



Ryan Enders
Aviation Accident Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: April 30, 2024

Subject: ERA24LA195 Call to the Morgantown, WV Civil Air Patrol

Contact: Eric Judy, Unit Contact

Eric Judy was contacted via telephone to discuss the circumstances involving the accident of N601DR.

Mr. Judy was asked if he had heard anything about an accident with an airplane in Connellsville, PA. He responded that he had heard there was an accident at that airport. Mr. Judy was asked what he had heard regarding the accident, and he responded that he had heard the engine had quit and the airplane landed long before running off the runway. Mr. Judy was asked where he had heard that from and he responded that he "doesn't remember".

The circumstances of an airplane being on the runway during the emergency landing attempt were discussed. Mr. Judy was asked if he knew who was flying the airplane on the runway or if he knew what airplane it was, and he responded that he did not know. Mr. Judy was told that the airplane was a Civil Air Patrol (CAP) airplane with the registration number N226CP and that it is believed that the flight originated from Morgantown, WV, based on a surveillance video from the airport. Mr. Judy was again asked if he knew who was flying the airplane and where it was based out of. He responded that he believes the pilot of N226CP was Francisco Vargas, [REDACTED], and that the airplane is based in Wheeling, WV. Mr. Judy continued that they were doing a training flight in the airplane. They were in Morgantown and Connellsville doing touch-and-goes. Another pilot, Nathaniel Burke, [REDACTED], was getting checked out in the airplane. Mr. Judy stated that Mr. Vargas is a member out of Wheeling and that Mr. Burke was a member out of Morgantown.

Mr. Judy was asked who he heard the initial information from again. He responded that he heard it from both pilots. Mr. Judy was asked to describe what they told him.

He responded that they stated an airplane flew over top of them and that the engine had quit. They told him that the gentleman landed the airplane and skidded off the runway.

Mr. Judy was asked if there were any communications between the accident airplane and the CAP airplane. He responded that there were none to his knowledge.

Mr. Judy was asked if he was aware of their planned flight in N226CP. He responded that he was aware of the flight to check out Nathaniel and that this was a normal flight to transition a pilot to a higher performance airplane.

Mr. Judy stated that he did not have a copy of the mission plan with him but would be able to find it. He was not involved with releasing the airplane to fly but he would be able to find the plan and send it over. In addition, he stated that after the flight, Mr. Vargas returned the airplane back to the Wheeling, WV location. Mr. Judy provided an email address of [REDACTED] and that he would include relevant phone numbers within the CAP in an email.

-End of conversation

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Date: April 30, 2024
Subject: ERA24LA195 Witness Interview
Contact: Clint Rinkhoff

Clint Rinkhoff was contacted via telephone at [REDACTED] to discuss the accident events of N601DR. The following is a summary of that conversation:

Clint explained that the accident pilot has a hangar beside his own. Clint explained that he had a handheld radio with him and that he heard the radio transmissions between the airplanes. He described that he was putting vortex generators on his brother's experimental. After 25 minutes went by, he was getting concerned for Dale (the accident pilot) because he knew he should have been back. That is when he asked his brother to grab the handheld radio and he turned it on. Clint went into the grass to call Dale but did not receive a response. He sat the handheld back inside the hangar and 5 minutes later he looked towards the Northeast and saw Dale coming on the upwind for runway 23.

Clint states that Dale was going upwind then he turned crosswind. He said that Dale began to make the call for runway 23 crosswind. He saw Dale turn for the downwind and then heard him make an emergency call about the engine being out. Clint said that he didn't think the pilots on runway 5 were taxiing at the speeds that they should have been. Clint stated that when Dale made the emergency transmission, the other airplane responded with "it was really nice that you made proper communications". Clint said that Dale responded to that transmission but then "dropped it" and flew the plane downwind. Clint called out on the handheld radio to the Cessna that he was being overflown "right now". Dale continued down the runway before Clint lost visual. Clint called out to Dale if he could hear him but received no transmission back. Clint asked the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) airplane if they could hear Dale, to which they replied

"no", but they could hear the ELT. Clint and his brother went to the accident scene and were told by the CAP pilots that they called first responders.

Clint was asked where on the airfield his hangar is located. He responded that its at the "antique hangars" down near the south end. Clint continued that his hangar is mid-section on the western side, so he could see everything well.

Clint was asked about the radio transmissions and the callouts made by Dale. He responded that on the downwind of runway 23, Dale said "I am declaring an emergency I have an engine out". The CAP plane responded, "well its really nice that you made proper communication calls". Clint stated that Dale said something about holding on the runway but did not get the entire transmission out.

-End of conversation