

Ryan Enders
Aviation Accident Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: March 11, 2024

Subject: ERA24LA090 Witness Statement

Contact: Michael Hounslow, [REDACTED]

Michael Hounslow sent an email to the Charlotte FAA/FSDO on January 14, 2024 to describe the accident events that he witnessed involving a Cessna 172 at Lake Norman Airport. Michael also describes his landing at the airport shortly before the accident of N512SP. Below are statements, including a photo reference he submitted, from that email to the FSDO.

"My name is Michael Hounslow, a transient pilot from Gaithersburg, MD visiting my brother, David Hounslow, another pilot in your region. I landed my plane N9045K at 12:09 pm at Lake Norman Airport (using RWY 32). The winds were listed at SVH at 230@11G22 on their AWOS. I have over 15,000 hrs experience, about 5,000 of those in my Cherokee Archer.

My probable guess is that the winds were variable 220@13-15G22-25 to 230@12-14G20-25. Not scientific but I did feel that my airplane was near the crosswind limits as I touched down. It was incredibly gusty and very close to a direct crosswind. An aircraft, N12918 (I believe) used RWY 32 before me and I was not going to argue with a based airplane about which runway to use. I landed but a gust was trying to lift me right at touchdown. Having flown jets for the airlines, I used a crab-kick at the end to manage the touchdown.

In our normal cockpit conversations, the conditions would be described as "sporty". A Cirrus entered the pattern right after me...I explained to him that the winds seemed more from 220 than 230 and he should consider using RWY 14 instead. The accident airplane had already radioed that he wanted to use RWY 14.

I have no idea what the Cirrus eventually did but his calls were for RWY 14.

I parked my airplane at a mutual friend Mark's house to meet my brother. He was over at the FBO so I started walking towards the RWY.



In the picture above, I was in the position of the red box, when I saw the accident aircraft. My sight line was about mid-field and I saw a C-172 fly by merely feet above the ground and fighting the wind. I was thinking "not good" and trying to compute mentally how much runway this guy did or did not have left remaining.

I always think of Mark's entrance taxiway as mid-field.

As I hastened my pace, I heard the C-172 (N512SP) engine accelerate to full-power and I thought "Good! He's executing a go-around!"

The second red line (picture above) was my sight line as I saw an airplane climbing but it was right wing high and it looked like it got caught by one of the gusts. I lost sight of the plane due to houses and trees and then I heard a snap noise and knew he had crashed.

I just wanted to fill you in on what I observed.

- It was a direct crosswind, with some impressive gusts.
- The pilot made the approach to the better runway but was probably a bit high and hot considering the plane was still airborne passing my first sight line up the midfield taxiway.
- The pilot did initiate a go-around at full power. I heard that sound.

The next items are best guesses from years of experience but I would say the pull-up was too brisk following the power-up. This introduced a lot of torque (left-turning tendency), a lot of P-factor (left turning tendency), and he got hit with probably a 18-25kt gust from the right just as the airplane was in this vulnerable position."

-End of statement