

April 30, 2015

Inspector Statement

Registration Number: N9172Q

Make: Beech

Model: V35B

Serial Number: D-9250

On April 04, 2015 at 2130 CST, I received a call from the ROC of an aircraft accident in Wetumpka, Ala, at the local airport (08A). The pilot had been transported by HEMS to a local trauma center and the accident site had been secured.

I arrived at the accident scene at 0800 the next morning. The aircraft wreckage was inside the airport property, on a runway heading, but 400 feet from the center line of runway 27, which was the apparent runway the aircraft was attempting to land at. There was extensive damage to the aircraft, with tree markings and tree bark imbedded into aircraft skin and flight controls. Directly behind the aircraft flight path was a tree line (approximately 120 feet) with obvious damage to multiple large tree limbs. The impact damage was on same heading as aircraft, parallel to the runway. With the heading of damage from the trees and position of aircraft, it appeared the aircraft was on a direct path toward a row of hangars which parallel the runway. These hangars have marking lights mounted on the roof. The aircraft propellers showed evidence the engine was making power at time of impact. Photographs and measurements were taken.

On April 08, 2015 I was briefly able to speak to the pilot's daughter who was with the pilot, Daniel N. Power. Due to his serious injuries I was not able to speak to him directly, but the daughter relayed that the pilot stated he attempting to land at (08A) at night, he was ten minutes away and clicked the radio mic to turn on runway lights. He stated he turned final when he saw what he thought was runway lights, but it seemed to him there was a lot of runway lights that were not operating, as he was deseeking and lining up on the lights, he saw trees in his path, but it was too late to do anything to prevent contact with the trees. The sates he does not remember after impact with the trees, until waking up in the HEMS helicopter. Flightaware shows at 10 minutes out, the aircraft was approximately 30 miles away, which at that distance the radio would not have been able to turn on the runway lights.

On April 10, 2015 I returned to (08A) and spoke to airport manager. She stated airport runway lighting system is fully tested by Wetumpka Public Utilities bi-monthly. This test had last been performed April 01, 2015. She stated she personally tested the lights each day as she locked up her office, if it was dark enough outside. I also interviewed the pilot of the HEMS helicopter which landed at (08A) and transported the pilot to the trauma center. He stated the runway lights were off on his approach, but he activated the lights by his radio and they operated normally.

On April 29, 2015 the pilot's health condition improved enough that I could talk to him. But due to his health, he could not provide a written statement. He stated on his approach to (08A) he had clicked the radio microphone switch 5 times to turn on runway lights. He stated he performed this procedure 3 separate times, but he stated he believes he was on wrong radio channel to turn on the runway lights. He stated this caused him to mistakenly line up on the lights on top of the hangar, instead of the runway. As he stated earlier, by the time the trees were in in view, it was too late for him to avoid impact.

John Park
Aviation Safety Inspector

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Vestavia Hills, Al 35242

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