



MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Aaron McCarter
Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation

Date: April 30, 2021
Person Contacted: Pilot Stephen Michaels
Company Representative Attending Interview: Gregory Winton
NTSB Accident Number: ERA21LA193

Narrative:

Purpose of flight was to take three employees of Haugland up to Williamson-Sodus Airport Williamson/Sodus, New York (SDC)

There were five (5) total people on board.

He has been employed by Haugland as a pilot for one year.

After departing ISP and maneuvering around and under class B airspace, he resumed heading and increased his altitude up to 2,300 or 2,700 ft for the flight to Pennridge Airport (CKZ) Perkasio, Pennsylvania, to pick up the 3rd passenger. He avoids the cardinal altitudes, because that's where everybody is flying.

After picking up the passenger, they departed Pennridge about 0730. The first leg from ISP to CKZ was just under an hour. The second leg from CKZ to SDC was going to be about 2 hours.

As they approached the Susquehanna River; There were no touch and goes performed on the water. He considered it in order to provide the passengers with a nice experience.

He described the event about 10 minutes before and leading up to the accident. He was following the river and scouting a suitable location on the water to perform a touch-and-go. Winds were from the north. There were three possible straights that were possible for a touch-and-go. On the first straight there were a bunch of sandbars. On the second straight, the water looked better, but he didn't want to gamble. He reiterated that he just wanted to do a touch and go or two because he wanted to keep everyone happy. He tried too hard to make it a pleasurable flight. If he was to do it again, I would not descend below 3,000 ft.

On the third attempt, there was almost a mile and a half run, they followed the river, and came around a bend in the river, immediately before impact, he saw the wire and impacted it. "I'm always looking for wires" There was nothing on the charts.

The wire was perpendicular to the coastline, directly across the river. Their altitude was about 100 feet above the water at impact. Reiterated there were no marker balls, and nothing was on the sectional chart. He thought it would have been marked somewhere.

After the impact. He described the sound and feel. "Hit the wires" leveled the wings and climbed; he wanted to get to altitude because "altitude is your friend." The airplane was climbing fine and flying. He was feeling the plane out and did not realize what was going on yet. He tried to assess what was going on with the airplane and decided there was nothing that was going to ground the plane at this point.

The plane was flying, had full power, and the flight continued north towards Sodus. He asked the passengers how important the meeting was. The airplane wasn't feeling 100% and the passengers stated that it was not important. He gave them the option of continuing to SDC (30 minutes) or returning to ISP (45 minutes) He decided to return to ISP because of the runway length and services provided.

Describing the damage, one passenger sitting on the right side saw that the elevator was bent and saw that there was a wire dragging and looked like a piece of cable that we hit. There was a piece sticking out of the top of the wing that they could not see.

When asked about three possible choices, (Continue to the meeting, fly back to ISP or land at a suitable airport) He described his thought process. He did not feel as though he needed to land as soon as practical. The airplane did not feel like he had to get on the ground as soon as possible. It wasn't an emergency.

The flight was about 160 miles and 45 minutes after they turned around. There was a substantial tailwind back to ISP. He thought it was best to go back to ISP. There was a substantial tailwind on the way back; he elected not to land at a suitable airport along the route of flight and thought it was best to go back to ISP.

Any photographs or video taken of the event? He saw a couple of pictures after it was in the hanger. But he was not aware of any recordings or photographs taken inflight. He reiterated it was not going to be a landing, it was going to be a touch and go.

What was briefed to the passengers? The priority was flying. He asked if everybody was, ok? And asked them to assess the condition of the airplane and asked them about the meeting. He reiterated that he did not want to go to Sodus, because there were no facilities there; that's why he elected to return to Islip. The demeanor of the passengers was ok. They were helpful, they were "champs." There was one passenger who looked frightened. He looked less than unhappy. The other two appeared to be ok.

He is unaware of a Haugland aviation operations manual and when asked about any kind of safety policy or manual indigenous to the aviation side of the operation, he was not aware.

When asked if flying low or doing touch and goes is a normal occurrence and how many times has this been done in the past. He stated that seaplane culture is almost always done down low and did not understand or respond to the question. When asked how many times have you shown the passengers a nice view on the water at this company over the past year? He stated that the mistake was that he did not do it in his back yard. He did it in unfamiliar territory. When asked a third time, how many times has he performed this maneuver with Haugland passengers in the past? He did not answer. When asked a fourth time, he stated he did not have a number.

When asked if Haugland passengers ever requested the pilot perform a touch and go, he did not know. He doesn't recall if a passenger ever requested and asked what was meant by "passenger" He was asked a second time if anyone ever made a request and he responded "what's a true" request and that he did not know. He subsequently asked for guidance from his representative (Mr. Winton) who attended the interview. Winton asked the same question and he responded "Yes" Passengers have requested touch and goes.

Statement from IIC; there is no operations manual, no safety policy and no safety manual. Directed a question to Winston about possible safety corrective action to which he agreed to discuss offline. Mentioned that it doesn't necessarily have to be an SMS (Safety Management System), but they (Haugland) need to start something.

The pilot has about 7,700 hours total time and he is an ATP. Most of his time is in the Caravan, about 6,000 hours and a majority of that time is float time.

We reviewed the investigation process when asked if he had any questions.

He stated that the feel of the airplane felt like it was a little out of trim. It felt a little heavier on one side and there was no vibration in the airframe/engine.

[END]



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Date: April 30, 2021
Person Contacted: Copilot Matthew Conrad
Company Representative Attending Interview: Gregory Winton
NTSB Accident Number: ERA21LA193

Narrative:

The purpose of the flight was to take passengers from Islip to Sodus.

When asked what he does and his job title, he stated, he works radios in IFR situations and he's "just kind of there." He had no business in Sodus. When asked again why he was there, he responded that that insurance requires a 2-pilot crew. "I kind of go along for the ride." "I'm not really a pilot flying."

When asked if he was a pilot, he responded Yes sir. He is a single engine, multi engine commercial pilot with instrument rating. He was sitting in the right front seat.

They departed Islip, went straight to Pennridge, then proceeded to Sodus. About halfway to their destination, the pilot decided duck into the Susquehanna and "carved" through the river. They struck some powerlines, climbed out and assessed the damage. They thought it was best to go back to Islip.

They didn't make multiple approaches to the river. They were looking for good water. It was not a down up and down up situation, with multiple approaches.

It was the pilot's decision, based on if the passengers wanted to fly low. They were asked if they wanted to go exploring. Seemed like the passengers may have requested it, but he truly doesn't remember. He frequently turns off the cabin headsets.

As they were looking for water to perform the touch and go, they made a right turn and almost immediately impacted the wires. He did not see the wires until they were right there. They came out of the bank. "It was pretty quick"; It was really, really quick."

The wire crossed the river. The wire was not marked, no safety balls or markers. Altitude was about 200 feet.

When asked if he was hired by Haugland to be a pilot? And what his primary job was, he responded, "Right now my primary job is to be a safety pilot."

After the collision, they discussed the condition the airplane, the damage, and how the airplane was flying. They had a working powerplant. Decision to possibly continue to Sodus but decided to go back to Islip because of runway length and emergency services available. It seemed like the best option.

Regarding any decision to land as soon as possible or practical, at the time it seemed like they made a good decision. "I don't want to Monday morning quarterback." During the in-flight damage assessment, he definitely saw damage to the right aileron and possibly the tip of the flap. He was certain of the damage to the aileron.

The flight characteristics felt pretty good, very good. It made getting back to Islip easy. The airplane flew normally. It was a little off, but it flew very well.

He was unaware if anyone on board had taken photographs or video of the event or afterwards.

What was communicated to the passengers after: "Hard for me to answer." Was more focused on what the airplane was doing. He tuned the passengers out. There was some discussion about their meeting and not making it. While describing the demeanor/behavior of the passengers when he went back to the cabin, he stated that everyone was more serious. Nobody was chuckling or laughing. It wasn't light.

Did passengers offer any opinion on what they wanted to do? He responded not to me. Did the passengers asked the pilot about landing sooner at another airport? The passengers seemed happy with the decision to go back to Islip.

Was there any discussion with the pilot from a CRM standpoint about corrective action and what should be done? They decided it was not an emergency and the airplane was still flying. The engine was operating.

Is flying low or doing touch and goes normal? It's a part 91 operation; sometimes we let people out, do some touch and goes- It's not uncommon. He just got on full time last month. He has performed about 15/20 touch and goes since he's been with the company.

He is unaware of a Haugland aviation operations manual and when asked about any kind of safety publication, safety policy, procedure or safety culture items; he does not know of any.

[END]