

Hill Millicent

Subject: FW: Eye Witness to Overrun Accident Oct 13, 2016 at KSFZ (North Central Airport, Pawtucket, RI)

From: Mark Patiky

Sent: Friday, October 14, 2016 3:22:59 PM (UTC+00:00) Monrovia, Reykjavik

To: Witness

Subject: Eye Witness to Overrun Accident Oct 13, 2016 at KSFZ (North Central Airport, Pawtucket, RI)

On the morning of October 13, 2016, between 0900 and 1030 (L), I was standing at the main hangar at North Central Airport waiting for the fog to lift in order to make a flight to Norwood, MA (KOWD) in my Mooney. Originally IFR filed for an 0830 (L) departure, I refiled for a 1020 (L) departure in anticipation that the fog would lift in a couple of hours.

At 9:45 (L) the KSFZ ASOS was reporting wind light and variable, visibility ¼ mile fog, ceiling 200 feet. I elected not to depart until the ceiling was well above approach minima (at least 400 feet) and visibility in excess of one mile.

Standing next to another pilot in front of the hangar facing the runway, we remarked that the actual winds were from the southwest at about 5 knots. At that point, we could barely see the tree line about 1200 feet away directly across the runway,

A Bonanza had departed from Runway 23 at North Central a few minutes earlier. He disappeared into cloud about half way down runway immediately after retracting his landing gear, which confirmed the 200 foot ceiling. At the same time, I heard that a Learjet was in a holding pattern waiting for the fog to lift at North Central.

Some minutes later, the winds picked up slightly and visibility improved. According to my iPhone app (Garmin Pilot), visibility had increased to 1 ¼ miles but ceiling remained at 200 feet. ASOS was still report winds light and variable although they were actually southwesterly slightly in excess of 5 knots. The bases appeared ragged and variable, but they appeared to average the 200 feet reported.

The pilot next to me went into the FBO. He returned mentioning that he heard on the Unicom frequency what he assumed to be the Learjet reporting a 5 mile final. I looked to the north east along the approach to Runway 23 and saw nothing. After a couple of minutes scanning the sky in all directions to see if the bases had changed, I suddenly spotted lights breaking out of the cloud on the approach to Runway 5, not Runway 23.

While it is impossible to judge speed and distance accurately, the aircraft appeared high as it passed over what I assumed to be the runway threshold. What I could judge, however was the location of the touchdown zone 1000 foot markers which are near the Runway 5/23 intersection with Runway 33/15 at North Central. At the point where most jets would normally touch down, the accident aircraft appeared significantly above the runway. I cannot hazard a guess as to height due to perspective distortion, but the aircraft was certainly well above the surface.

As the aircraft passed directly in front of me, which is at a point known to be about 2100 to 2200 feet along Runway 5, the wheels were about 20 to 30 feet above the surface. I helplessly shouted, "Go around! Go around!" knowing that there was only half of the available runway remaining. The aircraft continued the approach, and I saw the wheels touch at the intersection of B4 taxiway, which I know to be 2000 feet from the end of the runway, having measured it in the past in order to judge my own landings on runway 23.

At that point, I knew it would be impossible for the jet to stop. I heard no thrust reversers, however, nor screeching brakes. I waited for the inevitable sound of a crash and ensuing fireball. Seconds passed and still, there was no sound. Was the aircraft taxiing back?

A few more seconds past, and when no sound of a taxiing jet was evident, I walked over to the taxiway to see if I could see anything. At that point, airport emergency services had sprung into action, and an airport vehicle raced down the taxiway to the sight of the accident.

It is my belief that this accident started before the pilot's decision to make the approach to North Central.

- 1) The passengers were apparently planning to attend a meeting in the local area. With the weather at or below minima at North Central, a more conservative decision would have been to land at KPVD, which was VFR at the time. North Central is 400 feet higher than KPVD and often when the weather is at or below minima at KSFZ, it is well above minima at KPVD.

Did the pilots consider that KPVD was only 12 miles away? The decision to land at KPVD would have inevitably caused a delay but perhaps by no more than half an hour. In this case with a decision to land at KSFZ, passengers were not only severely delayed, they are fortunate to be alive.

- 2) While the pilot may have heard winds were light and variable on the ASOS, he also would have heard that ceilings were 200 feet. In fact, the winds were from the south west at about 5 knots, but he would not have known that. The winds at KPVD may have given him a clue since "light and variable" is an indeterminate.
- 3) The approach minima for Runway 5 at KSFZ is 271 feet agl and for Runway 23, it is 250 feet agl. Why not choose the approach with the lower minima? Was availability of approach lighting on Runway 5 a determining factor?
- 4) While it was impossible to know, in reality, if the pilot had waited 15 minutes longer when the fog had lifted, he would have been able to make a less stressful approach. Was time a factor in his decision? Were passengers anxious about making a meeting? Could more comprehensive en route planning averted this situation entirely by considering a more suitable alternate?
- 5) Runway lighting did not appear to be at full intensity, although this was difficult to gauge from my position. Assuming it was not at full intensity, with the with restricted visibility, why didn't the pilot select full runway lighting intensity? Indeed, he may have, so this could or could not be a factor.
- 6) When the aircraft broke out of cloud, it should have appeared to the pilot that he was well above glide slope. Runway 5 does have a VASI so that high-above-glide slope indication should have been a clue that the decision to land was questionable.

After passing the touchdown zone when well above the runway, that should have been a clue that a missed approach was required. And what about airspeed? While it is impossible for me to gauge, the aircraft did appear to be fast on the approach. This is a purely subjective assessment, which has no factual significance.

After passing the runway halfway point that should have been a vital clue that a missed of approach was absolutely necessary. Did the pilot not flying monitor ground speed? This would have offered another clue that the aircraft had a tailwind, and that landing in the remaining distance was impossible.

Even as the wheels touched, with 2000 feet remaining with the runway end hurtling toward them, there was still opportunity to make a go-around. The Runway 5 departure end is clear of obstructions, and because the terrain drops off significantly beyond the departure end, the late go-around may have been conducted safely.

Two pilots presumably well trained in the aircraft made inexplicably unsound decisions. At each step along the way, this accident could have been prevented. The pilot flying sealed his fate, however, when, with 2000 feet of runway remaining, he elected to land. I can just about do that in my Mooney, but I would not risk it, so, why would someone attempt that in a jet with far greater inertia and probably 30-40 knots or more greater speed?

My contact information is shown below. If I can be of further assistance, I am more than delighted to help.

Thanks you.

Mark Patiky
Mooney N 1085Z

Tel. [REDACTED]
Cell [REDACTED]