

Inspector's Statement

On 1/15/2015 I accompanied Inspectors Kevin Hancock and Porter Mayberry to Folsom Field, Vinemont, AL to inspect CE-152, N89921. This aircraft had been involved in an accident on 1/10/2015 and we were there to inspect the damage to the aircraft and determine whether the brakes and throttle cable was functioning properly at the time of the accident. The accident involved a student pilot, Anthony Nicolella, who had hit a tree after taxiing across the ramp. Mr. Nicolella claimed that the throttle cable had frozen and that the brakes did not work, all of which prevented him from being able to slow or stop the aircraft prior to impact with the tree.

Airport Manager Ben Harrison showed us a security video taken on the day that the accident happened. The video, which completes an everchanging sweep of the ramp and nearby areas of the FBO, showed N89921 just as the engine started. Within a second the aircraft was rolling out of the parking spot and was quickly picking up speed as it immediately moved out of the camera frame.

Initial investigation indicated that the aircraft travelled 343.8 feet from its parking spot on the ramp to where it impacted the trees west of the ramp area. There was no evidence of any skid marks on the ramp or in the grass in front of the trees.

Inspection of the aircraft, which had been moved to a nearby hangar, showed damage to the propeller spinner, cowlings, windshield, engine mounts, firewall, and instrument panel. The aircraft brakes were tested and found to be functioning normally. The throttle would not move because of damage sustained to the firewall and engine mount but Inspector Mayberry determined that it appeared to be connected properly. The mixture control was also frozen and would not move. It appeared that the parking brake cable was not connected and that the parking brake did not function.

After inspection of the accident site and the airplane, review of the security video, and a discussion with the other inspectors, it is my opinion that the student pilot was not properly holding the brakes when he started the aircraft. The video indicates that he probably had the throttle set higher than the normal starting position, causing the engine quickly obtain a higher than normal RPM. Because the brakes were functioning normally and there is no indication that the pilot attempted to shut down the engine with the mixture control, I would conclude that the pilot panicked after engine start and made no attempt to stop the airplane prior to impact with the tree. Our inspection found no mechanical reason for why the pilot could not control of the airplane after start.


Nina A. McBride
Aviation Safety Inspector, OPS
AL/NW Florida FSDO, SO-09

January 16, 2015

Inspectors Statement Accident involving N89921

On 01/15/2015 Inspectors Nina McBride, Kevin Hancock, and I arrived at Folsom Field, Vinemont AL to investigate an accident involving a Cessna 152, (N89921) which occurred on 01/11/2015 @ approximately 1110. The student pilots name was Anthony Nicolella. The aircraft was parked adjacent to the terminal with the nose pointed westerly, away from the runway toward a wooded area located across the parking ramp. Once the pilot had attained engine start the aircraft traveled approximately 343.8 ft. from the parking spot to the impact point in the wooded area. Per the pilot's statement, after starting the aircraft, he was unable to move the throttle and the brakes were inoperative. The aircraft sustained substantial damage to the prop, engine mount, firewall and left wing. Because the pilot stated he had no throttle control and no brakes, I was sent to verify his statement. My investigation discovered the brake system was functioning normally and I believe the throttle was operational prior to impact. We were unable to move the throttle (post-accident) due to the damage sustained to the engine mount and the firewall, however the throttle cable was connected properly and had it not been damaged, due to the impact, I believe it would have functioned as designed. It is this inspector's opinion, the pilot panicked and lost control of the aircraft due to his own inability to maintain control and did not have a maintenance issue with the brakes nor the throttle. The pilot was the last person to fly this aircraft (six days earlier) and had reported no maintenance issues at that time. END



Porter C. Mayberry
Aviation Safety Inspector
BHM-FSDO-09

Record of Telephone Conversation

Date/Time of Call: 1/12/2015 15:00 CST

Individual Contacted: Anthony J. Nicolella; Student Pilot # GG- [REDACTED]

Telephone Number: [REDACTED] cell

Topic: Aircraft Accident involving CE-152, N89921; 1/10/2015 at 1525 CST

Mr. Nicolella stated that he was a student pilot enrolled in the Private Pilot Certification Course at Wallace State Community College, Cullman, AL. Mr. Nicolella was scheduled to complete a solo flight, lesson 13 of the syllabus, in the local area on Saturday January 10, 2015. He was going to the local practice area to practice maneuvers like stalls and slow flight. He had met with a flight instructor from Wallace State CC, Judd Davis. Mr. Davis had reviewed his flight lesson plan and they discussed cold weather aircraft operations. The weather was good but it was cold, probably about 28°F, when they began the preflight briefing. Mr. Davis had told him that they did not need to preheat the airplane because that was only required when the temperature is below 25°F. Mr. Nicolella discussed the cold weather starting procedure with Mr. Davis. Mr. Davis reminded him to prime the airplane prior to starting and, because of the cold weather, it would take 4 primes rather than the usual three.

Mr. Nicolella stated that when he started the engine, he primed it 4 times and then had the throttle open $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. He turned the key to start the aircraft. The engine started and the airplane immediately started to roll. He was pressing on the brakes hard but there were no brakes. He states the brakes went to the floor. He was heading across the ramp towards the treeline in front of him. He did not have time to pull the mixture as he was rolling across the ramp. He was trying to pull the throttle back but it seemed like the throttle control was jammed or locked in position and would not move. There was a large hangar to his right as he was rolling and he was able to veer the aircraft to the left slightly to be sure to miss the hangar. When asked how he was able to steer the airplane at all without the brakes, Mr. Nicolella stated that it did not turn much but just a little bit to the left.

He impacted the tree and then turned the ignition and master off. He did not use the mixture to shut the aircraft down. He immediately went into the FBO and told Mr. Davis that he had just crashed into the trees. He was not badly hurt but had bruised his right arm and wrist when the aircraft impacted the tree.

This would have been his fourth solo flight. His first flight was in early December, somewhere between the 7th and the 10th. He had a second solo flight soon after that but that lesson was a combination of dual and solo as was a third flight. This was to be his first complete solo flight. He has about 25 hours of total flight time but does not have his logbook because it is kept at the flight school.

When asked how he knew that the temperature outside was 28°F, Mr. Nicolella stated that he had checked the AWOS near his home in Meridianville and at the Cullman Airport prior to planning his flight. Mr. Nicolella also stated that he did not think the airplane had been flown since he had flown it the previous Sunday when there were no problems or discrepancies at that time. When asked if he had set the parking brake prior to engine start, Mr. Nicolella stated that that aircraft did not have a parking brake in it.

I mentioned to Mr. Nicolella that the date on his written statement may be incorrect and that he had dated 1/11/2015 and that I thought the accident had occurred on Saturday 1/10/2015. He said that he realized that afterwards but had been pretty shaken up at the time and had dated it incorrectly.

[REDACTED]
Nina A. McBride
Aviation Safety Inspector, OPS
AL/NW Florida FSDO, SO-09

Record of Telephone Conversation

Date/Time of Call: 1/12/2015 14:45 CST
Individual Contacted: Judson Davis; Flight Instructor
Telephone Number: [REDACTED] cell
Topic: Aircraft Accident involving CE-152, N89921; 1/10/2015 at 1525 CST

Mr. Davis is a flight instructor at Wallace State Community College. Mr. Davis stated that he had been present at the Cullman Airport on Saturday January 10, 2015 and had reviewed the preflight planning and lesson preparation for Mr. Anthony Nicolella. Mr. Davis stated that Mr. Nicolella had been scheduled for a solo lesson in the local area and that this was to be his first solo to the practice area. The syllabus for Lesson 13 requires him to practice manueurs such as stalls and slow flight. Mr. Davis was concerned with reviewing the cold weather starting procedures with Mr. Nicolella and showed him the procedures posted on the wall outside the briefing room. He told Mr. Nicolella that the starting procedure would require him to prime the airplane a little more than usual. He reviewed Mr. Nicolella's certificates and endorsements and saw that he met the requirements for a solo flight. Mr. Davis stated he had flown with Mr. Nicolella some in the past but Mr. Nicolella was now flying with another instructor at the flight school.

Mr. Davis watched from the window while Mr. Nicolella did a preflight and got into the airplane. He noticed that the seat belt was hanging out of the door and that Mr. Nicolella seemed to be having trouble opening the pilot's door to retrieve it. Mr. Davis then went out to the airplane and opened the door from the outside and Mr. Nicolella got the seat belt. As Mr. Nicolella was getting situated in the cockpit, Mr. Davis confirmed that the key was sitting on the dash so he pulled the propeller through a few times to allow oil to move in the pistons and cylinders. Mr. Davis went back inside.

The next thing he knew, Mr. Nicolella came back inside the FBO and stated that he had just hit the trees. They went out to the airplane and saw that the airplane had smashed into the trees.

[REDACTED]
Nina A. McBride
Aviation Safety Inspector, OPS
AL/NW Florida FSDO, SO-09