

Inspectors Statement

My Name is Cornelius J. Baker, I am an Aviation Safety Inspector assigned to the West Columbia Flight Standards District Office.

On Friday May 21, 2021 at 1930, I received a call from Front Line Manager (FLM) Petrossian. Piper Navajo (PA31) N575BC had crashed departing Myrtle Beach International Airport (MYR) at 1825 local. The sole person on board was the pilot and he was fatally injured. I was asked to accompany Inspector Jackson for training purposes. Being that it is a three hour drive and already late, it was decided to wait until the next morning. Contacted the MYR Fire Chief and discussed arrangements and the removal of the pilot. Due to the damage and fire they were unable to find the pilot and will wait until in the morning to try and remove him. Contacted the Fixed Base Operator (FBO) to see if they serviced the aircraft prior to takeoff. Spoke with Irene Smith with Beach Aviation Services [REDACTED] and was told they did service the aircraft with 167.5 gallons of avgas. I requested and received a copy of the fuel receipt. The fuel truck was being tested and quarantined until released by NTSB.

On Saturday May 22, 2021, I met Inspector Jackson at the office and we drove to the accident site located near 3383 Socastee Blvd in Myrtle Beach. Arrived on scene about 10:30 AM and met with the Fire Chief, the assistant Coroner and law enforcement. Inspector Jackson and I split up and tried to interview witnesses. Speaking with a group of home owners one stated her neighbor saw the aircraft before it crashed and she took me to her house. I spoke with Rosy Garcia [REDACTED], Ms. Garcia stated she was standing in her driveway, on Bellamy Lane which is west of the accident site, and said I was in the Air Force and hear airplanes around here a good bit, what caught her attention was the sputtering of the aircraft engines. She knew it didn't sound right. When she saw the aircraft it was low and the wings were wiggling like the pilot was fighting to control the airplane into the field. It then nose over and went straight into the ground. After a few seconds it exploded.

We were told by the Fire Chief a passing airport police officer stopped and as he got to the door of the aircraft it exploded.

I walked the perimeter of the accident site and took pictures of the debris field and main wreckage. As I was finishing up my picture taking a white Ford pickup truck pulled up and the passenger got out and crossed police yellow tape. I instructed them to stop, but they kept coming and I met them just outside the burned grass area. It was the pilots son, daughter and their significant others. Then the pilot's girlfriend and a close friend of hers arrived. I allowed them to walk the perimeter until I was completed with the picture taking. Bradley Harper the son told me the number one squawk going into maintenance was what it took to get the aircraft off the ground. He said he has flown the aircraft and it took both hands and full nose up trim ever since the first time they flew it. He stated his dad said he was looking forward to getting the aircraft back with elevator control fixed. I asked him why they had flown it that way for so long. Bradley stated it had been getting worse lately. They spent some time at the aircraft and debris field then departed the area.

Due to not being able to depart the accident site, we requested the Director of Maintenance (DOM) Deric Ingalls of Executive Helijet Aviation to bring the logbooks and the last maintenance event records to us. Executive Helijet Aviation maintenance department is based on 14 CFR Part 43 shop. Before the DOM arrived Mr. Charles Klinger [REDACTED], stopped by the accident site and stated, he was sitting on his patio which overlooks a lake and had a clear view of the sky. He noticed a small aircraft fly by with its landing gear down flying about 50 miles an hour and waddling back and forth. Then it went straight down and few seconds later he saw a plume smoke come up. Mr. Klinger said he couldn't hear the engines but knew it was a twin engine aircraft. As I was completing the interview of Mr. Klinger the DOM arrived. I questioned Mr. Ingalls about what was performed on the aircraft during this maintenance event. Mr. Ingalls stated it was an annual inspection and that it had been there for several months. I asked for the inspection invoice and reviewed it, the other squawk was for the removal and reinstallation of the flight controls for painting. Mr. Ingalls was asked if the elevator control was squawked by the pilot. Mr. Ingalls was not aware of a control issue with the elevator. I asked Mr. Ingalls then he would be surprised if someone said that was the number one squawk to be repaired during this maintenance event. Mr. Ingalls said yes he would, because Mr. Harper gave him the squawk list and he was not aware of any problems with it. We thank Mr. Ingalls and he departed the area.

A short time later the insurance company representative (David) for the aircraft owner arrived and I escorted him into the accident site and allowed him to take pictures. We discussed the problem of not having any security at the accident site and he said he would try and get some help. Heidi Kemner arrived from the NTSB and we explained everything we had found so far. We received a call from the Fire Chief who stated the ELT was still going off and asked if we could shut it off. After a brief search and a few panels removed from the tail section, it was located and secured. Ms. Kemner laid out the plans for the removal and inspections with the manufacturers. It was decided we return to Columbia and Inspector Jackson return the next day.

Cornelius J. Baker
Aviation Safety Inspector
SO-FSDO-13

Witness Garcia

Write a description for your map.

Witness Garcia

N575BC Accident site

Google Earth
Legend

© 2021 Google



100 ft

Write a description for your map.

© 2021 Google

17

Witness Klinger

3000 ft

