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Air Safety Investigator
Aviation Safety - Eastern Region (AS-ERA)

Date: August 7, 2023
Subject: ERA23LA327 Interview with Pilot
Contact: Mr. Eric Ruhe

The following is a record of conversation with Mr. Eric Ruhe. Mr. Ruhe was interviewed by phone on August 7, 2023, at 1456 EDT. He was called at [REDACTED] and provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED].

At the beginning of the interview, he was advised that the NTSB is a federal agency mandated by Congress to investigate aircraft accidents, and NTSB has no authority to take any action against any individual. He was also informed that the purpose of an NTSB investigation is for safety only, and any person NTSB talks with has the right to representation; he agreed to the interview without representation.

At this stage of the conversation, he was advised that for transparency I would be typing the notes and would send to him for review and comment.

Mr. Ruhe stated that he was spraying fungicide on beans and the airplane was running beautifully, with "no problems at all and engine indications all good." He was entering the second spray run for a field when suddenly there was a "pop," flames came out of the exhaust stacks, and the engine lost all power.

He was heading toward power transmission lines at the end of the field and had no power to get above them, so he went underneath them and performed a forced landing in the adjacent bean field. The airplane ground looped in the waist-high beans, substantially damaging the left wing.

They removed the airplane from the field, and he was instructed by the FAA not to do anything with it. I advised him that the NTSB was indeed retaining the airplane for examination. He indicated that they have a place where they can store it and remove the engine if necessary. He said that they removed the cowling and could see no indication of damage. The propeller still spins normally, and Mr. Ruhe believes that the damage is in the gas generator sector of the engine. The airplane is at [REDACTED], and the Cleveland FSDO will be coming to see the airplane tomorrow or Wednesday.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on August 7, 2023. No edits were received.