

Around 1:10 p.m. on Wednesday, July 12th, I was walking towards the FBO at Patz Field (KEBA). At this time the pilot of N16071 started the engine and was taxiing on the ramp. Ross Anderson and I noticed a roughness/skip/miss in the engine as he was taxiing. The pilot proceeded onto, and back taxied runway 11. At the time we believed he was just taxiing to the end of the runway to perform a runup and possibly clear out the engine. I proceeded into the FBO. We were not outside for the entire time the airplane was taxiing up the runway. A minute or two later, from inside the FBO, I saw something go by the window and stepped outside to see that N16071 was airborne and proceeding with a takeoff. At this point the aircraft was about even with the FBO building, or possibly just a little further down the runway. I can't recall the sound of the engine, but the plane was visibly struggling to hold any altitude at first glance. At this time, I yelled for Ross to come outside, and he in turn notified Randy Haralson that he may want to step outside as well. From my vantage point during all of this, N16071 never had enough altitude to clear the trees that would have eventually been directly ahead of him off the end of runway 11, but I also noted the plane drifted to the northeastern side of the runway, I presume to stay clear of the trees for as long as possible.

At some point off the end of runway 11, I saw the airplane descend. At that time I couldn't tell if the airplane stalled or if the pilot was performing an emergency landing, but the aircraft did drop out of view, and ultimately crashed.

Carson Floyd

[REDACTED]

July 18, 2023

As requested, I am providing this statement concerning the accident that occurred on July 12, 2023 at Elbert County Airport involving N16071.

I observed the pilot running the airplane on the ramp. The engine was running very rough. He taxied from the ramp to runway 11. Myself and two other pilots noted that the engine was still running rough as he taxied past the FBO. He taxied into position and applied power. The airplane was accelerating very slowly and still running badly. He continued the takeoff roll, not rotating until after passing abeam the terminal building. The airplane appeared to be unable to gain sufficient altitude. Crossing the departure end of the runway, he turned slightly left to avoid a stand of trees off the end of the runway. After avoiding the trees, the airplane nosed up slightly, then descended below the trees and out of our sight.

Please let me know if you need anything further.

Randy Haralson
Manager, Elbert County Airport

Upon arrival at the Elbert County airport on 12 July, myself and Carson Floyd had a brief interaction with the pilot of N16071. We then started walking to the FBO as he was starting the plane. We noticed a hard skip coming from the plane. Just before we entered the FBO we saw the plane back taxi runway 11 with the very obvious skip still coming from the engine.

While we were in the FBO talking with Mr. Haralson, N16071 began a departure on runway 11. Carson ran out the door to look and called back for me to watch. When I got out of the door the plane was approximately 3/4 of the way down runway 11 with an altitude around 40-50 feet. I called back for Randy and he came out to see the departure as well.

The plane never gained enough altitude to clear the trees. The pilot banked the plane to the left to clear the trees off the end of runway 11 while still holding the nose high in an attempt to gain altitude and followed the opening around the tree line. At this point we saw the plane dive and we lost sight as he went below the ground on the departure end of 11. Mr. Haralson left in his truck to go to the scene and Carson and I followed in my truck. The pilot was out of the plane and walking around when we reached the scene of the crash.

Ross M Anderson