



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Eastern Region – Ashburn, Virginia

RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Who: Terry Brockett, Air Traffic Controller, Lawrence Municipal Airport, Lawrence, MA (KLWM)

When: March 1, 2017

RE: ERA17FA117, Sonex N315AL, Methuen, MA

I interviewed Mr. Brockett in person at the LWM control tower. Mr. Brockett stated that he was working both ground and tower control at the time N315AL crashed. He said the pilot of N315AL initially contacted the tower and requested to taxi to Four Star Aviation Jet Center to purchase fuel. After the pilot refueled, he contacted the tower and stated he was having trouble picking up the ATIS information. Mr. Brockett then verbally provided the current ATIS information then cleared him to taxi to runway 14. Once the pilot was ready for departure, he called the tower and stated his intentions were to stay in the traffic pattern and practice touch and go's. Mr. Brockett cleared the pilot for takeoff and to make "left-closed" traffic and to report "mid-field downwind." Mr. Brockett said the pilot departed and made a tight, left downwind turn and leveled off at an altitude of 1,400 feet above ground level (AGL). Mr. Brockett told the pilot to widen out his pattern because there was a Piper Cherokee in front of him that was also in the pattern, but was flying a wider pattern. The pilot acknowledged and reported when he was mid-field.

Mr. Brockett stated that when the Piper Cherokee was "over the numbers" on final approach, he observed the accident airplane had just turned onto final approach and was about 500-600 feet AGL at a speed of about 80-90 knots. Though spacing was not an issue, Mr. Brockett said the accident airplane made a very shallow s-turn maneuver to the left than back to the right before it suddenly nosed over in a right hand turn and disappeared behind trees about 1 mile from the end of the runway. Mr. Brockett said the airplane was not spinning as it descended and he did not see any smoke or fire trailing the airplane at any time. The pilot also did not acknowledge his clearance to land and did not make any distress calls prior to the upset.

Leah D. Read

Sr. Air Safety Investigator

National Transportation Safety Board



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RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Who: Gary LaFauci

When: March 2, 2017

RE: ERA17FA117, Sonex N315AL, Methuen, MA

In a telephone conversation, Mr. LaFauci stated that he works for JetBlue at Logan Airport in Boston, MA, and was returning home from work when he first observed the accident airplane. He said he driving north on Interstate 495 in Methuen, MA, and was just passing the “condos” when he saw the airplane headed south toward him in a shallow, left hand turn toward the Lawrence Airport. As the airplane flew over his truck, Mr. LaFauci could see the underside of the airplane thru his sun-roof. He said the belly of the airplane was “engulfed in flames.” He described the flames as “very bright red” and that the airplane looked like a “meteor.” The flames were behind the propeller (which was turning at the time) and under where the pilot would sit. Mr. LaFauci said there was no smoke associated with the flames, and he did not see any liquid or spray coming from the airplane in addition to the flames. Mr. LaFauci said he pulled over and continued to watch the airplane, which was now behind him and about 150 feet above the ground. He said the airplane suddenly nosed-over toward the ground and it disappeared from view behind pine trees. Mr. LaFauci did not see the airplane hit the condos, but did see a small amount of smoke rising from that location shortly after he lost site of the airplane.

Mr. LaFauci said he was talking to his wife via blue tooth when he first saw the airplane. The time-stamp on his phone was 1:03pm.

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Sr. Air Safety Investigator

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