



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Doug Brazy
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation

August 5, 2016

Subject: Conversation with John Ledford, Pilot in Command – N1495J, NTSB Investigation ERA16LA250

On August 5, 2016 at 1300 eastern daylight time, Mr. Ledford was interviewed by telephone and provided the following information:

The accident flight was the third flight of the day. The first flight was from Orlando Executive Airport (ORL) to Jacksonville Executive Airport at Craig (CRG). The pilot gathered weather information before departing for the airport at 730, noting that clouds and rain may affect the return flight that afternoon. After arrival at the airport he performed a full preflight inspection following the steps listed in the pilots operating handbook. He and one of his employees flew to Jacksonville to meet a client, where they went surfing and had lunch. He fully fueled the airplane (84 gallons) and performed a preflight inspection at CRG, and departed for the return flight to ORL about 1330. On the return flight he deviated from the direct route due to clouds, the flight was otherwise unremarkable and landed normally at ORL. He Advised the FBO staff that he did not require any fuel, and to leave the airplane as he would return in a couple hours for the next flight. He estimated that he used about 15 gallons on the flight, all from the right wing tip fuel tank.

The pilot went home and prepared for the accident flight trip, which was with his 9 year old daughter. The destination was Venice Municipal Airport. (VNC). He checked the weather again, and decided to depart ORL to the west, and then turn south along the west coast of Florida, to avoid inland clouds and rain. He performed another preflight inspection, and listened to the Automated Terminal Information System. He started the engine with the fuel selector set for the right tip tank, and then selected the left tip tank before takeoff. The flight departed ORL about 1800. After departure, he climbed to 1500 feet Mean Sea Level (MSL) to remain clear of the Class B airspace surrounding Orlando International Airport. About 10 miles west of ORL, he began a climb to a cruising altitude of 4500 MSL. About 2 minutes after the climb began, he heard a "popping sound" from the engine. He immediately contacted the ORL Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) and advised that he intended to return to ORL. He then performed the entire Engine Power Loss in Flight checklist, but was unable to determine what was wrong. The engine remained at partial power for a short time, but then lost all power. At that time the pilot contacted ORL ATCT and declared an emergency, advised that he may be able to reach land, but would likely end up in the lake below him (Lake Down) and asked for emergency services to be available. He initially thought the airplane would be able to glide to a nearby field, but determined that it wouldn't, and prepared for a ditching in the lake.

About 45 seconds before impact, he opened the cabin door (which is on the right or Co-pilot's side) and explained to the passenger that they were going to "crash land" in the lake, and that as soon as the airplane hit the water, she should unbuckle her seatbelt and shoulder harness, and swim away. He noted that both he and the passenger had worn the lap and shoulder belts for the flight.

The pilot initially considered attempting a tail-low landing attitude, but concluded he could not due to the descent rate and airspeed. He then chose to try and land "level" on all three landing gear. However, as the airplane reached 10-15 feet above the water, the stall warning light activated, and then airplane entered a "spin stall" and impacted the water.

The pilot noted that after impact, the airplane was immediately underwater, it did not float for any period of time. He then was able to unbuckle the passenger seatbelt and remove the passenger from the airplane, and brought her to surface. He managed to hold the passenger above the water until help arrived via boat, and transported them to shore where Emergency Medical Service personnel were waiting.

Mr. Ledford advised that with the exception of the engine, there were no other issues with the airplane on either flight that day.

Mr. Ledford was thanked for his time.

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