

National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Aviation Safety
Central Region



CEN24LA356

RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Gregory J. Thurston, FAA Aviation Safety Inspector

September 25, 2024

Interviewee: Gregory J. Thurston, FAA Aviation Safety Inspector
Date/Time: September 25, 2024 / 1600 CDT
Location: Telephone Call
Investigator: Andrew Todd Fox, NTSB Air Safety Investigator

On September 25, 2024, at 1600 central daylight time, NTSB Investigator Fox and FAA Inspector Thurston discussed the wreckage examination of Piper PA-12 airplane, N7878M, that was involved in a force landing accident on September 12, 2024, near Cumberland, Wisconsin:

Inspector Thurston stated that examination of the airplane fuel system and the engine revealed no evidence of a preimpact mechanical malfunction. There was ample fuel recovered from the fuel tanks at the accident site, and there was no evidence of any water or particulate contamination of the fuel system.

Inspector Thurston stated that internal engine and valve train continuity were confirmed as the crankshaft was rotated through the propeller flange. Compression and suction were noted on all four cylinders in conjunction with crankshaft rotation. A lighted borescope inspection of each cylinder did not reveal any anomalies with the cylinders, pistons, valves, valve seats. Both magnetos remained attached to their engine installation points and produced spark at each ignition lead. The upper spark plugs exhibited features consistent with normal engine operation. The engine oil sump contained ample oil, and the disassembled oil filter did not reveal any evidence of contamination. The carburetor fuel inlet screen exhibited no evidence of contamination.

Inspector Thurston stated that the throttle cable was broken at the clevis, but the carburetor throttle position remained in a wide-open position. The mixture control was found in the full-rich position, and the full-rich mechanical stop-pin was found fractured.

Inspector Thurston stated that the cockpit carburetor heat control was found turned off. Cable continuity was confirmed from the carburetor heat control to the airbox control; however, due to impact-related damage to the airbox, the carburetor heat valve could not move. A borescope was inserted into the damaged airbox and did not reveal any evidence of rubbing/scratching between the carburetor heat valve and the airbox.

Investigator Fox and Inspector Thurston then discussed that according to a carburetor icing probability chart contained in Federal Aviation Administration Special Airworthiness Information Bulletin CE-09-35, Carburetor Icing Prevention, the recorded temperature and dew point at the time of the accident were in the range of

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susceptibility for the formation of serious carburetor icing at glide engine power. According to the bulletin, if ice forms in the carburetor of a fixed-pitch propeller aircraft, the restriction to the induction airflow will result in decreased power output and a drop in engine rpm, which might be accompanied or followed by a rough running engine. The bulletin also notes that a pilot should respond to carburetor icing by applying full carburetor heat immediately and that the engine may run rough initially for a short time while the ice melts. The bulletin further recommends that a pilot use carburetor heat when operating the engine at low power settings or while in weather conditions in which carburetor icing is probable.

Inspector Thurston stated that during a follow-up interview the pilot acknowledged that he did not review a carburetor icing chart before the flight. However, the pilot also stipulated that he applied carburetor heat after the engine began sputtering.