

Lynn Spencer
Air Safety Investigator
Aviation Safety / Eastern Region

Date: October 16, 2023
Subject: ERA24LA007 Record of Conversation
Contact: Brent K Holliman, pilot

The following is a record of conversation with Mr. Brent Holliman. Mr. Holliman was called on October 13, 2023, at 1034 EDT. We agreed to talk further at a later time, and I called him back at 1226 EDT on October 16, 2023, for an interview. I called him 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. His wife was on the phone with him for the interview.

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. I also let him now that we are downloading the data from his aircraft so that we can better understand what occurred.

Mr. Holliman stated that his son places baseball in North Carolina and they were going to go get him and bring him home. The accident airplane was a 2023 Cirrus SR22, and this was the second Cirrus he has owned. He has completed the Cirrus training twice. He sent the airplane to Wells Aircraft, Inc. in Hutchinson, Kansas for a 100-hr inspection which was completed on October 8, 2023. He was notified that there was an issue with a seal and some oil leakage, and so a repair was made. The airplane was flown back to him on the day of the accident.

Before departing to go get his son, he updated the Jeppeson database and completed a walk-around. About 1400, he turned on the airplane battery, and the airplane would not locate properly on the tarmac, so he recycled the battery twice and then it was fine. He completed his checklists, and he has the same routine for every flight. They had a normal takeoff and flight except for the fact that he noticed that a cylinder head temperature (CHT) was 399, which was a bit high, so he reduced the engine rpm, the CHTs were all in the 370s, and he kept a close eye on it. They landed at Kennett Memorial Airport (TKX), Kennett, Missouri and headed toward the fuel pumps on the airport when "Taxiway, Taxiway" came up on the Primary Flight Display (PFD), followed by "STALL, STALL," just after they exited the runway. This was very confusing because they were no longer flying, and they were on the taxiway. He fueled up to the tabs, performed a very thorough walk-around, and added one quart of oil (to bring it to 7 qts). Everything, including the stall tab, was fine. The engine start was normal. He taxied to the runway, took off, and had a normal flight and landing at Burlington/Alamance Regional Airport (BUY), Burlington, North Carolina.

They arrived as the FBO was closing, and although he called the after-hours number several times, no one answered, so they picked up their son and decided to purchase fuel at the self-serve at the Blue Ridge Airport (MTV) in Martinsville, Virginia, which was about 15 miles northwest of BUY. It was an uneventful flight to MTV, where he flew a practice RNAV approach to runway 31. Everything worked fine, although when he arrived at the final approach fix, the airplane did not capture the glideslope, so he disconnected the autopilot and hand flew the approach and landing.

He fueled the airplane and completed the walk-around, then taxied to runway 31 for takeoff. He set the heading bug to 305, and the course setting in Foreflight was 284° back to GOK. That would have been a 21° turn had autopilot been activated. It was loaded into the panel from Foreflight prior to takeoff. He then started the takeoff roll. Shortly after rotation, the PFD went black real quick and then it said, "TAXIWAY, TAXIWAY" yet they were probably at 200 ft above ground level. He looked over at the Multi-Function Display (MFD) and it was orange with an autopilot course showing a 45° left turn, which he thought was strange because the autopilot should not have been on. The PFD then blinked, and it looked as if they were in a critical attitude; however, he looked out and he was going to the left in a climb, but the airplane was wings level. He was confused by this and as he looked outside again, he was looking right at a tree. He pulled back and to the right and they hit the tree hard, although he managed to maintain control. It was a dark night, and he could not see anything out the front of the airplane. They discussed pulling the CAPS and decided that he would just fly the airplane, which was very shaky. He could not see the altitude on the display, and he was pressing the autopilot disconnect with the red button while wondering how the autopilot got on in the first place.

They circled back toward MTV and as soon as he got the autopilot off, he got the altitude back on his PFD, and it showed 2,200 ft msl. He looked out and felt like he was at pattern altitude, so that seemed correct. The engine was running, and although the airplane was vibrating, he was able to control it so he opted not to use the CAPS system. He lined up on runway 31, lowered full flaps incrementally, and landed gently on the left main landing gear, then the nosewheel and then the right main landing gear (the right tire was flat). They immediately cleared the runway, shut off the engine and got out.

Questions:

Q: What did you see during the display failure?

A: The PFD lost the altitude and speed on the tapes, but TAXIWAY, TAXIWAY was dominating the screen. You could still kind of see behind that. The MFD went orange, with the line that he would for the AP course showing about 45° degrees to the left although he had not turned on the autopilot yet.

Q: Did the displays come back to normal?

A: The airplane was hard to control, and somehow the autopilot was on (he thinks), and he kept hitting the red button on the yolk. The gauges came back but not completely. There was no airspeed tape, but the altitude came back on the PFD.

Q: Were there any Crew Alerting System (CAS) messages?

A: No, just TAXIWAY, TAXIWAY and no aural message.

Q: Did you refer to the backup gauges?

A: It was so fast, and he did not think to look at his primary displays.

Q: Were there any injuries?

A: No injuries whatsoever. The tree broke the windscreen and there were branches inside of the airplane, but nobody was even scratched.

Q: How did you control speed (with IAS failed)?

A: He was just feeling it with his power setting and sense.

Q: Did you consider using CAPS?

A: Because he got it to climb, he felt better landing the airplane rather than using CAPS. He did not know what the terrain was or if they would end up in the trees.

Q: How many total hours do you have?

A: He has about 762 hours total, and about 131.6 hours in the past 12 months. About 250 in the SR-22.

Q: The inspector stated that when he examined the airplane, the trim was in the full up position. Do you have any thoughts on that?

A: He always sets the trim to TO before takeoff, and while coming in to land after he hit the tree, the airplane was trimming for landing and the airplane was not fighting it, so he does not know why the trim was that way.

The call ended at 1310 EDT.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on October 16, 2023. He replied on October 26, 2023, at 1355 EDT with edits that were incorporated into the narrative. The corrected digest was e-mailed to him on October 26, 2023.

Lynn Spencer
Air Safety Investigator
Aviation Safety / Eastern Region

Date: October 16, 2023

Subject: ERA24LA007 Record of Conversation

Contact: Brent K Holliman, pilot

The following is a record of a follow-up conversation with Mr. Holliman. Mr. Holliman was called on October 26, 2023, at 1434 EDT. I called him at [REDACTED] and provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED]

Q: I asked Mr. Holliman about the 21 hours of actual instrument time on his 6120 form and asked if he had any simulated instrument time.

A: He has gone under the hood but that was years ago. When he bought his first Cirrus in 2020 or 2021, he did 21 hours of actual IFR flight with an instructor. He has also taken and passed the Instrument written test.

Q: I asked Mr. Holliman to estimate the weights of the aircraft occupants, as well as any bags they had.

A: Pilot: 167, wife, 140, girlfriend 110, son 190, travel golf clubs 15 lbs, small backpack, 8 lbs. He had a half tank of anti-ice fluid in the tank.

Q: I asked Mr. Holliman if by chance, although this was a VFR flight, he was aware of the Blue Ridge Airport (MTV) Takeoff Minimums or the (Obstacle) Departure Procedures for that runway.

A: He looked at the airport on Foreflight and at the airport diagram and the gross surrounding. He did not look at any of the IFR flight procedures since it was a VFR flight. He said, "I will tell you that it was so dark that night that what he thought it looked like was nothing like it looked like that night." He is going to send me the video of the flight from Foreflight.

Q: I asked why he believes the airplane was not higher at that distance (1 mile) from the end of the runway where he struck the tree.

A: He stated that he does not believe they were a mile past the airport, and he does not think that the tree was on the runway heading. They would like me to talk to the airport manager to get the exact location of that tree. They told him it was way to the left of the runway.

Notes provided by Mr. Holliman upon review: "That looks accurate. . . The next morning in the daylight, it was apparent that the trees were. . . on an incline that was increasing making them substantially higher than runway elevation."

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on October 26, 2023. He replied on Thursday, October 26, 2023, at 1517 EDT with comments that were incorporated into the narrative. The final digest was e-mailed to him on October 30, 2023.

Lynn Spencer
Air Safety Investigator
Aviation Safety / Eastern Region

Date: October 30, 2023
Subject: ERA24LA007 Record of Conversation
Contact: Brent K Holliman, pilot

The following is a record of a second follow-up conversation with Mr. Holliman. Mr. Holliman was called on October 30, 2023, at 0924 EDT. I called him at [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I discussed with Mr. Holliman the flight data downloaded from the airplane. I walked him through the flight progression: rotation then flap rotation followed by a 20+ second descent. I let him know that after the flap rotation, in addition to the descent, his flight path was no longer over the runway as he was descending, which resulted in the TAXIWAY, TAXIWAY warning. I let him know that he impacted trees about 1.5 miles after rotation on the extended runway centerline after he began a left turn, and at the moment of tree impact, the autopilot was likely inadvertently activated as there was no selection of heading mode or lateral mode. It was in Takeoff mode which would've just programmed wings level and climb at 7 degrees nose up.

Mr. Holliman responded that that makes sense and it just happened so fast. The whole flight was only like 5-7 minutes, and things happened so quickly after takeoff. It was so dark, and he could see nothing outside, and his airplane flight displays were confusing given that he felt like he was straight and level in a climb. He stated that he much better understands spatial disorientation and how it can happen after this flight. He stated that he is very thankful that he looked up from his instruments when he did to see the tree in front of him, and that he managed to mostly avoid it and effectively pilot the damaged airplane back around for a safe landing. We discussed how flying at night without moonlight or lighting in the airport area is almost like flying in IMC as there is no reference to anything outside. He agreed and stated that he had not realized how the terrain was rising above the

airport until the next day, when he saw the airport in the light. He feels grateful that he was able to get them all safely back to the ground. Mr. Holliman admitted that this was his fault, and that although the airplane messages surprised and confused him, there was nothing wrong with the airplane. This was unfamiliar airport in the mountains at night, and he simply COULD NOT see the way he expected to be able to see after rotation and he did not realize that he was descending after he retracted his flaps. He is thankful that he looked up when he did to see the tree in front of him so that he could mostly avoid it and come back in to land safely.

NOTES FROM PILOT AFTER REVIEW AND PHONE CONVERSATION:

Thank you again for your time today and your detailed explanation. I agree with your observations and as we tried to clarify today, I just wanted to detail the events from my perspective in the left seat.

We left the airport on runway heading and as we retracted 50% flaps, the plane settled as typical with our particular plane. Directly after that a blink (or sudden contrast change) of the PFD and the alert "Taxiway, Taxiway" came on. The MFD showed an irregular screen with a left turning arrow consistent with an autopilot track with no particular course or intercept. As I tried to understand what the displays meant, given the fact that I had never seen that display, I looked out the windshield for a brief second and saw the tree. I emphasize this to say that the display was irregular and nothing I had seen in all the hours I had flown the N253BC and the Cirrus before that. The irregularity caused enough pause to be problematic. I do not know if it was a glitch in the avionics due to irregular terrain or an interpretation issue but I just wanted to be clear. I have confidence that you will understand further after all the data is complete and I appreciate your continued investigation. The last thing of note is that there were never alerts for "Terrain, Obstacle or instructions to Pull Up" which are typical alerts that are seen in that aircraft. With several of the small issues we stated in the report, I felt it was worth a detailed explanation from my perspective.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on October 30, 2023. He replied on November 3, 2023, at 1433EDT with comments that were incorporated at the end of the narrative. He responded on November 6, 2023, at 1310 EST with the comment, "I agree with this report and I have nothing to add at this time." The final digest was e-mailed to him on November 6, 2023.