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Aviation Safety / Eastern Region

Date: November 15, 2023

Subject: ERA24LA035 Record of Conversation

Contact: Gregory Smith, pilot

The following is a record of conversation with Mr. Gregory Smith. Mr. Smith was interviewed by phone on November 15, 2023, at 0956 EST. He was called at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 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. 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. Smith explained that the accident flight was a post maintenance flight; however, everything was perfect. There were no anomalies or malfunctions of any kind. His original thought was that he misjudged his airspeed, but then after talking with other pilots at the airport, they spoke of downdrafts on the arrival end of 22, and he wondered if it was that.

I asked Mr. Smith what the prevailing wind was at the time of the accident, and he responded that it was 8-10 kt knots from 220, right down the runway. I asked if this was his home airport and he responded yes. I asked him if there was any convective activity in the area around the time of the flight, or a tree line that may have induced a downdraft, and he explained that there was not; however, the runway slopes down at the arrival end of runway 22, and that perhaps the wind follows this curvature and creates a downdraft. I asked if he had encountered that before, or if there were any gusts, and he responded no, and that this was just his theory.

He stated that the airplane was 10 to 15 feet above the runway with the engine at idle, and then a split second later, the airplane was on the runway surface with a broken landing gear. He recalls seeing 60 mph several seconds before this, but he was not sure exactly when he noted that airspeed as his eyes were looking at the runway. He added that there were no stall indications, and everything appeared to be lining up for a good landing.

I inquired about his comment to the NTSB duty officer shortly after the accident, and he responded that he told her that he misjudged his airspeed and figured that that is what led to the accident. He explained that the whole thing was only a few seconds from start to finish. After it happened, he and the passenger both said, "What happened?" I asked him about his initial assessment, and he stated that his initial assessment was that he flared too high and was too slow, but it was so sudden it just didn't feel like a stall. He explained that he was practicing an emergency descent and landing with the power at idle during this landing, and he was trying to get to the threshold. At the time he was thinking that he may have added full flaps too soon and might not get to the threshold. He stated that, upon reflection, if he had added the power and extended the glide, he might have been in a better position. He said he probably should have added power and that the issue was not likely a downdraft. I explained that every pilot out there has bad landings where the sight picture is simple "off" or mis-judged, and airplanes can be fixed, and he concurred and acknowledged that although he was not injured, his pride was.

The call ended at 1029 EST.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on November 15, 2023. He replied on November 16, 2023, at 2020 EST with the comment, "Seems accurate to me." The final digest was e-mailed to him on November 17, 2023.