

Federal Aviation Administration



Orlando Florida, 32819

Cheryl King

Aviation Safety Inspector

On September 27, 2018, at approximately 1300 hrs., Dan Beard (pilot) and myself, David Fowler (Owner/builder of Titan T-51, N154DF), met at my hanger at the Valkaria Airport, (X59) to discuss our next test flight. Airplane was in 40 hr. phase 1 testing. After this briefing we rolled the plane out, did a preflight, and Dan cranked the engine up. (Before Dan's arrival I checked all fluids. Fuel was 15+ gals. measured directly by sounding the tank with a marked stick). Winds were out of the northwest, so Dan taxied to the southeast corner of the airport. I followed him about halfway in my truck, again no indication that the engine wasn't properly performing. While Dan proceeded to the southeast end of the runway I turned around and drove to the northwest end of the runway, parked, and intended to watch the take off. Dan waited for one plane to land and another to take off before he could take the runway. When he did I heard the engine accelerate and saw the airplane lift off. I did notice that when the plane was a little more than halfway down the runway, Dan had not retracted the landing gear. This immediately caused me concern. As the plane went directly overhead of my position, he couldn't have been more than 200 or 300 feet above ground. The engine still sounded okay to me, but I noticed an almost continual white smoke trail coming from, I believe, the port side exhaust stack. The smoke was almost like Morse code in that it had little puffs of black smoke equally spaced within it. As it passed over my head it passed over the hangars behind me and began to turn to the East as if attempting to return to the airport. It was obviously losing altitude. When it got down behind the hangar I lost sight of it.

This statement offered by

David Fowler



Indianapolis Florida, 