

N8788D accident narrative

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At 15:30 lcl on 10/08/2020, ASI Seltsam-Wilps was informed by the ROC of an accident involving N8788D at PYM. The aircraft was a PA-18-150 which was landing on Runway 24, and ground looped, ending up on its back. 2 POB, minor injuries, taken for treatment by local EMT's. MassDOT Inspector Mihaley was enroute to obtain photos. After collecting multiple photos of the accident scene from Inspector Mihaley, I granted permission for the aircraft to be moved to a secure hangar on the airport as it was blocking the only operational runway. NTSB was notified.

On 10/9/2020 I travelled to PYM to inspect N8788D. I also met with one of the Maintenance personnel (Mitch) from Alpha One who provided the maintenance records. Significant damage was noted. The aircraft had flipped on its back after loss of control on landing. The Asst. Airport Manager, Matt Cardillo was also present. No video was available of the accident. Photos of the aircraft in-situ were obtained by Drew Mihaley of MassDOT Aeronautics who responded the day of the accident.

The aircraft substantial sustained damage to the wings, lift struts, empennage and vertical tail as a result of the flip. There was impact damage noted on the right main gear, with some yellow paint transfer. The aircraft apparently swerved off the runway and struck a taxiway light, causing it to nose over. The cabin showed evidence of crushing. The right wingtip sustained damage and the spinner and prop did as well. The prop showed evidence of S-bending. Engine mounts were found to be buckled and bent. Substantial crushing damage to vertical stabilizer and evidence that the empennage was structurally compromised by buckling were also observed. All control continuity was checked, no pre-impact abnormalities noted for the aircraft.

I called the pilot, John Sannizzaro at [REDACTED] He described the events as follows:

They were conducting a fire patrol for the County of Plymouth, finishing a 2 hr flight. The back-seater, Ken Bunting [REDACTED] needed to land to take a break. The pilot was aware of the forecasted winds and had been watching the conditions at PYM by checking the AWOS throughout the flight. PYM was using runway 24, since the intersecting runway was closed that day due to construction. The winds were consistently 300 degrees at 12-15 knots with gusts of 20. He said he had a few other options for airports to land at, but elected to try it, as it did not seem outside of his personal limits. As he approached the airport, he could see and hear a local PC-12 taxiing and getting its

clearance to depart. He talked to the pilot of the PC-12 and gave him room to depart. He did not feel that vortices were a factor as the strong crosswind would have pushed them off the runway. Final approach was done with ½ flaps and 75 mph approach speed. He touched down mains first, with the tail high. The aircraft began to weathervane to the right on roll out, then he applied too much rudder and it swerved left. The pilot then decided to apply full power and go-around. At that moment, the pilot described that he believed he struck a runway light with the main gear which caused a large nose forward pitch. He believed he was actually airborne at the time he hit the light as there were no tire marks immediately next to the light. He felt the mains impact the ground and the prop dug in, causing it to pitch forward onto its back. All occupants were conscious after impact. A mechanic, Mitch, ran over to them and helped them both get out, and secured the fuel and electrical switches.

The pilot has 1600 hrs in tailwheel aircraft with 1400 hrs in his own RV-7 which he built in 2014. He had approximately 25 hrs in the PA-18 at the time of the accident. He said there were absolutely no mechanical issues with the aircraft and this incident was entirely pilot error. He was completely aware of the local wind conditions and opted to “give it a try”

Tom Maher, airport manager of Plymouth Airport described the light that was struck as up to standards, having failed precisely the way it was designed to do on impact. There were no abnormalities with the light or its attachment.

Weather at PYM (accident occurred at 1930Z):

KPYM 081852Z AUTO 27015KT 10SM CLR 17/01 A2983 RMK A02 SLP100 T01670006

KPYM 081952Z AUTO 29013G20KT 10SM CLR 17/M01 A2984 RMK A02 SLP103
T01671006

KPYM 082052Z AUTO 28012G21KT 10SM CLR 16/00 A2986 RMK A02 SLP110
T01610000
53011