

Memorandum of Conversation

Date: 28 August 2018

Time: 1000 central daylight time

Conversation Including: Ms. Lauren Aiello; Student Pilot

Conversation Regarding: CEN18LA346, N4275Q

Duration of Call: 40 Minutes



Summary & Factual Information from Conversation:

Ms. Aiello stated that she began flight training on June 15th, 2018, and all flight time had been completed in a Cessna 172 single-engine airplane. Ms. Aiello has flown 63 hours total, of which 9 hours were solo. The accident airplane was based at Shreveport Regional Airport (SHV).

The accident flight was supposed to be a solo cross-country from SHV to Texarkana Regional Airport-Webb Field (TXK) to Ruston Regional Airport (RSN) to SHV. Ms. Aiello reported that she arrived at SHV around 0930 CDT to preflight the airplane. She stated that the preflight inspection was routine and that she did not observe any anomalies besides low tire pressure on both main landing gear. The engine had about 7 quarts of oil and both fuel tanks were full (topped-off) before the flight. Ms. Aiello stated that she obtained a taxi clearance from her hangar to an aircraft maintenance facility that her father owned. After repositioning the airplane, she and her father inflated both main tires and polished the windscreen. Ms. Aiello reported that the engine restarted without hesitation and ran normally before taxiing to the runway. She obtained a taxi clearance to runway 24 and requested visual flight rules (VFR) flight following to TXK from ground control. Ms. Aiello stated that the surface wind was from 100° magnetic at 4 knots, according to the Automatic Terminal Information Service (ATIS) broadcast. She reported the before-takeoff engine runup was uneventful; engine speed was increased to 1,700 rpm, verified both magnetos were functional, applied carburetor heat and observed a corresponding decrease of engine speed, and observed normal engine oil temperature and pressure indications. She then verified that the flight controls moved freely through their entire range-of-movements, the elevator trim was set for takeoff (slightly nose-up), and verified correct radio frequencies before calling the tower controller for a takeoff clearance. The tower controller told her to "hold short" of the runway; however, she received a takeoff clearance after holding short for about 30 seconds.

Ms. Aiello reported that the takeoff run was normal and that she rotated for liftoff at 60 knots. She noted that after liftoff the elevator force feedback through the control wheel and the kinetic forces were less than normal. Ms. Aiello established a normal climb attitude and the airplane climbed to about 800 ft mean sea level where she perceived a continued degradation of airplane climb performance and observed the airspeed decrease from 75 knots to 70 knots. She recalled that the airplane would not climb without a loss of airspeed. Ms. Aiello reduced airplane pitch to increase airspeed and to avoid an aerodynamic stall. The throttle remained at full power and the engine continued to run smoothly. Ms. Aiello stated that despite not observing any anomalies with engine operation, she concluded that the airplane was having engine issues because she was unable to maintain a normal climb attitude without a loss of airspeed. She told the tower controller that she was having engine issues and that she was going to land. The tower controller cleared her to land on any runway. She made an immediate left turn near midfield to land on runway 14. Ms. Aiello stated that after realigning with runway 14 the airspeed had increased to 95-100 knots and the airplane was too high to make a normal landing. She reduced engine power to idle and attempted to glide to the runway. Ms. Aiello reported that the airplane was not able to land on the remaining runway and that she made a slight left turn to land in the grassy area southeast of the runway. The airplane bounced three times in the grass before the nose gear collapsed. The airplane then impacted a drainage ditch at the airport perimeter. Ms. Aiello reported that she was not wearing the available shoulder harness, and consequently she was briefly knocked unconscious when her forehead impacted the glare shield and her chin impacted the instrument panel.

Ms. Aiello stated that upon further reflection, she does not believe the engine was malfunctioning during the flight and that there was a chance that the airplane encountered a wingtip vortex from another airplane. She recalled that the airplane's airspeed had increased after she turned from runway 24 to runway 14 and that she did not recall the engine running rough at any point during the flight. Ms. Aiello acknowledged that she likely did not have enough experience to correctly identify and recover from a wake turbulence encounter.

--- End of interview summary ---

I can attest that the above summary and factual information was taken on the above stated day, and is correct to the best of my knowledge:

Signed: _ Andrew Todd Fox _

Dated: _ 28 August 2018 _

Andrew Todd Fox
National Transportation Safety Board
Air Safety Investigator