

June 08, 2016; 1320L:

David Ralph returned my phone call this afternoon. I identified myself as an FAA Inspector investigating the accident on behalf of the NTSB to gather facts for determining cause and increasing safety.

Mr. Ralph departed ME08 (Gadabout Gaddis, PVT) at approx. 1745 enroute to CT24 (North Canaan, PVT) on a VFR flight with 1 pax (Tammy Sullivan).

Ralph checked the wx on his cellphone but did not get a wx briefing or check notams. The wx on departure was ovkst with good vis (5-10sm) and light SE wind.

About an 1.5hr later over Laconia Ralph descended to 2500 MSL to continue sightseeing around the mts. The cloud cover/ovkst was concealing some of the peaks by then but valley visibility was still good. A little further south, near Concord, some of the valleys began to show signs of mist/fog and the ceiling was getting lower. Ralph descended to 1200-1300MSL.

:10 south of CON with light rain/mist on the windscreen and deteriorating vis, Ralph turned 180 to return to CON. Upon completing the turn, he lost visual reference with the ground. At this point he added power and initiated a climb to approx. 2200'. Things get fuzzy from there but it appears that while trying to level the wings and continue the climb he actually tightened the turn resulting in a steep descending spiral. Shortly after that the aircraft entered the trees.

Mr. Ralph stopped for fuel in Bethel (0B1) and estimates that he had 20-22 gal of fuel on at the time of the crash.

He said he was rested and that fatigue was not a factor.

His last BFR was 1-1.3 yrs ago with a local Great Barrington CFI named Richard Folan. No Wings Program or safety seminar participation.

Injuries: Ralph – Pelvis broken in 3 places, broken right arm, and various bruises and lacerations. Sullivan – Right arm broken in 2 places (requiring surgery) and 5 broken bones in right foot.

Willing to deliver or photocopy mx logs.

Mr. Ralph is still very shaken up by this experience, mourning the loss of his aircraft, and was concerned with losing his certificate. I briefly outlined that I was only functioning in an accident investigation capacity but that later myself or someone else will probably contact him concerning whatever certificate action is warranted.

June 29, 2016; 1140L

Inquired how Mr. Ralph's healing was progressing – it is going well.

Requested copies of: pilot logbook page showing last biennial event, a/c logbook showing last annual insp. and something showing make/model of engine and prop.

Inquired as to his Actual Instrument experience. Only the 3 hours required for the Private Certificate.

I then mentioned that I was shifting from the accident investigation role to this FAA office's role as regulatory compliance. We discussed his path forward. I told him to expect a letter in the next couple weeks explaining what the FAAST inspector and I had discussed. That is summed up as likely being a few hours of remedial ground training on weather sources, aeronautical decision making, and preflight planning, and a few hours of flight instruction to enhance his abilities to operate solely by reference to the instruments.

I explained that at this point we are probably not going to pursue a 44709 reexam and that we felt that due to the situation and his compliant attitude, everyone's energies and the interests of safety would be better spent pursuing the remedial training path.

He thanked me for the work I've done with him and would send the requested documents today or tomorrow.