



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Eastern Region – Ashburn, Virginia

RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Who: Brittany Whitener

When: January 30, 2019

RE: ERA19FA070, Blairsville, GA, D/A: 12/19/2018

In a phone conversation, Mrs. Whitener stated that the purpose of the flight was to go see Christmas lights. This was her first time ever flying in a small, general aviation airplane. She and the two other female passengers worked at a medical facility together and the pilot owned a pharmacy in town. The flight was organized the day before the accident (December 18, 2018) with an intended meeting time at the airport of 6:30pm. Mrs. Whitener said she was a little late getting to the airport, but when she arrived, the pilot was with the airplane in a hangar. The other passengers were there too. She watched the pilot walk around the airplane checking the ailerons and fuel. He also rotated the propeller. The pilot then mentioned something about weight and balance. It was decided that Mrs. Whitener would sit in the front and the other two passengers would sit in the back. They pulled the airplane out of the hangar and got onboard.

Mrs. Whitener said the pilot started the engine and they taxied down to the runway, stopped, and the pilot pulled out a booklet. The pilot told Mrs. Whitener that he had to do a pre-takeoff check prior to every flight. Mrs. Whitener recalled hearing the engine rev up a few times. Once that was complete, they departed.

Mrs. Whitener said the takeoff was normal and they flew over to Blueridge. The pilot showed them the lights from different cities in the area, but they could not see any Christmas lights. They then proceeded back to the airport and Mrs. Whitener could see the lighted runway in front of them. During the approach, the pilot was telling Mrs. Whitener that he needed to hit "markers" on the GPS. After hitting the first "marker" the pilot said that he had to do something before he hit the second "marker", but she wasn't exactly sure what that meant. She said the pilot was relaxed and "content." He didn't seem to have any concerns about the flight at all. The engine was running fine and there were no unusual noises in the cockpit. Everything appeared normal. The next thing Mrs. Whitener remembered was tasting blood and seeing rescue personnel. She asked them to call her husband and they did. The next thing she remembered was waking up in the hospital.

Mrs. Whitener said she did not recall the airplane hitting trees or the impact. She described the weather as dark and “really cold, but not windy.” They only had one little bump of turbulence when they were approaching the airport.

Leah D. Read, Sr. ASI