



Memorandum of Conversation

December 21, 2017

Conversation with Mr. Cory Wehmeyer, Aviation Safety Inspector, Lubbock, Texas, Flight Standards District Office regarding CEN15LA350, Midland, TX, Trixy Princess Gyroplane, N743SS, Accident

Mr. Wehmeyer traveled to the scene and examined the gyroplane. There was substantial damage to the right side and forward part of the fuselage. The horizontal stabilizer was broken and separated aft. The vertical stabilizer was broken aft and bent right to the right. The main rotor mast was bent 90-degrees at mid-height. The main rotor blades were bent downward, and all three composite blades of the pusher prop were broken circumferentially at the blade tips, indicative of the engine operating at high power. The gyroplane was powered by a Rotax 912 engine, which had two turbochargers on it; a modification that was not recommended by the manufacturer. It powered a constant speed propeller. A witness at the scene said the engine was running at high power when it struck the ground. An examination of the engine showed no anomalies.

Mr. Wehmeyer said that the Pilot, Mr. Trace Dennis and his father built the gyroplane for the purpose of setting up a business to sell this make and model of gyroplane. The accident aircraft was wrapped in a police design and the flight that day was to take the local sheriff up to demonstrate that the gyroplane could work as a slow, low altitude observation platform for police departments. Both father and son had student pilot certificates. The son (pilot) also had a sport pilot certificate.

Mr. Wehmeyer said the gyroplane was pretty complex and was too much aircraft for the pilot with his skill level. Mr. Wehmeyer also said that their overall knowledge of airmanship was extremely lacking. When he asked the pilot questions as, do you know what the weight and balance of the aircraft is or how much fuel does it carry, the pilot didn't know. The pilot did no planning prior to the flight.

Mr. Wehmeyer said the pilot had a sport pilot certificate, but was pretty sure that did not cover this aircraft. Per the regulation the aircraft can't weigh over 1,320 pounds gross weight, it's maximum stall speed can't be over 45 knots, it's speed is restricted to 120 knots, and it can only have a fixed pitch or ground adjustable propeller.

Considering the weight of the passenger and that the pilot had fueled the aircraft before takeoff, it was hot, and the density altitude was high, the aircraft didn't have the performance. When he made his turn back to the north, he lost his airspeed.

As taken by:

Dr. David Bowling
Regional Chief, Senior Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Aviation Safety, Central Region