



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Record of Conversation

Person Interviewed: Alan Crawford

Date: February 4, 2015

Subject: – CEN15LA018

Mr. Crawford was interviewed in person at an apartment he was renting in Houston while undergoing therapy for the extensive burns he suffered in the accident. Also present for the interview were his wife, son, daughter in law, and parents.

Mr. Crawford is a senior captain with Southwest Airlines and a seasoned air race competitor. He has competed at Reno on several occasions.

Mr. Crawford stated that he was returning from an air race competition and had just leveled off at 8,500 feet when he heard a "thump", about 15 minutes into the flight. Mr. Crawford thought he struck a bird and told air traffic control that he needed to land. He then heard a second thump along with a "rattle and vibration" and immediately found a place to make a forced landing. While preparing to land, there was a third "explosion." Mr. Crawford said that this was when he saw a fire near his left foot and black smoke started to fill up the cockpit. He declared an emergency, secured the engine, unlatched the canopy, and made a forced landing to a field. Mr. Crawford said the landing was hard and the instrument panel flexed downward and trapped his feet. Once the airplane came to a stop, he realized his shirt was on fire as he struggled to free his legs. He was finally able to exit the burning wreckage and rolled on the ground to put the flames out. Mr. Crawford then got up and was met by the witness, who stayed with him until help arrived.

Mr. Crawford said he did not know how or why the #3 cylinder intake rocker-cover was not installed and did not have an explanation as to why the exhaust rocker-cover was partially installed. He said the engine ran great during the air race and he did not remove the cowlings and perform engine work after the race. Mr. Crawford did not think sabotage was involved either.

Leah D. Yeager
National Transportation Safety Board
Senior Air Safety Investigator