

On January 12, 2011, about 1700, eastern standard time, a Beech A23-24, N3670Q, registered to and operated by a private owner, ditched in the Gulf of Mexico, west of Venice Beach, Florida, following loss of engine power. The personal flight was conducted under the provisions of 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91 with no flight plan filed. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed. The private pilot sustained serious injuries, one passenger sustained minor injuries, -and ~~the threetwo~~ passengers received minor injurieswere not injured. The airplane sustained substantial damage during the ditching. The flight departed Venice Municipal Airport (VNC), Venice, Florida at 1649.

The pilot stated that the airplane had 3.5 hours of fuel on board and no anomalies were noted during the preflight inspection or engine run-up. He departed from runway 31 to an altitude of 1,500 feet above ground level. The engine was running smoothly, and all the gauges were "in the green." He made a right turn to head east, but the engine "suddenly quit." The pilot established glide speed, switched fuel tanks, turned the auxiliary fuel pump on, enriched the mixture to full rich, and squawked "7700." An engine restart was attempted but was unsuccessful. He then made a right turn in an attempt to return to the airport, but realized that he could not make the airport or the beach and ditched the airplane into the ocean.

After recovery, the airplane was examined by a Federal Aviation Administration inspector. Examination of the airframe and flight control system components revealed no evidence of preimpact mechanical malfunction. Examination of the engine revealed that the engine was exposed to salt water with a corresponding degree of corrosion. The spark plugs were removed and exhibited medium gray color combustion deposits and salt water contamination. The crankshaft was rotated which established internal gear and valve train continuity. All four cylinders produced compression. Both magnetos would not produce spark, but were damaged by salt water exposure. The magnetos were removed and the drive gears were found intact. The fuel system was checked and residual fuel was found in the injector. The injector fuel inlet screen was clean. The engine contained a normal quantity of oil and the oil filter was removed, opened, and found to be clean.

A review of the engine maintenance records revealed that the engine was previously overhauled in the field 13 years ago. The Lycoming Service Instruction (SI) No. 1009 specifies the recommended time between overhaul (TBO) for Lycoming Engines. According to SI 1009, IO-360-A2B series engines should be overhauled after the accumulation of 2,000 hours time in service since new or previous overhaul. Additionally, engines that do not accumulate the hourly period of time between overhauls as specified, are recommended to be overhauled in the twelfth (12th) year.