



MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Investigator Name: Aaron McCarter
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: May 23, 2016
Person Contacted: Gregory Harms (Pilot)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA16LA183

Narrative:

Pilot and 2 minor passengers arrived at the airplane and found 3 baby birds flopping around in the cockpit. He removed the birds and performed a preflight walk around looking for a nest.

During the walk around, he noticed that one of the rags that were used to cover one of the elevator openings had fallen out. It had been several months since he has flown the airplane. He stated he "hardly flies it at all." It had been at least 3 months since the last flight.

He did not see a nest during the rest of his preflight.

He started up the airplane and taxied for about 5 minutes with no issues, but immediately after takeoff from runway 35 at about 100 feet above ground level, smoke appeared near the left rudder pedals.

Immediately made a steep turn back to the runway and was going to attempt a landing on the opposing runway 17.

The smoke turned back and smelled electrical in nature. It started to fill up the cockpit and he was having a hard time seeing the runway.

During the turn, he noticed fire emanating near the left rudder pedal and he attempted to stomp it out.

He was lined up for runway 17 but he could barely see it due to the smoke. He managed to land on the runway but he could not stop; he tried to stop. He thought they flipped over when they struck the grass but realized they "tipped forward onto the nose."

When the airplane stopped the pilot and two passengers were able to evacuate before the airplane became completely engulfed by fire.