

Federal Aviation Administration Inspector Summary Report – Brief

Aircraft N3445Q, a Piper PA32R-300, serial number 32R-7780312, departed Kimberling Airport (MO64) runway 13 on October 10, 2020. The aircraft departed the airport with tow bar Model TH-53, manufactured by Bracket Aircraft Co., INC., still attached. The pilot entered into a left downwind for runway 13. While turning to left base, the aircraft was too low. The tow bar contacted a tree and forced the aircraft into several trees. The aircraft crashed approximately ¼ mile away from the airport. The aircraft burned. There was one passenger who was able to escape with serious injuries. The pilot was able to escape with life threatening injuries. The aircraft was destroyed due to fire damage.

The pilot stated that his lawn tractor that he normally uses to tow his aircraft was in the shop and he had used his personal vehicle to pull the aircraft out of the hangar that morning. He never removed the tow bar from the aircraft. There are witness marks on the runway that show that the tow bar scraped the runway for most of his taxi and turnaround and for a portion of the departure role. Witnesses at MO64 saw the aircraft takeoff with the tow bar attached but could not stop the takeoff in time. They notified the pilot via radio and the pilot then entered left downwind to land back at MO64.

The pilot stated that he had retracted the gear after departure and had a gear up indication. He further stated that he lowered the gear for landing and noticed the aircraft had a vibration. When asked why he had gotten so low during the pattern, he did not know. The aircraft was over a residential area when the tow bar contacted the first tree. At that point, the tow bar became entangled in the tree and the pilot could no longer control the aircraft. The aircraft crashed into several trees before coming to rest on top of several, empty boat trailers. The crash occurred in the residential area but did not damage any buildings or injure any bystanders. There were multiple people painting a building within 100 feet of the crash site that witnessed the accident.

Based on available evidence, the accident was a result of pilot complacency when he failed to remove the tow bar from the aircraft and failed to perform a proper walk around as part of his preflight. The pilot then failed to maintain situational awareness while returning to MO64 thus resulting in non-recoverable contact with trees.

William C. Taylor

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