions or corrections.

I sincerely appreciate your assistance. Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to let me know.

Sincerely,

Tim Sorensen

Tim Sorensen

Senior Aviation Accident Investigator

National Transportation Safety Board

1879 N. Neltor Blvd. -- #223

West Chicago, IL 60185

Office: [202-314-6635](tel:202-314-6635)

Mobile: [REDACTED]

Fax: [202-640-5008](tel:202-640-5008)



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy N. Sorensen
Aviation Accident Investigator
Central Region

Date: November 5, 2015
Person Contacted: Ilya Tsitkin
NTSB Accident Number: CEN15FA427 – Lexington, Texas

Narrative:

Mr. Tsitkin stated that he stopped flying for the skydive center in July / August 2014. He did not know the accident pilot, nor had he ever flown the accident airplane. He commented that, in general, their airplanes were “well used.”

Mr. Tsitkin characterized the skydive operations in general as “go, go, go.” He added that the owner wasn’t familiar with the regulations. As a result, she might pressure a pilot to fly when it was not prudent. The pilot would have to stand his/her ground.

----- End of entries -----



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy N. Sorensen
Aviation Accident Investigator
Central Region

Date: November 5, 2015
Person Contacted: Maximillian Weiner
NTSB Accident Number: CEN15FA427 – Lexington, Texas

Narrative:

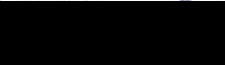
Mr. Weiner flew as a pilot with the skydive center from January 2014 until May / June 2014. He flew only on the weekends.

Mr. Weiner noted that the owner could be “tough;” pushing the pilots a little too hard at times in his opinion. Pilots needed to “stand their ground.” He offered one example: When a clear area began to open in an overcast cloud layer, the owner would pressure him to climb up through it in order to get the skydivers to the jump altitude before the clear area was large enough to fly through safely. He added that pilot turnover seemed a bit high to him as a result.

Mr. Weiner reported that the skydive center was vigilant about airplane maintenance. He added that in addition to the required 100 hour inspections, they would also complete 50 hour inspections. He never recalled having a concern about any maintenance issues and thought that the airplane was well maintained.

Mr. Weiner explained that his training consisted of observing during two jump flights. He was then supervised by an experienced jump pilot while he flew the flights. He added that livestock was kept on the property; however, in his experience, the animals never caused a problem. He commented that he did execute a go-around on one occasion due to some animals in the landing area.

----- End of entries -----

RECORD OF ☒ VISIT ☐ CONFERENCE OR ☐ TELEPHONE CALL		TIME 9:30 AM	DATE 09/28/2015
NAME (S) OF PERSON (S) CONTACTED OR IN CONFERENCE AND LOCATION Cindy Gibson		ROUTING	
		SYMBOL	INITIALS
SUBJECT Accident of N3129D			
DIGEST SPOKE TO CINDY GIBSON (OWNER OF THE DROP ZONE) SHE TOLD ME THAT LYONS LIKED TO PERFORM A "WING OVER" TYPE MANUVER AND HE HAD DONE THIS MANY TIMES IN THE PAST. SHE DIDIN'T LIKE HIM DOING THIS SO HAD A CONVERSATION ABOUT THIS WITH HIM TELING HIM TO STOP IT. THE DAY OF THE ACCIDENT HE HAD DONE THIS THREE DIFFERANT TIMES.			
CONCLUSION, ACTION TAKEN, OR REQUIRED			
DATE 09/28/2015	TITLE Aviation Safety Inspector	SIGNATURE  PETER BRANDON	