

Braxton Robertson

08/04/2018

N87000

Detailed Written Statement

On the day of the accident flight, the pilot in command, Braxton C. Robertson arrived at Lakewood Airport (N12) on August 4, 2018 at approximately 9:30 AM. The flight was conducted under the operation of 14 CFR Part 91. The pilot in command holds a Commercial Pilot, single engine land rating, issued 04/27/2017. On the day of the accident the pilot in command was a holder of a first-class medical issued on 05/02/2018. The pilot in command's last FAA practical flight exam was for the certificate of Flight Instructor issued 08/16/2017, the next bi-annual flight review required will be due on 08/30/2019. The Pilot in Command began a pre-flight of N87000, a 1974 Bellanca 7GCAA. The pilot in command reviewed the forecasted weather including but not limited to, temperature and dew point. The fuel tanks were confirmed full during the preflight inspection. The fuel was sampled via the fuel sumps for contaminants, none was found. During the sampling process the fuel was observed to have a blue color. The engine oil level was observed to be adequate for flight. At approximately 10:00 AM, the aircraft engine was started and taxied to runway 24. During the engine run-up, the operation of each magneto was checked, and the carb heat function was verified as well as the procedures recommended by the manufacture were followed before flight. During the magneto operation check, a loss of 100 RPM was noted for each magneto. The carburetor operation was also verified with a normal loss in RPM. The takeoff was conducted on runway 24 and left traffic was selected for a banner pick-up. During the first banner pick-up, the engine ran smoothly as full throttle was advanced. The aircraft climbed away in-tow normally. The route started at the airport with a south bound heading along the back-bay side of the shore to Beach Haven. Here the aircraft was turned to a northbound heading along the shore with the intention to fly to Seaside Park. However, the route intended to be flown was unable to be completed due to pop-up thunderstorms that were moving over the area. The aircraft was turned northwest bound and flown back towards the Lakewood Airport without finishing the route as planned. On this first flight of the day, the aircraft was flown for approximately two hours at low cruise power

between 2000 and 2300 RPM. Maneuvering the aircraft for left downwind to runway 24, a position report was given on the common traffic advisory frequency with intentions to fly inbound for a banner drop-off on the right side of the field. As the aircraft was turned onto final, the aircraft was at an altitude of approximately 500 feet MSL. The throttle was brought to idle as the aircraft started a descent to the right side of runway 24 towards the banner drop-off field at the end of the runway. On approach, everything was verified to be operating normally. The aircraft gained momentum and was pitched up to level off at the same height of the trees to the right of the aircraft. When the aircraft was pitched up, full throttle was simultaneously added in an attempt to start the climb out phase of the banner drop-off. When full throttle was advanced, the engine did not respond as expected. The engine continued to operate but produced very limited power while making abnormal combustion sounds. The mixture was quickly checked to be at full rich and the throttle was verified to be in the full forward position. The banner tow release was then actuated, releasing the banner. The aircraft was at a low altitude and slow airspeed during this time. The pilot in command determined that at this altitude it would not have been possible to maneuver the aircraft away from the nearby obstacles. The Aircraft was maneuvered by pitching down to avoid a loss of control and continued with a forced landing straight and ahead. The aircraft continued to experience impact with small pine trees and the ground shortly after. After impact, the pilot in command has no memory of any further action done to the aircraft.