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FAA Aviation Safety Inspector

AFG-CLT-FSDO-EA68

Date: August 10, 2023

Subject: ERA23LA316, Record of Conversation/Interview

Contact: Mr. Timothy J. Whelan

Mr. Timothy J. Whelan contacted me by phone on August 10, 2023, at 0916 EDT. He called me from [REDACTED]. He provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED].

At the beginning of the interview, I explained to Mr. Whelan my role as FAA Investigator in Charge (IIC) in following up with the initial written statement that he provided on August 1, 2023. In my initial phone call to Mr. Whelan on July 28, 2023, I did explain to Mr. Whelan that I would be sending him an email to request a written statement and with that e-mail I would be attaching a copy of the FAA's Compliance Brochure, also known as the Pilot's Bill of Rights, or PBR. I asked Mr. Whelan if he knew what the PBR was, and he said he knew what the PBR was and that he would provide a statement. In my initial e-mail to Mr. Timothy J. Whelan on July 31, 2023, requesting a written statement, I did provide to him a copy of the FAA's Compliance Program brochure (Pilot's Bill of Rights).

Mr. Whelan provided a home address of [REDACTED] Mooresville, NC [REDACTED]. His date of birth is [REDACTED]. He holds a Private Pilot certificate and is currently pursuing a Commercial Pilot certificate. Mr. Whelan has 207 hours total flight time, and 3.1 hours in a Cessna 152.

Mr. Whelan was asked the following questions by me:

Did you feel rushed prior to and/or during the accident flight on July 27, 2023?

- Mr. Whelan stated, "not really, it felt normal."

Were any performance calculations performed?

- Mr. Whelan stated that he "could not recall, but believed they were done by Jarret". He remembers talking about their weight that day and the aircraft's expected performance, but not specifically if calculations were done.

Were there any engine performance or engine malfunctions that contributed to the accident?

- Mr. Whelan stated that the engine didn't respond the way he thought it would, but that this was only his third time in a Cessna 152, and "he didn't know what to expect."

Did you apply full power on the initial takeoff out of 14A, and did the engine respond accordingly?

- Mr. Whelan stated that he did apply full power during the initial takeoff roll out of 14A, and the aircraft's engine responded with "no issues."

What time did you depart 14A (Lake Norman Airpark) for N92 (Laney's)?

- Noon

Had you been to N92 before the day of the accident?

- Mr. Whelan responded "No, this was my first time at Laney's. Prior to this day, I had not even heard of Laney's."

What were the winds that day?

- 270 @ 5kts

What runway were you approaching at Laney's?

- 13

How far down runway 13 were you when the decision was made to go-around?

- 1/3 to 1/2

You say in your initial statement that once it was confirmed you were going around, you applied full power. Did you apply full power fast?

- Mr. Whelan stated "I applied full power as I was trained to do in order to avoid backfires and harm to the engine. I put the power in normally for a go-around."

Did the engine hesitate?

- He "doesn't believe so"

Were there any problems with the flight controls?

- No

What was your lowest altitude over runway 13?

- 20 feet

What is the length of runway 13 at Laney's?

- Mr. Whelan stated that he "can't remember the exact length but was told it would require a short-field landing."

Were you filming or videotaping this flight?

- No

Were shoulder harnesses used during your flight?

- Mr. Whelan stated "yes", and that he credits them for saving him from greater injury.

What were your injuries?

- Mr. Whelan stated that he sustained a concussion from hitting the instrument panel, as well as a hematoma in the nose, lacerations on the cheek and eyelid, and a swollen face.

What are your lessons learned?

- Mr. Whelan stated, “do not take someone else’s word while flying, even during a flight lesson”. He states he should have done his own Weight and Balance and performance calculations, “even if you know they’ve been done” and to “respect density altitude”.
- “Don’t fly into an airport you’re unfamiliar with, especially to do short field landings without ever seeing the airfield.”
- I asked him if he had anything else to add. Mr. Whelan wanted to stress that “Jarret follows procedures 100% of the time”, and that Jarret was a “great instructor” and that he would continue to fly with Jarret if this all turns out well in the end.

Do you have any questions for me?

- “How will this impact my flying career and how long will this process take?” I told him that I was currently unsure how this would impact his flying career and reminded him of the difference in the FAA investigation versus the NTSB investigation. I mentioned that there was a possibility of follow up action on the part of the FAA and what some of those actions might be (counseling, remedial training, etc.), but that was still to be determined as the investigations conclude. I also told him I didn’t know when he could expect the investigations to conclude and that it could be at least another month or more.

In wrapping up our conversation, it was suggested that he use this accident as a learning opportunity to further progress his own career and safety in aviation, as well as the careers and safety of his fellow students. I stressed to him that he is still very young and that he has the potential to impact numerous people along the way with what he has learned from this unfortunate experience. He said he will use this as an opportunity to mentor his fellow students, which he has regular interactions with approximately 10 other students each day.

The call ended at 0959 EDT.

This digest was e-mailed to Mr. Whelan for him to review on August 10, 2023. He replied on August 15, 2023, at 1026 EDT with comments that were incorporated into the narrative.