

8/10/2021

To whom it may Concern;

I arrived for work at 7:00 am at the Melbourne Airport, Ozarka Aviation Building. I had unlocked the office and walked to the big hangar to open it up. At that time, I had noticed a Cessna 210 taxiing to a tie down spot on the ramp. The Pilot who looked about mid 50's got out of the aircraft and tied the plane down. He stood by his plane made phone call, and shortly after was picked up and they drove off.

Later about 10:45 am, I was out front of the building talking to students who were leaving to go get lunch. At that time the vehicle pulled up through the gate and drove to plane. The next thing that I had seen was the pilot untie the plane and get in. He started the plane and taxied out to the runway. I said goodbye to the kids, and I started across the parking lot to the big hangar to work. As I was walking, I heard the plane on the runway, the engine sounded fine with no missing or abnormalities. The wind was about 10 knots, cornering headwind; temperature was about 95+; sky had light, puffy clouds. I watched it as I walked and made a comment to myself "Damn he is passed Taxiway Charlie and still on the ground?" Then thinking, "It certainly isn't barking like a 210, the prop noise was very mild, and in this wind, not climbing? He should abort the take off." I dismissed the prop noise because of the wind. At this point I could see he was about two thirds down the runway and just rotating, breaking ground, climbing a bit, and fighting wind gusts. I was in front of the big hangar at this point, and curiosity got the best of me. I ran to the side of building and looked up, but saw nothing in the sky. I thought I saw something low in tree line of my vision, then a big black plume of smoke shot into the sky. It was 11:12, I texted Chris Emerson at the other end of the airport and said "Look. Lots of black smoke over there, hopefully it wasn't that 210!" Then I ran into the office and told the director and chief flight instructor what I saw, and simultaneously my phone rang and it was Chris who said that was the plane. Law enforcement I believe called him. We three hopped in the truck and drove to the crash site. Emergency services were already there; it was 11:28 when we arrived. When I arrived, I noticed the right wing tip in the tree with a broken limb. The left wing hit another tree and the wing tip was on the ground. The plane was smoldering on the ground after hitting an oak tree. There was mainly just burn marks on the tree that I could see from a distance. It looked like most of the damage was from fire and not impact. I believe he was trying to turn back to the airport and also trying to avoid the house in front of him. When he made the turn to the west, he would have had a quartering tailwind. The wind was gusting pretty good at that time in that area.

John Chmura