

INSPECTOR STATEMENT

Aircraft Accident

Location: Castroville Municipal Airport, TX (KCVB)

Date: 04/29/2024

Time: 1830 UTC / 1330L

Aircraft: N822CH / Pratt William J, Baby Great Lakes

On April 29, 2024, at approximately 1330 local time, the pilot of N822CH was attempting to land on an undocumented grass runway located between the paved runway and the taxiway at Castroville Municipal Airport (KCVB). The grass runway runs parallel and to the East of the paved runway 16. While attempting to land on the grass runway, the pilot reported feeling like he hit a large pothole and then lost control of the aircraft. The aircraft came to a rest on the grass runway approximately 1,410 feet south from the start of runway 16 and approximately 35 feet from the taxiway with the nose of the aircraft in the dirt, tail up and pointed approximately West. The plane caught fire upon coming to a rest and was engulfed in flames. The pilot was able to exit the aircraft with burns received from the accident. The pilot walked/ran approximately .5 miles to an airport hangar and requested help. The pilot was sent to the Brooks Army Medical Center to be treated for burns over approximately 30% of his body. The pilot is listed in Critical, but Stable condition. The fire department was able to put out the fire on the aircraft, but the aircraft was substantially damaged by the fire. The weather was sunny with some clouds and approximately 90 degrees Fahrenheit with light winds. The grass runway was dry/no standing water. The pilot was the only person on board. Substantial damage to the aircraft caused from post-accident fire.

On April 29, 2024, at approximately 1600 local time, I, the FAA IIC, arrived on-site at Castroville Municipal Airport. Upon examining the accident area, I observed a single tire skid mark approximately 30 feet in length along with a few areas that appeared to be propeller strikes. The aircraft was located approximately 50 feet further south from the ground skid markings. The right wheel was lodged under the aircraft and could not be pictured. I performed an inspection of the grass runway area along with 6 volunteers and no separated aircraft equipment could be located nor any potholes observed. I took pictures of the accident scene and questioned the airport staff that was on-site. There were no eyewitnesses and no video picked up the accident. I left the scene at approximately 1730L.

On April 30, 2024, at approximately 1300 local time, I interviewed the wife of the pilot because the pilot was having a medical procedure and was not available for interview. The wife stated her husband told her that he felt like he hit a huge pothole and the aircraft cartwheeled. He caught fire and got help as soon as possible.

On April 30, 2024, at approximately 1430 local time, I went back to the aircraft which had been moved to the pilot's hangar at Castroville Municipal Airport, to see the right-hand tire/wheel assembly because it was stuck under the wreckage the day prior. The

wheel detached the landing gear frame at the weld. The broken area showed evidence of rust on the forward section and would suggest it was broken prior to this flight. At the request of the NTSB IIC, I took the right wheel assembly and right gear attachment frame from the wreckage to be sent to the NTSB lab for testing. I was unable to recover the aircraft logbooks. I have asked the pilots wife to provide them.

On May 01, 2024, after review of the available data, it appears that the most likely cause of the aircraft accident was a previous break between the right wheel assembly and the right wheel gear/frame attachment point. The data suggests that on landing, the wheel started to break and was drug for approximately 30 feet before completely detaching from the frame and causing the accident, which would correspond to the pilot's statement that the aircraft felt like it hit a pothole. When the wheel separated from the aircraft, the right frame dug into the ground approximately 10 inches and broke the gear/frame support for the left and right wheels. The broken left frame/gear assembly pushed up into the non-metal fuel tank, rupturing it and dowsing the aircraft pilot and engine with fuel. The engine heat ignited the fuel and engulfed the plane and pilot.

JASON L
PRUITT

Digitally signed by JASON
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Date: 2024.05.02
08:21:40 -05'00'

Jason L. Pruitt
ASI / SW-17

Enclosures:
Supporting Pictures (4)

Accident Area – Castroville Municipal Airport (KCVB):



Accident Scene looking south on undocumented grass runway 16:



Right Wheel break point showing evidence of prior rust (Part sent to NTSB):



Right gear/frame attachment break point (Part sent to NTSB):

