

John Brannen
Senior Air Safety Investigator
AS-CEN

Date: Various dates

Subject: CEN22LA002

Contact: Steve Miller (FAA Inspector)

Mr. Miller was the FAA inspector that responded to the accident involving N6996Q. He reported that when he looked at the airplane at the accident site, the left tank was empty and the right tank was full. The fuel tanks were not compromised and no leaks were noted. He inspected the airplane after the accident and found some discrepancies. The airplane was on the first flight following an annual inspection in which the carburetor was replaced, a control cable was replaced, and other maintenance performed. He noted that when he inspected the airplane, there was a cotter pin missing from the bolt that attached the throttle cable to the carburetor throttle arm. The bolt and nut were still in place, and the bolt and nut were finger tight still, so the missing cotter pin would not have prevented normal operation, but it was missing. The throttle did operate normally during his inspection. Additionally, the fuel selector was subject of an AD, 75-01-04. The fuel selector handle was found between detents and was positioned between the left and off positions. The handle bezel had 2 spring tabs that were designed to prevent the handle from being inadvertently moved to the off position during normal operation. For this to be effective the long end of the handle was supposed to be between the gates of the spring tabs. This would allow the selector to be switched from the right to left tank but not to the off position. The handle was outside of the spring tabs that are to prevent inadvertently shutting off fuel supply. He said he talked to the pilot and she was under the impression that the long end of the fuel selector handle was what was supposed to be used for determining the selected position. He said that based on discussions with the pilot and mechanic that he did not think that the AD for the fuel selector had actually been complied with. He reported that during his inspections he didn't find any other mechanical issues that would account for the loss of engine power.

I spoke with Mr. Miller at a later date because the pilot reported that the fuel selector handle was installed 180 degrees off. He said that the handle was installed correctly but the pilot was using the long end of the handle as the indicator when actually there is a pointer on the opposite end (180 degrees from the long end) that is actually the indicator. He provided a picture of the fuel selector as found and in the picture the handle is worn and the paint is faded. The red handle was faded and the white pointer was also faded. This would have made it more difficult to discern that the small end was the pointer to use as a position indicator.