

Polk County Gyro incident of 10/3/2019

Inspection of aircraft N463JW

Back ground: On October 3rd at approximately 1130 EST, N463JW experienced an engine power loss and the pilot performed an emergency landing. The pilot chose a seemingly appropriate forced landing area which turned out to be a lake of mud approximately 50 feet deep. The approach was normal, but due to the surface condition the aircraft rolled slightly upon touchdown. The rotor and prop struck the mud and stopped. The pilot was not injured, and was eventually rescued by the Coast Guard. Due to the location of the forced landing area, the aircraft was not able to be inspected until extracted.

On October 16th, FAA Inspectors Dwight Greenlund and Aerial Rodriguez of the Orlando FSDO assisted Rotax engine specialist Jordan Paskevich in conducting an inspection of the aircraft. The location of the inspection was the Silverlight hangar facility at [REDACTED] Zephyrhills Florida, 33524.

A detailed inspection of the aircraft showed no damage to the engine. The oil was slightly over-serviced, but no other irregularities. A new propeller was installed, and the engine start attempted. After several failed start attempts, the fuel system was inspected. The fuel was saturated with a high percentage of water. Additionally, the fuel was obviously contaminated. Approximately 14 gallons of fuel was drained from the 16 gallon tank. Using a water strainer, approximately ½ gallon of water was present from the 14 gallons. The fuel was replaced with clean fuel, and the engine started and ran with no further problems.

Damage to the rotor and propeller were consistent with contacting the ground. The mast was bent due to the torque of the rotor blades striking the ground. The fuselage was seemingly bent, possibly from the slight ground roll upon landing. Aside from the noted damage, the aircraft seemed in relatively good condition.

The pilot stated he obtained the fuel from a gas station near the North Tampa airport where he keeps his aircraft. He mentioned he used that specific gas station frequently, and had not had any problems with fuel in the past. The aircraft had been running for approximately 45 minutes prior to the engine power loss. The pilot could not recall if the propeller was still turning during his emergency decent and landing.

Though the pilot possesses only a student certificate, he has the appropriate instructor endorsement for solo cross country flight. Additionally, no irregularities were noted in the maintenance records provided.

Dwight Greenlund

Aviation Safety Inspector

Orlando FSDO