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Subject: ERA23LA333, Correspondence with FAA Inspector Patrick Wilcox

The following pilot written statement (from John Saltzman) was forwarded via email by FAA Inspector Patrick Wilcox, PHL FSDO on 8/28/2023:

“Incident statement:

On August 11, 2023 at approximately 1205 est I departed Eagles Nest (31N) airport with approximately 18 gallons of fuel on board alone in my aircraft. I transitioned down the coast of NJ until I reached Townseds Inlet and flew to the west across the Cape May Peninsula toward the Delaware Bay. My intent was to look for boats fishing for cobia this time of year, I was planning on landing and taking my boat into the Delaware Bay to go fishing once I landed. At approximately 1400 est I experienced loss of power to my engine at a flight altitude of 3000ft. My first response was to get the aircraft in best glide configuration. I then looked for the best place to land. I was over the Delaware Bay and the aircraft was at the limit for gliding to land, if it did make it to dry land, there were only wetlands in that area which are not ideal for landing, I realized quickly that I needed to don my personal floatation vest (PFD) and prepare for water ditching. As I attempted to put my PFD on I became tangled in my seatbelt and headset wire. This delayed my emergency procedure and by the time I was situated, landing/ditching was imminent. I felt it was too late to refer to the checklist which was next on my procedures I quickly cycled the ignition and attempted to manipulate the throttle but I was not getting a response.

I declared an emergency on both 121.5 and marine channel 16 since I was over the Delaware Bay there were vessels nearby in the event of water ditching that could assist. Shortly after declaring an emergency, the RPMs came back up and I had power. I began to climb from about 1200 ft to gain some altitude and I let guard know on 121.5 that I had regained engine power. I confirmed with them that Millville Airport (KMIV) was the closest airfield. As I began to navigate in the direction of KMIV I lost engine power again just moments after I had regained it. I had just cleared the wetlands and was over a wooded area. I again established

best glide and chose the best option to land which was a farm field nearby.

I asked for wind direction from Atlantic City Guard and made a left pattern 180 power off approach into the field. I propped my door open, idle cutoff and turned off my electronics. There were tall trees surrounding it which extended my rolling distance, I touched down midway through the field but was unable to stop the aircraft within the field. I was aiming towards a house across the street, so I put in right rudder to veer to the right. I attempted to split the space between two telephone poles. At the time I did not see that the road I was about to cross was elevated. When the aircraft hit the elevation of the road, it went airborne and a telephone pole hit my left wing. The aircraft touched back down in a secondary field on the opposite side of the road from where I first touched down. The nose dug into the ground and it rolled forward flipping into an inverted position as it came to rest.

The pilot door was open but jammed, I exited through the pilot window. Once out of the aircraft I gathered myself and checked back in the cockpit to make sure everything was off and remove the key. When I went to check the fuel selector, I found that it was in the left position. I had only been running on one tank. I turned it to "off" at that time.

Regards,
John Saltzman"