

Mr. Killop,

My name is Charles "Kenny" Winn, pilot certificate [REDACTED]. I am the Chief Pilot at MaxFlight Helicopter Services located at [REDACTED] Grosse Ile, Mi 48138.

On 7/11/2020 at approximately 1600 hours local, I was departing our location at the Grosse Ile Airport for a 30 minute site seeing tour to Detroit City. I made my radio call on CTAF 123.0 advising local traffic that I would be departing directly from Taxiway A, joining the upwind for Runway 35 and departing north. As I began my takeoff roll, I witnessed an amphibious ultra-light departing the ramp from in front of the Grosse Ile FBO. The ultra-light's pilot never made a radio call, but it was immediately apparent to me that he was on a take-off roll to the south straight down Taxiway C directly from the ramp. This caused me to abort my takeoff from Taxiway A to ensure adequate spacing between my helicopter and the ultra-light. As I sat in a hover, I watched the ultra-light build enough speed to lift off. The airport was reporting greater than 20 knot winds from the NW at the time. Because of the strong quartering tailwinds, as the ultra-light left the ground, it yawed immediately to the right approximately 30 degrees. This appeared to make it very difficult for the pilot to maintain a southbound heading down Taxiway C, as I witnessed the pilot drift right of center-line on Taxiway C and strike one of the elevated taxiway marker lights on the righthand side of Taxiway C. As the pilot of the ultralight continued his takeoff on an approximate 210 heading, I committed to my takeoff roll and departed directly from Taxiway A into the upwind for Runway 35. As I departed, I briefed to my passengers on board that the pilot of the ultra-light was extremely lucky that he had not rolled his aircraft as a result of striking the taxiway marker. This was the last I saw of the ultra-light, and I learned later that afternoon from local pilots that the ultra-light crashed resulting in a fatality.

It was, and still is, my opinion that the pilot on board the ultra-light was flying dangerously, and that winds were too strong and variable for safe flight in an ultra-light on that day at that time.

If you have any questions, or need clarification, feel free to contact me directly at [REDACTED]

Best Regards,

[REDACTED]

Charles "Kenny" Winn

Chief Pilot

MaxFlight Helicopter Services

Scott Arnold

From: Eddy Swamy [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, July 20, 2020 10:34 AM
To: McKillop, Larry (FAA)
Subject: Grosse Ile Accident July 11, 2020

Hello Larry

My name is Edgar "Eddy" Swamy. I'm 60 yrs old, flying for 44 yrs. I'm a 16,000 hour ATP rated pilot currently flying Gulfstream 450/550 as a Captain and also operate a AutoGyro Cavalon Gyroplane Personally.

July 11th and 12th I was visiting Grosse Ile Airport having flown into the airport that morning in my Gyroplane at 1030 local. That morning and throughout the day the winds were gusting from the north west and runway 35 was the prevailing runway. When I landed the ASOS was reporting winds 310/11 gusting 17.

While in the Kroger Grocery store parking lot which is approximately 2 miles directly north of the airport, I received a call from my brother who lives on the island telling me that the ultralight Seaplane was overhead flying southbound. My phone history records this call at 1637 local time.

At approximately 1640 local time I did observe the plane approximately 300 to 400 feet AGL flying southbound in about a 20° right crab with only one person onboard in the front seat and the landing gear down. The total time I observe the airplane flying was approximately 45 Seconds and engine RPM remained constant.

As I continue to talk to my brother I verbalize to him that it appeared he was slowly descending and my first thought was I certainly hope he's not landing to the South. I also mentioned that on a day like today flying that particular airplane would be a little sporty in this wind.

As a pilot I will always gaze to the sky to view an airplane flying. I only draw particular interest into this aircraft as a few weeks prior the local airport personnel had commented that this pilot had previously had a landing accident and had repaired the plane. He was new to the airplane and was learning to fly it.

I hope my observations and comments are helpful in your investigation.

Regards
Eddy Swamy

[REDACTED]
Holland, MI 49424

From: Marc Bourassa [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, July 15, 2020 12:05 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Grosse Ile Ultralight Accident

Hello. My name is Marc Bourassa, and I live in Wyandotte, MI. I live on Northline and saw the ultralight fly over my house last Saturday afternoon, around 4:30. I got a (poor) picture of it and posted on social media the next morning with the following text.

"Yesterday I was outside and heard a small prop plane coming near. I looked up and it was this little ultralight with pontoons and flying only 200-300 feet above the houses. Way too low for flying over a built-up area. The breezes were getting stronger and you tell the pilot was having a rough time of it gaining altitude and maintaining stability. That motor isn't strong enough to keep from being blown about. By the time it was over Northline and the tracks, he was having real difficulty even banking without the plane being tossed about. I hope there wasn't any accident."

Unfortunately, I read the paper soon after and found out there had been a fatal accident. It looks like he came in off the river, which seems strange if he had pontoons, flying west over Northline. He made it about a quarter mile west banked right, possibly over the railroad tracks, heading south back toward Grosse Ile. I lost sight of him due to trees since he was at such low altitude. The winds were around 15mph at ground level, and possibly stronger gusts higher up. The plane looked to be getting tossed around a bit and was not very stable when banking south. The motor also sounded like it was straining and at one point went full throttle. I don't know if it's any help to your investigation, that's what I saw of the flight.

All best,

Marc Bourassa

