



**National Transportation
Safety Board**

Memorandum For The Record

DATE: September 14, 2018

FROM: Courtney Liedler, NTSB IIC

SUBJECT: Interview with Pilot, Steven Salazar

Mr. Salazar stated he was currently in a rehabilitation facility for his injuries. At the time of the interview, he stated he was on pain medication, however, he had a clear head and felt good for the interview.

Mr. Salazar stated the owner of the flight school had his flight bag and pilot logbook and would be able to provide those records to the NTSB.

On the day of the accident, Mr. Salazar had two training flights scheduled and the discovery (accident) flight. However, the two training flights before the discovery flight were canceled. He arrived at the airport 1 hour before the discovery flight, and at that time, the airplane was being used in another training flight. He "sat around and waited" for the airplane to return and grabbed extra headsets. He was given the passenger weights on the flight reservation; he stated he completed a weight and balance calculation on his phone and determined they were within the center of gravity limits for the airplane.

When the airplane returned, Mr. Salazar went out to the ramp to begin his preflight of the airplane. He explained that the airplane fuel had been "topped off" by the prior flight instructor. Once at the airplane, Mr. Salazar placed his flight bag in the back of the airplane and began the preflight using the flight school's pre-flight checklist. The airplane "looked good" during his walk around, which included checking the oil and fuel. He also explained that he cycled the flaps twice during pre-flight, once to make sure they fully extended and retracted, and a second time to visually inspect the rods and roller tracks.

The two passengers arrived, and he greeted them; advising that he just completed the preflight. Mr. Salazar briefed the passengers on the tour plan, they would depart and fly the approved route over the downtown Dallas skyline and then return to the airport. The flight would be 45-minutes from airplane start-up to shut down. He explained that air traffic control (ATC) may not approve the downtown route and, if that happened, they would alter their flight to fly east from the airport to the practice area and return. Mr. Salazar stated he gave the two passengers a briefing before they departed that included operation of seat belts, doors, air vents, and the fire extinguisher location.

After he and the passengers boarded the airplane, he retrieved the current ATIS weather and entered the altimeter setting. He received approval from ATC for the skyline route and was issued an altitude, heading, squawk code, and departure frequency. He was then cleared to taxi to the runway. Prior to takeoff, he completed his engine run-up while waiting for a jet to land on the runway. Mr. Salazar stated it was busy at the airport at that time. ATC issued a takeoff clearance for runway 15 and reported wind was from 330° at 4 knots. Mr. Salazar stated he read back the clearance to ATC and continued with departure.

Mr. Salazar reported the takeoff was “normal” until the airplane began veering to the left. He remarked that he had spoken to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspector who advised him that there was video of the accident. In the video, the FAA stated it appeared he was practicing a soft field takeoff, the airplane left ground effect early in a high pitch-attitude. Mr. Salazar recalled the airplane’s nose started to lift prematurely when he applied power and he attempted to push it down before liftoff.

He reported the engine performed “normally” on takeoff. When the airplane began veering to the left, he applied right rudder and aileron. The controls felt normal with no resistance, but the airplane continued to veer over the grass toward the taxiway. Mr. Salazar recalled hearing the stall warning horn sound, he lowered the nose and adjusted the trim. When the airplane was over the taxiway, he considered landing on the taxiway since there was no runway available, but it was “all happening so fast.” He tried to keep the airplane nose up, but the airplane continued into a nose down position and crashed into the dirt.

He passed out from the impact and when he woke, he recalled fire and an ambulance were at the site. Someone had asked him to turn the fuel selector off, but he was not able to move to do so. He turned to look at the passenger seated in the back-left seat and saw her seatbelt was choking her. He advised an emergency medical technician (EMT) to cut her seatbelt off her neck and the EMT did. Emergency personnel had to cut the airplane apart to extract him and the passenger. They loaded him onto a stretcher and transported him to the hospital emergency room. He went to the intensive care unit and had to undergo a 12-hour surgery the next day. His self-reported injuries included a laceration on his nose, contusions around his eyes and on forehead, broken L1 and L2 vertebra, broken right femur and tibia, broken left ankle and shattered left heel.

Mr. Salazar stated the flaps were retracted for taxi and takeoff. He would not have lowered the flaps and did not recall the passenger in the right seat lowering the flaps either. Mr. Salazar explained the passengers were not on the controls at all during the flight, he had “complete control.” He stated there were no mechanical issues with the airplane.

He stated he had been flying with the flight school since February 2018. He had acquired a least 350 hours of total time in a Cessna 172 airplane. He completed all his private pilot flight training, half of his commercial training, and all of his CFI training in a Cessna 172. He felt comfortable with “how the Cessna handles.”