

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to provide a statement regarding N255JP and the accident that occurred on January 21, 2024. I find these details very difficult to revisit because I was close personal friends with the pilot, Bill Cope. Bill also knew that I manage a Cirrus SR22T and have several hundred hours of experience in the Cirrus SR22 series.

Bill called me one day and said that he wanted to get checked out in the accident airplane. He stated that he had “a few hours” in a Cirrus from before. Over the course of several months, Bill and I met multiple times for lunch. During these meetings, we also conducted ground training on the aircraft. Despite his wealth of experience, I found Bill to be genuinely interested in learning about the aircraft and its differences from other aircraft he had flown. Bill was specifically interested in the Cirrus Airframe Parachute System (CAPS) because he had not flown an aircraft equipped with it before.

During our training, I frequently referenced the *Flight Operations Manual* published by Cirrus Aircraft. Bill and I discussed the use of the CAPS system while training on multiple occasions. I referenced the CAPS deployment criteria table on page 68 in section 2.9: Takeoff Briefing. I also showed this chart to Bill several times. The CAPS criteria states that if there is an engine failure below 500 feet AGL, you land straight ahead. There is a note that states “Activate CAPS immediately if no survivable alternative exists.” Between 500 feet and 2,000 feet AGL, you are to deploy the CAPS system immediately.

As mentioned previously, Bill was genuinely interested in this topic, so we covered it in depth before almost every flight. I also stressed to Bill the importance of performing a CAPS strategy briefing as part of the takeoff briefing.

Our training was interrupted several times due to the busy flight schedules both Bill and I had, as well as maintenance issues on the aircraft, which I will discuss shortly. It took us roughly 4 months to complete the training. Despite this lengthy process, I found Bill to be competent to operate the aircraft. I also found him to have good knowledge retention regarding previously covered topics.

During the training process, I mentioned to Bill the importance of adequately warming up the engine. I informed him that Cirrus recommends waiting until the oil temperature is at least 100 degrees Fahrenheit before performing the engine run up. I also told him about some additional recommendations I had received from a previous Cirrus Aircraft employee. The recommendation was to wait until all cylinder head temperatures registered in the green on the MFD, before performing a runup. I believe this is around 240 degrees Fahrenheit. I told Bill that on cold days, this may be difficult to achieve at 1,000 RPM engine idle. I told him that he may have to idle around 1,200-1,400 RPM to assist with slowly warming the engine.

As previously mentioned, we had maintenance issues with the accident aircraft throughout our training process. On our first scheduled training event, we spent a great deal of time doing the preflight, engine run up, and general familiarization with the aircraft. There were runway closures on runways 18/36 and 22R/4L. Because of this, we had to taxi to runway 4R, which is a great distance away from Signature FBO.

We completed our takeoff briefing – including CAPS strategy– and were cleared for takeoff. At rotation, the engine began to run extremely rough. We received CAS red warnings, and I checked the engine page to see that the manifold pressure was extremely high. We aborted the takeoff, returned to the runway, and taxied clear. We were given instructions to taxi to the area of the fire station. We remained at that location for quite some time, performing several engine run ups to see if we could determine a cause. During this take off attempt, we were unable to reach rated RPM without the severe over boost and engine roughness occurring.

During one of these run ups, I filmed **Video 1**, which is being provided to you. As you can see, we were seeing indications of a severe engine over boost. So severe, that the manifold pressure indication stopped reading. We were also seeing excessive fuel flow indications. Being perplexed by this, we called Rogers Yarnell. Mr. Yarnell was the most common pilot for this aircraft in recent times. He stated that he had some issues in the past with the engine over boosting. He stated that he had talked with Tornado Alley, the makers of the turbo-normalizing conversion. He stated that he had explained the over boost to them, they had checked out the engine, and told him that operating with a small over boost was permissible.

With my previous Cirrus experience, I felt that this over boost was far too great. I felt that the aircraft was not safe to operate. Bill also agreed. We returned to the FBO, and informed Mr. Yarnell about the issue.

I called a contact that I have at Cirrus Aircraft named Josh Hoskins. Josh and I have worked together with past Cirrus aircraft that I have managed, and I have found him to be extremely knowledgeable and helpful. I sent him the video as well. Josh did not immediately answer, but he did call me back later. Josh said he thought from the video that the issue could likely be a manifold pressure slope controller, or a stuck wastegate. Bill and I passed this information along to Mr. Yarnell, who stated that he was going to have the airplane fixed.

A week or two later, we received word from Mr. Yarnell that the aircraft had been fixed, he had flown it back from the shop, and found it to be satisfactory. Bill and I set another date to continue the training.

During this second training flight, we were very cautious to spend a good amount of time on the preflight and engine run up. Everything appeared to be normal. On the takeoff briefing, we paid extra attention to the CAPS strategy and briefing. We once again reviewed the CAPS chart in the FOM.

On the takeoff run, when Bill advanced the throttle to full, we again encountered an over boost situation. This over boost, however, was nowhere near as excessive. During our previous calls, Josh Hoskins had advised me on the phone that in the case of a minor over boost the pilot could manually maintain manifold pressure within normal limits if they were able to obtain rated RPM. I had also been told this by previous Cirrus maintenance personnel. Additionally, I was familiar with the AFM which states: "If manifold pressure exceeds 32 inches on takeoff or during full power climbs, reduce power to maintain no more than 32.0 in Hg."

Prior to this second training flight Bill and I had discussed this call and decided that this was safe. We decided that if we encountered this situation, we could safely continue the takeoff and training flight, while manually keeping the manifold pressure within normal limits. We were able to safely accomplish this flight doing just that, and manifold pressure remained within normal limits for the duration of the flight.

Upon landing, we once again let Mr. Yarnell know that the engine was still not quite right. He stated that he would coordinate with Tornado Alley to have them look at the aircraft. After a few more weeks, Bill informed me that the aircraft was back, and Tornado Alley had replaced the manifold pressure controller. Bill and I completed the remainder of his training with only one other minor issue.

On a return flight from KJKA to KLIT, the engine seemed to skip a beat briefly. It was so brief as to go almost unnoticed. Bill and I both looked at each other and said, "did you feel that". We looked at the engine synoptic page and decided that we might be running slightly too lean of a mixture. Based on my previous Cirrus experience, this is normal on certain engines without tuned fuel injectors. We slightly richened the mixture and did not have any further issues. Throughout the remainder of this flight and the remainder of the training, there were no other issues that we noticed with the aircraft.

On the day of the accident, Bill and I spoke multiple times. I was in Colorado on vacation and returning to Little Rock that afternoon. Bill was going to fly the accident airplane to Tampa to attend recurrent training at Flight Safety for a CJ3+ that he managed.

At 12:43 PM, I received a text from Bill that said, "Tricks for starting the cirrus in the cold?". This began a text message chain that is also being provided to you. These images are labeled **Text 1 and Text 2**. At 12:51 PM, Bill called me and told me that he had run the battery down during his start attempts, and that he now needed a GPU to start. We briefly discussed the cold weather starting characteristics of the aircraft and starting with a GPU. Bill stated that he was familiar with this process from his past experience operating an FBO. Bill stated that he knew he had the engine flooded, because there was fuel on the ground. We discussed waiting to allow this situation to dissipate, and he stated that he was. He stated that "Signature was taking forever to get a GPU anyways."

As I was boarding my commercial flight, I remembered a warning on cold weather operations from the FOM. I sent Bill a screenshot of this warning which can be found on page 53 in Chapter 2, Section 5. This screenshot is being provided to you as well, and is labeled **Image 1**. I also texted, “I saw earlier that it was pretty cold there. It’s possible this could be happening. I’ve never had it happen, but our hangar is heated. I sent Bill this message at 1:01 PM. At 1:03 PM, Bill replied, “Got it started” and “Thanks”. That was the last time I heard from my friend.

As you can imagine, I am highly distraught by these events. As mentioned previously, Bill was a very good friend of mine. I have covered all details here to the best of my recollection. This subject is very painful for me to reflect on, but I want to make sure that I help you in any way that I am able. Should you need any more information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Ryan Knauer.

Ryan Knauer