



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Eastern Region – Ashburn, Virginia

RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Who: John Maroney, Eyewitness

When: May 6, 2017

RE: ERA17FA174, Clearwater, FL

Mr. Maroney was interviewed in person at the Clearwater Airpark (CLW), the day after the accident. He said he worked at the airport's FBO and was being trained as a fueler. It was his first day on the job. Mr. Maroney is not a pilot.

Mr. Maroney stated that he was standing in front of the FBO (airport side) and observed several airplane's land on runway 16. They were landing one right after another. Mr. Maroney saw N271TS on final approach and everything appeared normal. He temporarily lost sight of the Cirrus but then heard its engine go to full power. Mr. Maroney then observed the Cirrus in a near vertical climb before it rolled left, on to its back, and descend inverted toward the east. The airplane disappeared from his view but he knew it was going to crash. Mr. Maroney shouted for someone to call 911 and responded to the accident, where he saw the airplane had crashed inverted adjacent to the taxiway.

Mr. Maroney said the wind was blowing very hard at the time of the accident and it would gust heavy for about 30 seconds, then stop. Then gust heavy again. He said thunderstorms were moving across the airport at the time of the accident. Mr. Maroney did not see any lightning with the storms.

Leah D. Read
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board



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RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Who: Peter Hurley, Witness

When: May 6, 2017

RE: ERA17FA174, Clearwater, FL

Mr. Hurley was interviewed in person at the Clearwater Airpark (CLW), the day after the accident. He stated that he owns a Grumman Tiger airplane and is based at the airport. Mr. Hurley is an ATP rated pilot with over 7,000 flight hours and is employed as a mechanic at Allegiant Airlines.

Mr. Hurley stated that on the day of the accident, he departed CLW and flew to the coast and practiced turns around a point over the beach. He observed convective weather moving in to the area and returned to CLW. As he entered the traffic pattern for the airport, he heard the pilot of Cirrus N271TS announce over the CLW UNICOM frequency that he was west of the airport and inbound for landing. Mr. Hurley radioed the pilot and told him that the west side of the airport had a noise abatement restriction and he needed to enter the airport's traffic pattern from the east. The pilot responded, "I'll follow you in then." Mr. Hurley entered a left downwind for Runway 16, and when he turned final he saw the Cirrus on downwind. It appeared high and fast, and was close behind him in the pattern. Mr. Hurley said his approach to land was relatively smooth, but as soon as they came over the numbers, the wind became very gusty. It took him a while to get his airplane on the ground. Mr. Hurley was concerned that he wouldn't clear the runway before the Cirrus landed, so he got off the runway quickly and radioed the Cirrus pilot that the winds were "snotty" on final and to be careful. The pilot acknowledged him. Mr. Hurley then taxied to his parking spot and tied down the airplane. He said the winds were blowing so hard by that time that he struggled to get the canopy on his airplane. It also began to rain.

Mr. Hurley said he didn't see the Cirrus after he had landed, but later heard sirens driving onto the airport. He drove over to the other side of the airport and saw the Cirrus had crashed. Fuel was draining from the airplane.

Mr. Hurley said thunderstorms were moving over the airport at the time of the accident and he could see they were dissipating as he was in the traffic pattern. He did not see any lightning. Mr. Hurley said there was wind shear on final but he couldn't estimate the speed or shift of the shear; however, the wind was variable between 240 and 270 degrees about 40 knots when he landed. Mr. Hurley also stated it was possible that a "microburst" was associated with the storms.

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