



# Federal Aviation Administration

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## Memorandum

Date: August 15, 2016  
To: Roberto Gonzalez, ATL FSDO Manager  
From: ASO ATL FSDO 11  
Prepared by: Steven Davidson, Avionics Inspector  
Subject: N288GB Accident Investigation/ERA16CA277

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On July 29, 2016 the Pilot of N288GB (1962 Cessna 172C) was on a routine flight under Title 14 CFR Part 91 flight rules from KAPT (Jasper, TN) to KMAC (Macon Downtown) with one passenger and a dog on board. It was reported to the Regional Operations Center that the aircraft experienced a loss of engine power approximately 30 miles north of KMAC and had to make an emergency landing in a hay pasture. The aircraft sustained substantial damage with minor injuries to the pilot in command and a single passenger on board.

On July 29, 2016 at 4:30 P.M. EST, an Inspector from the Atlanta Flight Standards was dispatched to the accident site to determine the cause of the accident and the extent of damage. When the FAA Inspector arrived on scene he was met by two Officers from the Jones County Sheriff's Office. The Officers had secured the wreckage site and had transported the pilot and passenger to the Macon Medical Center for further treatment and evaluation. During the initial interview with the Jones County Sheriff's Office Deputy, they had reported that the pilot had stated he had ran out of fuel which caused the aircraft engine to stop. An examination of the aircraft and wreckage site showed that the aircraft had initially touched down approximately 200 yards from the final resting place. During roll out the pilot loss control of the aircraft and ran through a wooden fence and struck a cedar tree head on, causing substantial damage. The damage consisted of the following:

- Engine fuselage had separated from the aircraft.
- Tail section was twisted in a clockwise direction.
- Both wings were severely damaged and bent throughout
- The tops of both wings showed bends and wrinkles associated with spar damage.
- The top of the crew compartment was peeled back from the aircraft.
- The propeller displayed minor damage usually associated with an engine not spinning.
- There was no evidence of a fuel leakage or breach of the fuel system.

Further evaluation of the aircraft crew compartment revealed that the fuel selector switch had been placed half way between the "Both Tanks" and "Left" tank positions. Also the copilot seat had been removed from the aircraft before flight to accommodate the pilot's 80-100lb dog.

On July 30, 2016 Atlanta Air Salvage out of Griffin, Georgia was contacted to assist in the recovery efforts. During the recovery process, the wings had to be removed in order to transport

the aircraft safely. 15 gallons of gas was drained from the right tank and zero gallons from the left. An examination of the fuel selector switch showed no defects. The selector was able to transition between detents in a normal operation. A review of the aircraft maintenance records showed that the last annual inspection had been completed on January 5, 2016 and all AD's had been signed off as complied with. The aircrafts airworthiness certificate was on board the aircraft but displayed the incorrect registration number.

During the interview with the pilot, he stated that he had performed a preflight inspection before takeoff and had confirmed 23 total gallons of fuel on board. Based on a calculated 7.5 GPH burn rate it was determined that the flight would take 1 hour and 45 minutes with a 3-5 KTS tail wind. The pilot stated that the flight was planned for 5,500 feet but was lowered to 2,500 feet as he approached his destination due to scattered cloud cover. Shortly after lowering the flight altitude to 2,500 feet the engine stopped producing power. The pilot stated that he was unable to restart the engine so he began to initiate emergency procedures to find a safe place to land. The pilot stated that he believes the fuel selector switch may have been inadvertently kicked out of the "Both Tank" position during flight and placed in the "Left" position causing the fuel to run dry in the "Left" tank. The pilot was questioned as to why his Airworthiness Certificate displayed the incorrect registration number. The pilot stated that he had recently purchased the aircraft on May 2, 2016 and was aware that the registration number had changed from N87328 to N288GB in the recent past but thought that the new Airworthiness Certificate would be mailed to him along with the new registration. He was unaware that either he or the previous owner should have reapplied at their local FSDO for a replacement Airworthiness Certificate.

The pilot was questioned as to why the passenger seat had been removed and if the removal of this seat was permitted by the Cessna Flight Manual. The pilot stated that he had removed the right seat to better accommodate the egress of the rear passenger and his 80-100lb dog. He stated that he did perform a weight and balance calculation with the seat removed but he was not sure if his aircraft allowed for the removal of the seat without approved data. The pilot stated that he would be sure to consult the aircraft flight manual in the future before performing modifications to his aircraft.

#### **Aircraft Inspection Status:**

1. Aircraft: 1962 Cessna Model: 172C, S/N 17249244
2. Engine: Continental, Model: O- 300 SER
3. Current Registration: DOI 7/11/2016
4. Standard Airworthiness Certificate: Not Valid
5. Annual inspection was completed and returned to service on Jan 05, 2016
6. AD's were signed off as to being complied with during last annual inspection Jan 05, 2016.
7. The Current aircraft total time is 3461 Hours on 07/29/2016.
8. The aircraft has operated 64 hours since the last annual inspection on Jan 05, 2016.

#### **Pilot In Command:**

1. Certificate # [REDACTED], DOI: 11/10/2015
2. Commercial Pilot
3. Current Second Class Medical: 03/24/2016
4. Limitations: Airplane Multiengine VFR only/ Tailwheel Flight Prohibited
5. 1,767 Hours of Total Flight Hours

**Environmental Conditions:**

1. Actual Weather: VMC
2. Runway Conditions: Dry
3. Precipitation: None