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Office of Aviation Safety - Central Region

Date: 04/30/24

Subject: CEN24LA169

Contact: Pete N. - Airport Manager

According to Pete, he had heard the pilot stated he impacted a pothole while landing on the undocumented grass strip (grass strip located between main runway and taxiway). The airplane caught fire and the pilot self-extricated himself and went to the terminal building. Pete responded to the airport and the accident airplane. Pete walked the grass strip and did not note any pothole type features in the terrain in the landing area. A 15 ft ground scar was noted, which Pete thought was consistent with the right wing.

Pete and some airport personnel recovered the airplane at the direction of the NTSB investigator-in-charge (IIC) and moved the airplane to the pilot's hangar. The NTSB IIC asked Pete (who is a mechanic) to note during recovery anything that appeared unusual or a potential problem. Pete observed a fracture of the right main landing gear spindle near the wheel attachment (see photo 1.).



Photo 1. Right main landing gear spindle.

About 50% of the fracture surface appeared to be a fracture that had been there for quite some time due to the surface, grease, and other materials. Pete photo documented the fracture and waited for further instructions on his assistance.

Pete stated that when the airplane is resting on its landing gear, the lower wing sits about 14 inches off the ground. Based on the evidence, Pete said it appeared the right main wheel separated during the landing, and wheel assembly became trapped under the wing and fuselage. The airplane skidded on its lower right wing and rotated. A section of the main landing gear assembly appeared to have punctured the fiberglass fuel tank, which was located between the pilot's legs in the cockpit.

--END OF CONVERSATION--