

Meeting was started, introductions were made:

Mr. Troutman was asked about his physical state and what his prognosis is for recovery, he stated that he is paralyzed from the waist down. He has been informed by doctors that his condition is not expected to change but he is continuing with rehabilitation. He is confined to use of a wheelchair for mobility.

Nick Anderson, operations inspector assigned to the accident, asked Mr. Troutman to provide some information on his flight hours, last check flight date, and licenses held, information that's needed/provided on the 8020-23.

Mr. Troutman was then asked by Mr. Anderson to give his statement about what took place on the night of the accident from his time of arrival at the airport. He stated his intention to get some night flying hours in and some cross-country time. He stated he arrived at the Owensboro airport at approximately 2130 local time. He checked weather and waited until he thought the weather was good enough for flight.

He took off and continually had to descend below clouds and realizing the weather had deteriorated and the cloud deck was continuing to descend. He stated the rain had increased and he needed to find a place to land. He decided against returning to Owensboro, then he thought of Madisonville and thought that was too far away since he wanted to land as soon as possible. He chose to go land at Sturgis airport, he saw he was 10-12 miles away from the airport and his next memory was of hitting the trees. He remembers nothing else until he was found the next morning by law enforcement and emergency responders. Found himself in weather he wasn't expecting.

His plan of flight was to stop at Madisonville, check weather, then most likely proceed to the panhandle area of Florida, possibly Dolphin Island for an overnight trip. He did say he had packed a bag of clothing to take along with him.

Mr. Anderson asked Mr. Troutman what methods he used to get weather data, he stated that he used the ForeFlight app on his phone and visually checked to determine if he thought the weather was clearing.

April of 2023 purchased the Cessna 150, accident aircraft. Other aircraft was destroyed in March of 2023 in a windstorm.

Mr. Anderson asked Mr. Troutman what runway he used for take-off from Owensboro, which he stated 24 or 18, and he believes he initially climbed to approximately 1500 feet and that the tower was closed so he did not contact them. He also stated that he didn't file a flight plan and was going to use pilotage and ForeFlight app connected to GPS to navigate the aircraft.

Mr. Anderson asked what type of GPS he had in the aircraft to which Mr. Troutman replied an old Garmin brand of GPS.

Mr. Anderson asked about the intensity of the rain showers he encountered prior to and after take-off, he stated that the rain increased in intensity along with the clouds and at a certain point the rain had become so intense he had near to zero visibility and he was very concerned about that.

Mr. Troutman stated he tried to perform a 180 degree turn for return to Owensboro and his instruments, attitude indicator, seemed to stay in a 15 to 20 degree bank for approximately 30 minutes after the beginning of flight and that this could have added to his difficulty in discerning what the aircraft attitude was in relation to the ground.

Mr. Anderson asked Mr. Troutman what his thought process was concerning the decisions he made in the weather leading up to the accident. He said he thought the weather was flowing west to east and didn't want to return to Owensboro because he thought the weather would continue to grow worse in that direction. He thought Madisonville was too far away and Sturgis airport was the best option because he had grown very apprehensive due to the deterioration of the weather.

Mr. Anderson asked Mr. Troutman what altitude he found himself at when he was attempting to descend to get below the cloud cover. He stated he found himself at approximately 1K feet AGL. The first time he came out of the clouds and saw the ground, he found he was in a bank he didn't realize he was in, and this was his indicator that he needed to get on the ground immediately, and that Sturgis airport was the best option. As he proceeded to Sturgis, he found himself in clouds again and while trying to get back out of the clouds he struck the trees that ended the flight.

Mr. Anderson asked Mr. Troutman what occurred in the time prior to him contacting the trees and he stated he has not much recollection, but thought he might have hyperventilated due to the situation he found himself, was distracted, and in a state of confusion, however he just has no memory of what led up to contact with the trees.

Mr. Anderson asked why Mr. Troutman wouldn't file a flight plan, and he stated he got careless due to his routine of flying to work in Madisonville or other local airports and was just careless, that it had become a bad habit he fell into.

Mr. Anderson asked Mr. Troutman if there were any external pressures that drove him to decide to fly at night in poor weather. He stated he and his wife had been involved in a disagreement that night and she didn't want him at their home. He also felt like he needed to push to get a certain number of flying hours before summer because he was in a program that would lead to a job at Republic Airlines and he was slated to be brought into a permanent position with the company in July and begin flight training there.

Mr. Anderson asked Mr. Troutman if he thought to reconsider his decision to fly at night and in bad weather. Mr. Troutman stated the issues between he and his wife had been reaching an intolerable level for quite some time, possibly up to 9 years, and had reached a point where he had to leave their home.

Mr. Anderson asked Mr. Troutman if there was a specific reason why the transponder wasn't turned on, and he said he could not give any reason why it was not operating, and that he feels he completely missed turning it on during pre-flight. Mr. Anderson informed him that the tower/ATC at Evansville was still open and active and had he had that on they could've directed rescue efforts to him immediately. Mr. Troutman stated it was a failure on his part not to have it turned on.

Mr. Gregory asked if Mr. Troutman received the certified letter from the NTSB requesting logbook information and he said he had, but due to being in the hospital several miles from home, he was receiving his mail very late from his wife, this letter was included in a number of requests for information from the NTSB. Mr. Gregory asked if it would be possible to obtain copies of the maintenance logs,

particularly the last two 100-hour inspections and last two annuals. Mr. Troutman stated he would ensure those are provided and would notify me of when I could expect those.

Mr. Anderson began to explain the regulatory guidance that concerns the events that led to the accident. Mr. Anderson told Mr. Troutman that initially he thought requesting a 44709 examination was the process to follow, however after further examination of the facts and events and due to his prior experience as an instructor and commercial pilot, the poor decisions he made that led to the accident demand that other more severe action be taken. Mr. Anderson explained to Mr. Troutman that his airmanship was poor and that after talking to office management he needed to take further, more permanent action. Mr. Anderson asked Mr. Troutman what his aspirations are to fly again, does he think he'll be able to do so again, and asked for his explanation explaining his thoughts. Mr. Troutman stated that he loves flying, it gave him direction and purpose in his life and he had a number of goals he wanted to achieve in the career field. Mr. Troutman says he knows his judgment that day was extremely poor, and that he feels he was emotionally compromised on the date of the accident due to the issues with his wife.

Mr. Anderson told Mr. Troutman that typically the 44709 is issued after an accident and that it is used to address shortcomings of pilots. Mr. Anderson explained the process of the 44709 and the choices that come with that, also the option of voluntarily surrendering his certificate. Mr. Anderson told him that in recent days there were facts that came to light concerning the alcohol containers found in the aircraft and the wreckage area. He explained the toxicology kit showed him under the influence of certain drugs and alcohol and that it required an explanation. Mr. Anderson told him those conditions are considered careless and reckless.

Mr. Troutman stated he thought we probably knew about the alcohol, and he stated his drinking that night after his workday is what angered his wife, led to their disagreement, and the result of the poor decision to fly that night.

Mr. Troutman admitted that yes, he felt his consumption of alcohol was a big contributor to his accident.

Mr. Anderson told him that the decision had to be made to rescind the 44709 letter and that his flying privileges had to be revoked due to his poor decisions and flying under the influence, that he had been careless and reckless in his operation of the airplane.

Mr. Anderson told Mr. Troutman that he was requesting enforcement action because of his actions in operating the airplane in that condition.