



National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Aviation Safety – Central Region

Interview Summary: Witness – CEN19FA325

Date: October 2, 2019

Location: via Teleconference

Interviewers: Courtney Liedler - NTSB, Denver; Andy Olvis – NTSB, Washington, DC; Robert McGee – FAA, Houston FSDO

Interviewee: Michael McNamara

Representative: Ed Bruno, Air Traffic Manager at Conroe

During the interview, Mr. McNamara stated the following:

Mr. McNamara was an Air Traffic Controller at Conroe-North Houston Regional Airport (CXO). He had been a controller since 1986; he retired from the FAA in May 2013 and began working for Robinson in June 2013.

On the day of the accident, he explained his interaction with the airplane began when the pilot called on the tower frequency for taxi instructions. Mr. McNamara taxied the airplane out from the ramp at GA Services to runway 14 via taxiway B, taxiway D, and taxiway A. He issued current wind and altimeter setting to the pilot. He asked the pilot for direction of flight; she replied they would be going west over Lake Conroe. Mr. McNamara watched the airplane taxi from the GA ramp to the runway area at the end of runway 14. The pilot completed a runup and asked for departure clearance. He cleared her for departure on runway 14.

About $\frac{3}{4}$ of the takeoff roll down the runway, on climb out, Mr. McNamara saw the airplane start banking to the left. The pilot reported she was having a “fuel issue/problem” and was going to return. He cleared the airplane to return on runway 19. He saw the airplane’s left bank get steeper and cleared the airplane to land on runway 32. He thought runway 32 would be easier since that was how they were lining up with their turn. As the turn continued and bank increased, Mr. McNamara cleared the airplane for any runway. That is when the airplane when straight, nose-down into the ground.

Mr. McNamara stated the climb out looked normal based on what he had observed from the airplane in the past. He had seen the airplane takeoff in the past and it always had a slower climb out because of the floats.

He stated that he did not see the airplane fly very often. He worked in the tower on Friday and Saturday, and only saw the airplane fly on Saturday's. It had been "at least a month" since he saw the airplane fly prior to the accident. Mr. McNamara stated every time he worked with the airplane; it was a female pilot on the radio.

Mr. McNamara said there was not a delay from the time the airplane requested taxi clearance to beginning to taxi to the runway. The runup was quicker than the flight school airplanes he handled; but seemed normal for most other general aviation airplanes, about 3-4 minutes.

From the tower cab, he could hear airplanes as they depart. He did not hear any abnormal sounds when the accident airplane departed.