

RECORD OF ☐ VISIT ☐ CONFERENCE OR ☒ TELEPHONE CALL		TIME 17:05	DATE 06/02/2021
NAME (S) OF PERSON (S) CONTACTED OR IN CONFERENCE AND LOCATION		ROUTING	
		SYMBOL	INITIALS
Mark Gaerte			
PIC and operator, N8376K, Gaerte Ag Services, LLC			
SUBJECT Interview post-accident of N8376K which occurred on 05/27/2021 near the Celina			
(KCQA) airport			
DIGEST Mark Gaerte reached out to me to discuss the accident for which he was the PIC (N8376K) on			
05/27/2021. Mark discussed with me that he had his first flight for the season on 05/22/2021 and that			
during that flight he felt a difference in the vibration of the propeller mechanism. He said he brushed			
it off as sometimes vibrations are caused on the airframe due to the installed boom/spray equipment			
and he thought that it could be related to that instead of an imbalance on the propeller. On the date of			
the accident, Mark had departed Defiance (KDF) to 53OH to pick up/drop off part and then went direct			
to Celina, KCQA, from there. He did not notice anything unusual on those flight legs. He said he			
started the aircraft as normal with his alternative start procedure (Fuel Solenoid CB 'IN', start with the			
3-position guard 'UP' with switch in 'Center'. Once the RPM spools up, pushes the the RPM levers			
forward, releases the switch from the 'Center' position, continues the start sequence from the checklist,			
once started then pulls engine to idle, pushes the 'guard' down and pulls the Fuel Solenoid CB out).			
Mark said the alternative start procedure isolates the electrical from the engine bay and prevents			
damage or shorts in-flight. He also said maintenance and industry had advised him of this alternative			
start procedure to avoid an in-flight engine shut down from stray voltage.			
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CONCLUSION, ACTION TAKEN, OR REQUIRED			
DATE 06/02/2021	TITLE ASI/IIC	SIGNATURE ELIZABETH A SWINGLE	
		 Digitally signed by ELIZABETH A SWINGLE Date: 2021.07.19 13:53:40 -04'00'	

Mark said he departed with about 80 gallons total fuel on board (after he had added 27 gallons on the ground). On roll-out, he didn't notice anything unusual or any unusual sounds as he had his new flight helmet on with noise canceling. He stated about 75 feet AGL, he noticed what felt like a 'surge' caused from no power, it pushed him forward on the seatbelt strap and then 'slammed' him back again in the seat when all the power 'returned at once'. With the initial surge, he glanced at the RPM, asked himself 'why is it surging' as he didn't notice any RPM issue, then looked out the window to do a lazy turn to the right to look for a place to set the aircraft down if necessary.

He then stated he set the aircraft up for best glide speed as he did not wish to ditch with his payload of chemicals in the east side of the river. He chose not to immediately dump his payload as it was only one 'burble' in the engine and felt it would be premature to cause a hazardous waste situation at that moment. Immediately following his turn to the right, his aircraft lost all power, he instinctively pulled back on the yoke, however he had zero climb and the controls felt mushy. Approximately 7 seconds had passed from the initial surge in power to ditching the aircraft on the ground. He was able to dump his load about 2 seconds prior to impact with the initial levy. The tail caught the levy and flipped the aircraft inverted in the river.

He did not recall flipping any switches in the aircraft at that moment as he was exiting the aircraft. He remembers grabbing his helmet and crawling out through the left side of the aircraft. I asked Mark if he could recall any engine or other noises once he had exited the aircraft (such as engine or avionics still running) and he said 'no, I didn't hear anything running'.

Mr. Gaerte and I had a 57 minute discussion and he was very cooperative, doing well in his health, and was eager to assist in anyway we needed to complete the investigation. This concluded my interview.