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Date: April 30, 2024
Subject: ERA24LA195 Pilot Interview
Contact: Dale Walters, Pilot

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

Mr. Walters was asked to describe what happened and the events leading up to the accident. Dale responded that the engine was recently replaced in the airplane and that it had some cooling issues. A week or so before the accident, he made some changes to the cooling plenum and the purpose of the flight was to validate those changes. He listened to AWOS at 6:49 and took off approximately 5 minutes later. This was an uncontrolled airfield. He called out and stated that he was going to stay in the pattern prior to takeoff. Downwind from runway 23, he heard another airplane coming in for a touch-and-go. He figured he would move away from the airfield to give more room. He went 3 miles north around the airfield and did turns around a point to pass time. After 10-15 minutes, he started to head back to the field and joined the upwind for runway 23 and heard that the pilot in the other airplane said he was landing on runway 23 for a full stop. Mr. Walters checked his engine temperatures and noted that they were still a "little high on the right bank of cylinders", but 80° lower than before.

He got to the point where he was turning for the crosswind for runway 23. He started to make the radio call for crosswind then stopped mid transmission because the engine began to sputter. He looked down the runway and noticed that another airplane was sitting at the intersection of runway 23 and 14, facing towards the intersection. Mr. Walters states that he radioed "aircraft on 23 I have an emergency engine situation, can you please expedite getting off 23". Mr. Walters stated that the other pilot responded with "I would if you made proper radio calls".

Mr. Walters made a 180° turn and lined up for runway 5 and looked down noticing the other pilot was back taxiing up runway 23. Mr. Walters overflew the other airplane at 400ft AGL and considered landing but was worried about the position of the other airplane on the runway that he was overflying. He maneuvered the airplane to the right and considered landing on the parallel taxiway, but he was concerned about the potential for other aircraft being on it. The engine was still sputtering at this point, and he flew down to the beginning of runway 23 in an attempt to turn another 180° and land on runway 23, hoping the other aircraft had exited the runway.

The engine stopped as he "dropped his wing" to begin the turn. He straightened the airplane out and landed crosswise to runway 23. Mr. Walters commented that he thinks he hit the overrun of runway 23 and that tire marks started right after the overrun in the grass. There was an embankment beyond the overrun that he could not stop in time for. He went over the embankment and in between two trees.

Dale was asked about what kind of damage the airplane received. He stated that there was extensive damage to the wings.

Dale commented that a bracket for the fuel air mixture cable had bent and overextended, causing the engine to lean out. This bracket was fashioned during the engine replacement. He knew this was something he needed to re-address and to fashion a new bracket, but he did not get to it before the accident flight.

Mr. Walters was asked if there is anything additional. He responded that he called for an emergency and the other airplane on the runway back taxied at this point. He feels that if the other airplane would have exited the runway that he could have successfully landed. Mr. Walters was asked if he knew the registration of the other airplane and he responded that he did not but believed it was a CAP (Civil Air Patrol) airplane out of Morgantown. The CAP plane stopped and walked over to him after the accident. He stated that the CAP pilots walked over, did not bring a fire extinguisher, and asked if he was okay approximately 100 feet away. Mr. Walters continued that he admits he "screwed up the bracket" but that he did well on his landing.

Dale was asked for his email address. He provided [REDACTED]

The NTSB 6120 form was explained to Dale.

-End of initial conversation

The pilot was called again on April 30, 2024, to ask for additional clarification regarding the communications between the CAP airplane and his airplane. The following is a summary of the follow-up conversation:

Mr. Walters stated that he was just getting ready to turn crosswind 23. He started to make the radio call but only got out the airport identifier and his tail number. The engine started to sputter so he stopped his transmission. He remembers that the CAP plane was 20-30 feet from the intersection of 23/14 and that they had landed when he was in the upwind. He remembers visually seeing them turning base for the runway. They had not begun their back taxiing and were facing the end of runway 23 when the engine began to sputter. Dale said that his transmission was: "I have an emergency engine problem, aircraft on 23 please expedite exiting the runway". Mr. Walter continues that the other airplane responded with "I would if you made proper radio calls".

Dale said that a witness on the ground could verify these events and that his name is Clint. Clint's phone number is [REDACTED]. Dale commented that there was no other exchange between the two airplanes and that it was "exactly that". He just started to make a 180° turn to line up with runway 5. He was 400 feet up roughly and about 1200 feet down runway 5 at this point.

Dale was asked when he saw the other airplane begin to back taxi. He responded that he did not see the other airplane turn around, they must have turned around between the call and the completion of his 180 turn to line up with runway 5.

Dale was asked where the other airplane was when he lined up with runway 5. He responded that the other airplane was 200-300 feet past the intersection of runway 14 and 5 and was back taxiing on runway 23. When Dale lined up with runway 5, he was right at or just before the intersecting runways.

Dale was asked if the helicopter by the taxiway was running. He stated that he has "no idea" but he saw the helicopter there. He chose to not use the taxiway because of its condition and the idea of other airplanes possibly utilizing it. It was also closer to buildings.

-End of follow-up conversation