

Inspector Statement

Accident N98134

I was notified by my Front Line Manager that there had been an accident involving N98134 a PA-28-140 on July 24, 2023 at approximately 1630 local time.

The pilot provided the following information. The aircraft had departed the Stanly County Airport on a local dual instruction flight. The aircraft was heading for the practice area north of the airport. This was the first flight of the day for the aircraft. There was approximately 34 gallons of fuel on board the aircraft as checked by the instructor. The Pilot-In-Command stated that the run-up was normal. The takeoff and initial climb were also normal. Shortly after departing the pilots noticed the aircraft was losing power. The instructor took over control and turned back toward the airport. The pilot established the aircraft at best glide speed and called the tower.

I traveled to scene with Inspector Spoon on July 25, 2023. We arrived at the flight school prior to going to the accident scene. During our time at the flight school the aircraft records were reviewed as well as the Pilot in Command's records. I spoke to a witness that was in the pattern at the time of the accident. The witness stated that he heard the aircraft inform the tower that they were returning to the airport with an engine problem. Tower cleared the aircraft to land any runway. The next transmission that was heard was the pilot stating that they were not going to make the airport. The tower asked the aircraft to over fly the scene to see if they could find the aircraft. They were able to locate the aircraft the tower.

Inspector Spoon and I then went to the accident scene. The flight path of the aircraft appeared to take it through the tops of the trees. The trees showed evidence of impact with a portion of the right wing remaining in the top of a tree. The aircraft then appeared to impact the ground in an extremely nose down attitude. The aircraft tail came to rest supported by wire transmission lines. The propeller appeared to be stationary when the aircraft impacted the ground. The instructor pilot was able to extricate himself from the aircraft and placed a call to 911. He then helped to get the student pilot out of the aircraft.

The aircraft tail was supported by the transmission wires. This made it unsafe to approach the cockpit to view switch positions. There was evidence of fuel remaining in the still attached right wing. The left wing was detached from the aircraft and the wing tank had been punctured by a large tree limb. Upon inspection of the tank there was a small amount of fuel remaining in the tank.

I received the Pilot-In-Command's statement on July 31, 2023. After reviewing the statement, I placed a phone call to ask additional questions. The PIC provided additional information concerning this accident. The PIC advised me that the engine did not quit completely and instead rolled back to 1,000 RPM. The PIC made attempts to get the engine to advance above 1,000 RPM by repeatedly moving the throttle, positioning the mixture control to full rich and then leaning it back, placing the carburetor heat to non and then off, and ensuring the fuel pump was on. These attempts did not improve the engine performance. At the completion of these attempts the pilot attempted to execute the emergency landing in the field he had set up for. The pilot stated that he had run out of time to perform all of the emergency procedure to secure the aircraft before the attempted emergency landing.

I received the student's contact information from the Instructor, (PIC). I placed a phone call to the student. The student stated that he did not remember anything from the emergency landing or after. He stated that he did not even remember driving to the airport for his training flight.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce K. Codwise

Aviation Safety Inspector