

I was sitting at the cross of both runways on the taxi way heading back to the hangars. I was watching Janet take off because I like the way her aircraft sounds. She took off about a quarter of the runway. When she passed about half of the runway, she was flying right over me. When she took off, I heard a bunch of popping coming from her airplane and then it stopped, and her engine quit. She started to slowly descend. She made a hard turn and went over the hangars and tried to make it to the runway but couldn't, so she found a clear spot to put the airplane down. She touched down in the field and as soon as her wheels touched down the tail came up over the front and flipped forward and then it flipped again. She got out in perfect condition and walked over to me on the runway.



Darrin and Scarlett Ellis

We were in the hangar and heard Janet taking off. The engine sounded normal. Then we heard the engine popping, and we ran outside. She was turning back to the airport and was descending rapidly. We thought she made the cross runway until we saw the water spraying up and realized she was in the field. It looked like one of her wings touched the ground and the airplane cartwheeled, did a complete flip, and landed right side up. Darrin called 911 and drove his truck on the runway to get as close as he could and saw Janet walking back towards the runway. He drove back to the hangar and Janet rode back on the golf cart with the Harvey & Rihn ramp agent.

On or about 2:15 PM on 3 Feb 2024 I observed an aircraft incident LaPorte Airport, T41.

I was sitting in our hangar, located in LaPorte Flight Line's hangar building D, watching aircraft perform take off and landings on runway 12-30. At the time aircraft were landing runway 30. The hangar faces north. I have a view of approximately two thirds of the takeoff end runway 30. The first third of the runway view is blocked by the TriStar hangars.

I don't know the tail number of the aircraft involved. I have seen it take off and land on prior days. It is a blue and white, high performance, aerobatic type aircraft.

I first heard the aircraft engine throttle up for takeoff on runway 30. A few seconds later the aircraft came into view from beyond the TriStar hangars. The engine sounded normal. The aircraft was at or about an altitude of 100 feet. A few seconds later it appeared to be at an altitude between 300 and 400 feet. It crossed the runway 5-23 intersection, the aircraft banked left to the southwest about parallel to runway 5-23. The engine sounded to be operating normally.

As wings leveled, the engine began misfiring and continued to misfire. Within a couple of seconds, the aircraft banked right, nearly parallel to runway 30. It was descending at a shallow, controlled descent. The engine was misfiring continuously.

After the aircraft flew beyond the hangars on the north end of runway 30 it banked right toward runway 30 in a controlled descent. Moments later the north hangars blocked my view of the aircraft. I no longer heard any engine noise. At this point I dialed 911 to report the incident.

A few seconds later, the aircraft reappeared from behind the north hangars. It appeared to have begun skidding flat on the ground on the fuselage belly. Toward the end of the skid, smoke or steam began to flow from around the lower section of the nose cowl. Then suddenly, the aircraft nose appeared to have dug into ground. The aircraft fuselage went vertical, tail first. It was unclear if the aircraft flipped tail over nose or just quickly settled back flat on the ground. It occurred quickly. The aircraft was no longer in motion.

At this point I jumped in my hangar golf cart and began driving to the site where the aircraft came to rest. It took a few minutes to get close enough to see that the aircraft came to rest on the fuselage belly.

A couple of moments later I saw the pilot was out of the aircraft walking around the nose of the aircraft signaling she was ok.

The field was too muddy and flooded to drive the hangar golf cart out to the pilot. The pilot was unable to walk directly to me due to the water and muddy field. The pilot walked toward the north end of runway 30. Just as she made it to the runway LaPorte EMS and LaPorte PD arrived at the scene and met the pilot.

Michael Overbey

Houston, TX 77071

DocuSigned by:

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2/4/2024

4 February 2024

On Saturday February 3, 2024 at approximately 2:30pm Janet Fitzke took off in N321JA. She took off on runway 30. After takeoff (at an altitude of about 400 ft) her aircraft began making a loud noise as if it was misfiring. Janet did a 180 degree turn and headed towards runway 5-23. She was descending at a controlled yet quick rate. She overshot the runway and landed in the field northwest of the runway intersection. All the tires landed on the ground, and you immediately saw water splashing higher than the actual aircraft. She went approximately 50 feet when we saw the tail of the aircraft lift and the airplane flipped two times leaving it upright. We immediately called 911 and an employee drove down the runway to check on the pilot. By the time he got to the site the pilot was out of the aircraft and walking towards the runway. Paramedics arrived to check on the pilot and she declined to go to the hospital.

Shelby Peterson

[REDACTED]