

Ryan Enders
Aviation Accident Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: March 19, 2024

Subject: ERA24LA139, Pilot Interview

Contact: Tyler Berlin

Mr. Berlin was contacted via telephone to discuss the accident of N59MK. The following is a summary of that conversation.

Mr. Berlin was asked to describe the events that led up to the accident. He responded that he works for a survey company and that he was transitioning from east to west near the survey area. Mr. Berlin commented that he began to get nervous with the airplane, so he elected to climb to 6,300ft based on exhaust gas temperatures (EGT's) being lower than expected. As he leveled off, he started to "roll back" the propeller control lever, but the control was not responding. He commented that he had this problem earlier in the flight, but the responsiveness of the propeller returned so he continued with the flight at that time. Shortly after attempting to reduce the engine RPM with the propeller lever, the engine RPM's "revved up" and the reading was 2650, in the red. The RPMs then dropped, and he lost engine power. Mr. Berlin attempted to troubleshoot while adjusting the control levers, but the engine power would not restore.

Mr. Berlin continued that he was losing airspeed, so he shut off the autopilot and started to set up the airplane. He was initially headed towards the Winchester airport, which was 5 or 6 minutes away, but decided to turn back to Front Royal because it is more rural. Mr. Berlin commented that he then started going through fuel checks. He commented that he was initially on the right tank and the engine had started to stumble after switching from the left tank to the right tank. He switched on the fuel electric fuel pump and could hear it running. He checked his magneto's. Mr. Berlin commented that he "checked and re-checked" everything" and was going through a checklist as he was descending. During the descent, he realized his seatbelt was

inadvertently unlatched and he had to secure that, which took up time. At this point, he knew he was not going to make the airport, so he elected to pick a field that he could see off to his left side and turned towards it for his emergency landing. Shortly after landing, he realized he was okay and so he started to shut everything off.

Mr. Berlin commented that he was on the right main fuel tank and reached down to switch to the left main tank, but in a couple of minutes the engine began to stumble. He realized that he switched to the auxiliary tank instead of the main tank, then switched it to the left main tank and the engine "smoothed out". However, the EGT's did not go back to what he expected, so he began to climb.

Mr. Berlin was asked what his oil pressure was as the engine troubles began. He stated that he was not sure of the oil pressure readings.

Mr. Berlin was asked how much fuel he had for the flight. He replied that he had full tanks, 99 gallons. He commented that there were 6 tanks total: 2 main, 2 auxiliary, and 2 tip tanks. There was no "banging" when the engine lost power, it "just went quiet". He did not feel that he was getting any thrust even though the throttle was "full forward".

The pilot 6120 form was explained to Mr. Berlin, and he was asked if he had any additional questions. Mr. Berlin commented that he had personal items in the airplane that he would like sent back to him and would like to have information provided on what was found.

-End of conversation

A second phone call was made to Mr. Berlin on June 4, 2024, to ask additional questions about the accident events. The following is a summary of that conversation.

Mr. Berlin was asked which fuel tank the airplane was on when the event in-flight occurred. He replied that he was on the left main fuel tank when the issues began. He initially was on the right main, but he had trouble with the EGT and responsiveness. At that point, he decided to end the flight and began to climb. He then attempted to switch to the left main tank, but realized he accidentally was on the auxiliary tank, so he then switched to the left main. Mr. Berlin commented that he was on the left main tank for approximately 10 minutes before the RPM spike and power loss occurred. He also commented that the left main tank had "a decent amount of fuel" remaining in it at the time of the engine power loss.

Mr. Berlin was asked if the auxiliary tanks were empty. He replied "yes, pretty close to empty". He commented that he remembered checking that he was on the correct tank and going across the engine controls and fuel settings after losing power.

-End of conversation