

Timothy Sorensen
Sr. Aviation Accident Investigator
Aviation Safety - Central Region

Date: September 16, 2023
Subject: CEN23FA410 - Dowagiac, Michigan
Contact: Oscar Azevedo - Airport Manager

Mr. Azevedo reported that the pilot departed from the Dowagiac Airport about 11:00am on Sunday, September 10th. The pilot commonly flew around the local area and for an hour or so. About 5:00p, when the pilot had not returned from the flight, he was reported as overdue. The accident site was not located until Thursday (September 14th).

Regarding the search efforts, Mr. Azevedo stated: "The search was hampered by weather on Monday [September 11th], and the inability of the Civil Air Patrol to communicate and coordinate resources. We could have the search services of the Great Lakes Drone Company regardless of weather or time of day. [However,] the Civil Air Patrol did not allow us to use such valuable resources. The company has assisted and located other lost aircraft in the past in our area. In addition, we were not allowed to have other aircraft involved in the search, even after multiple requests to coordinate with the Civil Air Patrol Activities, while crop dusting operations were still allowed from our airport!"

Mr. Azevedo noted that the pilot normally refueled (topped off) the airplane after each flight. Additionally, the pilot was the builder of the airplane and was meticulous with regard to its construction, maintenance, and operation. The pilot had sold the airplane to a local pilot; however, he still flew it regularly with permission of the current owner.

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