



MEMORANDUM for RECORD

Millicent Hill
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation

Date: May 24, 2018
Person Contacted: Leroy Miller
NTSB Accident Number: ERA18FA149 – Commerce, GA

This investigator interviewed Mr. Miller by telephone. He reported the following:

He stated he keeps his airplane in the same hangar the pilot does. He stated the pilot preflighted the airplane and told him he had fuel in the header tank, not the wing tanks. He saw the pilot verify the fuel quantity, he also checked the gasgator and did not find any fuel contamination. The pilot departed on a 10 minute flight, when he returned to land at the airport the engine rpm's were going up and down. He said the pilot landed normally and began taxiing back towards the hangar but turned back towards the runway. The second takeoff was slow, "he barely made it above the trees, the airplane stalled, the right wing dropped, then the nose dropped." He reported hearing "the engine sputtering" before impacting trees.

He stated the accident airplane had a modified starter, a Dewalt power drill, that allowed the pilot to start the engine from the cockpit. He stated when he was helping the pilot after the accident, the starter motor was running, he believed the pilot was trying to restart the engine before the accident.

He reported fuel was leaking when he got to the airplane to help the pilot, about 1 to 2 gallons. He stated the pilot typically wears hearing aids but was not wearing them that day. He thought it was possible that the pilot did not hear the engine rpm fluctuating during the previous landing.

He stated the pilot always used a checklist and had previously given him flight instruction.

May 21, 2018

Howard and I arrived at the hanger on Settlement Rd between 6:30pm - 7:00pm. Howard and I took the plane out of the hanger and Howard preflighted the plane. Howard told me that the wing tanks were empty and the header tank had fuel. Howard started the engine up and taxied to the west to clear runway of any objects. Howard done his run up on the west end and then took off to the east which took about 700-800 feet to get airborne. He had a steep climb out at a very slow speed. He headed east for about 10 mins. and on the return to the strip I could hear the plane's engine RPM's were going up and down, but touch down looked normal. Howard turned around and taxied back east toward the hanger, but before reaching the hanger he did a 180 and I noticed the pilot's door was open. He immediately throttled up and took off to the west and got about approximately 50-75 feet above the runway and was headed straight for the trees. At that time the plane seemed to slow and he managed to get the plane just above the tree line and then the plane stalled, the right wing dropped and nosed down and crashed into the tree line.

At crash site a lot of fuel look like it was leaking from the left wing. There is a man that lives near the west end of the runway said he heard the plane sputtering as it approached the tree line.