

Brian Rutt
Air Safety Investigator
Central Region

Date: July 10, 2023, 1100 central daylight time (cdt)

Subject: CEN23FA270, Icon A5, N239BA

Contact: Orville Rinehart

This is a summary of a conversation with Orville Rinehart, friend of the accident pilot. Persons present during the conversation are listed below.

Investigator-in-Charge (IIC) John Brannen
Senior Aviation Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Denver, Colorado

Investigator Brian Rutt
Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Denver, Colorado

Party Member Daniel Sindt
Aviation Safety Inspector
Federal Aviation Administration
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Mr. Rinehart stated he had talked to the accident pilot the morning of the accident about 9 or 10 am cdt. They were planning to go to a lake in northern Minnesota. The two pilots coordinated a time and location to meet in the air and fly in formation to their destination. Mr. Rinehart stated that there was a scattered cloud layer at about 6,000 ft mean sea level (msl) and they had climbed to cruise at about

5,200-5,500 msl. When they were at the southern edge of Lake Mille Lacs, both pilots agreed to descend over the water to about 50-70 ft above the surface of the water, and the accident pilot descended slightly lower. Mr. Rinehart noted that he was flying at the accident pilot's 7 or 8 o'clock position and about ¼ mile behind. He estimated the lake had four-to-six-inch waves and the wind was about 300° at 6 knots. Mr. Rinehart stated that both pilots were communicating to each other through onboard radios. The accident pilot's son was driving on a road on the west shore of the lake communicating to the accident pilot via cellular telephone. The pilots agreed to fly closer to the west shore of the lake. Mr. Rinehart stated he initiated a climb and turned toward the west and then, in his peripheral vision, noticed a splash and thought the accident pilot had landed. He made several radio calls to the accident pilot with no response. Mr. Rinehart noticed a debris field on the water and landed on the lake. He called 911 and started searching the area for the accident pilot. About 10 minutes later, boats with sheriff's deputies arrived.

Mr. Rinehart stated that the accident pilot did not indicate any mechanical issues with the airplane or any health concerns before the accident flight. Mr. Rinehart also stated that the accident pilot would usually communicate his intentions and made no indication that he was going to land on the lake. Additionally, the accident airplane was not at a speed and configuration consistent with landing.