



MEMORANDUM for RECORD

Ralph E. Hicks
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Date: April 2, 2021
Correspondence from: Michael Pupek, FAA Atlanta FSDO and Ray Cason (Pilot of N3299)
NTSB Accident Number: ERA21LA167 – Vienna, Georgia

The following written pilot statement was provided by Mr. Cason to the Mr. Pupek via email:

“Called Cordele AWOS@ 11:02 AM March 31, to get weather report. Two reports that I am most interested in are the temperature/dewpoint and the wind direction/speed. There was enough spread in temperature/dewpoint that fog was not a concern. The wind was reported to be 240 degrees at 9 knots. I was good to go. My ground guy could not come to work due to wife's doctor appointment, so I was mixing and loading the airplane. There was an urgency expressed to get the crop sprayed (watermelons) with a plant protector due to the dropping temperature over the next two nights. I was not familiar with the chemical to be used so the first load was very light. While ferrying, I noticed smoke from a woods fire indicating the wind was almost from due west (270 degrees). After the first load, I continued to increase the following loads by a few acres until the last load which was lighter due to a change in wind direction and speed. During the entire time I had sprayed this loads no gust of wind was experienced only direction and speed had changed.

During the ground run for takeoff on the last load, it took longer for the tail to get up which was expected hence the lighter load. The tail never got on the "step". I was approaching a point that I was normally on the step and crossing a ditch that runs east/west. Shortley before reaching this point, the nose was trying to veer left. I applied right brake to correct but it had little to no effect, and I was at a point of no return. Due to a lack of flying speed, my only option currently was to try and jump the ditch. In doing so the main gears hit the north embankment and was snatched from airframe. the airplane skidded and came to a stop. I exited the aircraft and headed for my truck. While

walking, I called Cordele AWOS to see if there were gust reported. According to the report, there were gust of 20 knots. Also, serval attempts were made to contact the farmer that I was spraying for and who is part owner of 3299X. After several attempts, contact was made with farmer/owner and I informed him of what had happened. Before returning to strip, I stopped at a store to buy a cold drink. While returning to strip, I noticed smoke over the wood line. As I was turning into driveway of strip, the plane was engulfed in flames. Another one of the owners was there and had called 911."