



RECORD OF INTERVIEW

Daniel P. Boggs
Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Aviation Safety - Eastern Region

Date: July 8, 2015 at 10:00 EST
Person(s) Interviewed: Mr. Stifel-pilot-in-charge
NTSB Case Number: ERA16LA299

Narrative:

Mr. Stifel was interviewed by telephone.

Mr. Stifel was still in the hospital during the interview.

Mr. Stifel (PIC) stated he has flown this airplane several times for the previous owner and has many hours flying the airplane over the last year or more. The new owner hired Mr. Stifel to fly the airplane to Bartow Florida where the new owner had a hangar. This flight happened several months before the accident flight but Mr. Stifel was not sure of the exact date he flew the plane to Bartow.

A couple months later the new owner, (Mr. William Hickman) contacted Mr. Stifel again and wanted to hire him for instructional lessons and wanted to move the airplane back down to Sebring so it would be closer to the instructor.

On August 23, 2016, Mr. Stifel showed up at the Bartow airport to find out that the owner topped off the fuel with auto fuel, He did not know if the sumped the tanks or used a screen during the filling process and was concerned about water in the fuel. The PIC believed the weight and balance would be good for the flight to Sebring though. The PIC performed the preflight and everything checked out good. The PIC and student flew down to Sebring with no problems. The stopped for lunch and also discussed a little flying they would do in the afternoon. Later in the day, they departed Sebring and at approximately 200 feet agl, the engine started running rough. The PIC immediately turned on the boost pumps with no effect. The PIC pushed the nose down and tried to fly to a clearing. As soon as the nose was in the down position, the engine shut down. The PIC flew to the clearing and flared the airplane for landing. The airplane touched down very hard and slid into an embankment and became airborne briefly before coming to rest.



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: August 29, 2016
Person Contacted: William Hickman
NTSB Accident Number: ERA16LA299

Narrative:

Mr. Hickman was contacted by phone on August 25, 2016, at 1120 EDT, and left a voice mail message. He was called at [REDACTED]. He returned the call on August 26, 2016, at 0807 EDT, and a conference call was arranged for 0900 the same day. He was called to the same number at 0901 EDT. He provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED]

At the beginning of the phone call he was advised that the NTSB is a federal agency mandated by Congress to investigate aircraft accidents, and NTSB has no authority to take any action against any individual. He was also informed that the purpose of an NTSB investigation is for safety only, and any person NTSB talks with has the right to representation; he agreed to the interview without representation.

He indicated that he does not have a student pilot certificate nor does he have a medical certificate. The accident flight was his second flight in the airplane, and his first as a student. His date of birth is [REDACTED]. He provided a home address of [REDACTED], Fort Meade, Florida 33841.

He indicated that he and his brother (James Hickman) purchased the airplane recently, and a condition inspection was performed at that time. The previous owner of the airplane recommended Mr. Stifel to him as an instructor since he owns a Lake Renegade (amphibious aircraft) and also is a flight instructor.

Mr. Stifel was hired to fly the airplane from Bartow to Sebring, and reported that before departure the 21 gallon fuel tank was filled using 93 Octane automotive fuel. The fuel consumption is about 5 gallons-per-hour and the flight duration was about 45 minutes.

He provided the following timeline for August 23, 2016 – In advance of the flight, the pilot-in-command (PIC), Mr. Stifel, pulled up an aerial view of the airport and area although he was familiar with the airport to identify possible landing areas in the event of a malfunction. The PIC performed a preflight inspection of the airplane which was reported to be thorough but a checklist was not used; the checklist was in the airplane. The flight was initiated with Mr. Hickman in the left seat and the PIC in the right seat. Both occupants were wearing a seatbelt and shoulder harness. While in the airplane a checklist was used, and after engine start, he (Mr. Hickman) taxied to the runway where the flight instructor initiated the takeoff. He noted that during the climb the PIC retracted the landing gear, and shortly afterwards at an unknown altitude, the engine began “spitting and sputtering.” The PIC was unable to restore power, and maneuvered the airplane for a landing on the airport. He reported that the airplane landed hard with the landing gear down, veered left, contacted an embankment and became airborne briefly. The airplane then impacted on the hull and came to rest upright. He (Mr. Hickman) climbed out of the airplane and went to the right side of the airplane and sat down, while the PIC remained in the airplane. First responders arrived and he was immediately transported to Highlands Regional, and then transported to Bayfront Medical Center. He was released from the hospital between 1330 and 1400 hours on August 25, 2016.

Mr. Hickman’s injuries include a compression fracture of the L1 vertebrae, and broken sacrum bone. No surgery is required, but he will have to be in a back brace for about 2 months.

He was asked about maintenance records and indicated that his brother has them. He confirmed the engine installed was a Rotax 914 turbo.

He was asked what runway the flight departed and he believed they were departing to the north. He indicated that the airplane came to rest facing the west.

With respect to the PIC, he too was taken to Highlands Regional, but then transferred to Bayfront Medical Center. As of the interview, he remains hospitalized. His injuries include a fractured T12 vertebrae.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on August 26, 2016, at 1205 EDT. He replied on August 27, 2016, at 0712 EDT with, “Mr. Monville, [a]fter reviewing your notes, I found two errors. The first-We did use the checklist in the aircraft before taxiing to the runway. The second point, I taxied the aircraft straight down the runway and my CFI took over before the turn to make the take off. Sent from my iPad.” These comments were incorporated into the narrative.