



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: July 25, 2021
Person Contacted: Damian C. Davis
NTSB Accident Number: ERA21LA297

Narrative:

Mr. Damian Davis was contacted thru the NTSB ROC on July 24, 2021, at 0730 EDT. He provided a cell phone of [REDACTED] and an e-mail address of [REDACTED]

He indicated that the airplane is registered in the name of his construction company, and the FAA paperwork for his purchase was submitted. He had the pink temporary registration in the airplane at the time. His airplane was equipped with two Garmin G5's and a JPI engine monitor, although an SD card was not in either slot of the G5.

He was flying from Asheville Regional Airport (AVL), Asheville, North Carolina, to Statesville Regional Airport (SVH), Statesville, North Carolina, for a practical examination with a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) designated pilot examiner for his private pilot certificate which was scheduled for July 24, 2021.

With respect to the accident flight he departed from runway 17 at AVL and made a left turn to intercept a 029° heading. He intended to fly around the mountain ridge and was instructed by FAA air traffic control to stay below 6,500 ft mean sea level (msl)¹. About 30 seconds later, while flying at 4,800 ft msl and climbing to 5,500 ft msl, the engine went to idle rpm. He trimmed for best glide speed of 68 mph and noted he had trouble maintaining it exactly because of the gusty conditions. He immediately performed the emergency procedures checklist by verifying the mixture and throttle were full forward, checked carb heat, verified the fuel shutoff valve was on. When he pulled the throttle out it felt like the engine was "choking." He also checked the mags and that did not restore power. He made a hard left turn, declared a Mayday, and reported his engine was going out or he was losing his engine.

¹ According to LiveATC.net audio recording from AVL ATCT, at 23:05 elapsed time of the recording which began at 2200 UTC, the controller instructed the pilot to maintain at or below 5,500 ft msl, which he acknowledged.

He looked for a place to land and at that time was about 3 miles from AVL and flying at 2,000 ft msl. He reported encountering gusty conditions. He looked for potential landing sites on a nearby river, and Lake Julian. He knew he could not reach AVL and noted the nearby coal-ash field. He maneuvered for the field entering downwind, base and final. He noted powerlines and lowered the flaps 20° then secured the airplane electrically. He touched down and because the coal-ash was soft kept the nose landing gear off the ground as long as he could. The nose landing gear contacted the soft ground and separated then the airplane nosed over.

He was asked the following questions:

Explain the carb heat check?

He checked it to make sure it was in. He did not pull it as part of his emergency procedures. He added that the airplane has an engine monitor and after the engine rpm decreased he checked the monitor and “All” cylinder head temperatures were fine.

Explain his mag check?

He initially verified the ignition switch was on “both”, then turned it to the left and then right positions, then back to the “both” position with no change.

Did the propeller ever stop?

No. the engine stayed at idle and at touchdown was operating at 740 rpm.

What was the fuel load on takeoff?

He had 16 gallons of 100 low lead (100LL) fuel.

Did he visually check the fuel tanks before flight?

Yes. He added 100LL fuel. He checked the fuel quantity by the gauges, a wooden paint stick with markings, and finally with a plastic tube with graduation markings. The total capacity of each tank is 26 gallons, but each tank has an unusable amount of 1.75 gallons. Although his airplane has a STC for use of autofuel, in the past he noted an issue with ethanol in the ethanol free fuel, so he began using 100LL.

Explain the restraint he was wearing?

He added shoulder harness to his airplane and was wearing the lapbelt and shoulder harness.

When the engine lost power explain the position of the mixture control?

The mixture control was full rich.

Did he have a flight plan filed?

He had a VFR flight plan filed and activated with Foreflight, and he also had VFR flight following. He carries 2 iPads, a fully charged iPhone.

Has there been any recent work done to the engine?

No. The last annual inspection was performed in March or April 2021.

Is the airplane insured?

Yes. Through AOPA Assured Partners who insure through Old Republic Aerospace.

The call ended at 0805 EDT.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on July 25, 2021. He did not reply. During a phone call with him on August 16, 2021 at 1409 EDT, he confirmed he did receive the DRAFT document and reviewed it when received. He did not think there was anything that needed to be changed but he would re-read the document later today and would let me know if any changes are needed. He did not reply. The FINAL digest was e-mailed to him on August 18, 2021.