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Date: January 12, 2024

Subject: CEN23LA099 Record of Conversation

Contact: Robert Spenle, Pilot and Aircraft Owner of N9770J

Robert Spenle stated during a telephone conversation that he last flew N9770J in December 2022. The aircraft was kept inside a hangar with a Tanis Preheat System plugged in. On the day of the accident, the aircraft was moved out of the hangar and the Tanis Preheat System was disconnected prior to starting the engine. He stated that he attempted about six engine starts prior to the battery dying and once the battery was recharged, he attempted an additional six engine starts prior to his ceasing further attempts to start the engine. He said that during each engine start attempt, he applied engine primer three times, and the throttle control was pumped two times. The throttle control was positioned about ¼ inch forward during each start. At times during the start attempts, he placed the mixture control into idle cutoff and ran the engine starter.

Robert Spenle said that he only saw smoke and they were exiting the aircraft. He said did not see if the fire began at the nose of the aircraft or at the aft rear firewall area. He said that he did not turn the fuel selector to the off position when he saw smoke but the mixture control was placed into the idle cutoff position.

Robert Spenle said he has never experienced an aircraft engine fire during start. He said that he did not know if the engine fire was caused by over priming the engine.