



Investigator Name: Leah D. Read  
Title: Sr. ASI  
Division: ERA

**Date:** July 23, 2024

**Subject:** ERA24LA284

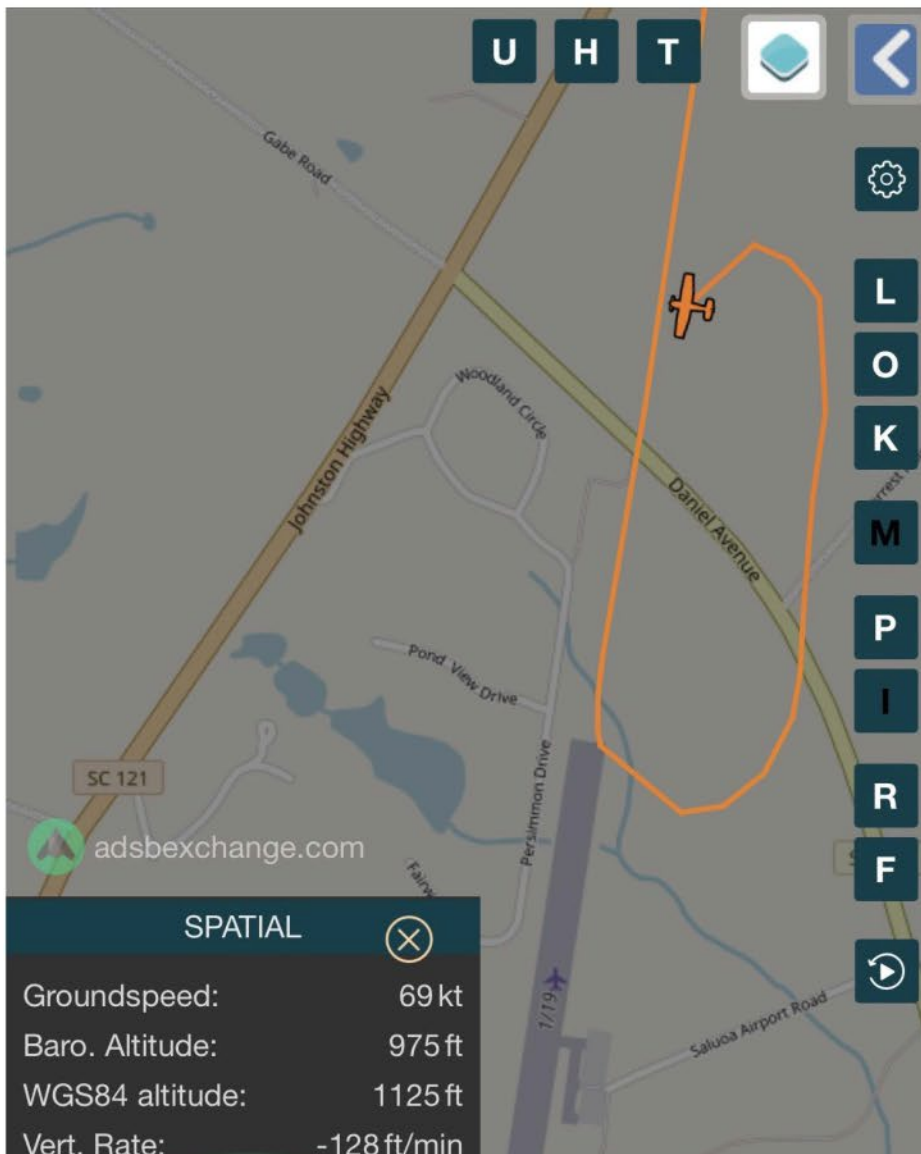
**Contact:** Dr. C. Michael Dempsey, MD, pilot/owner

The following is an excerpt of Dr. Dempsey's written statement that was emailed to the FAA and NTSB.

**N94NF Crash Statement, 6/30/24 approximately 10:13 EDT**

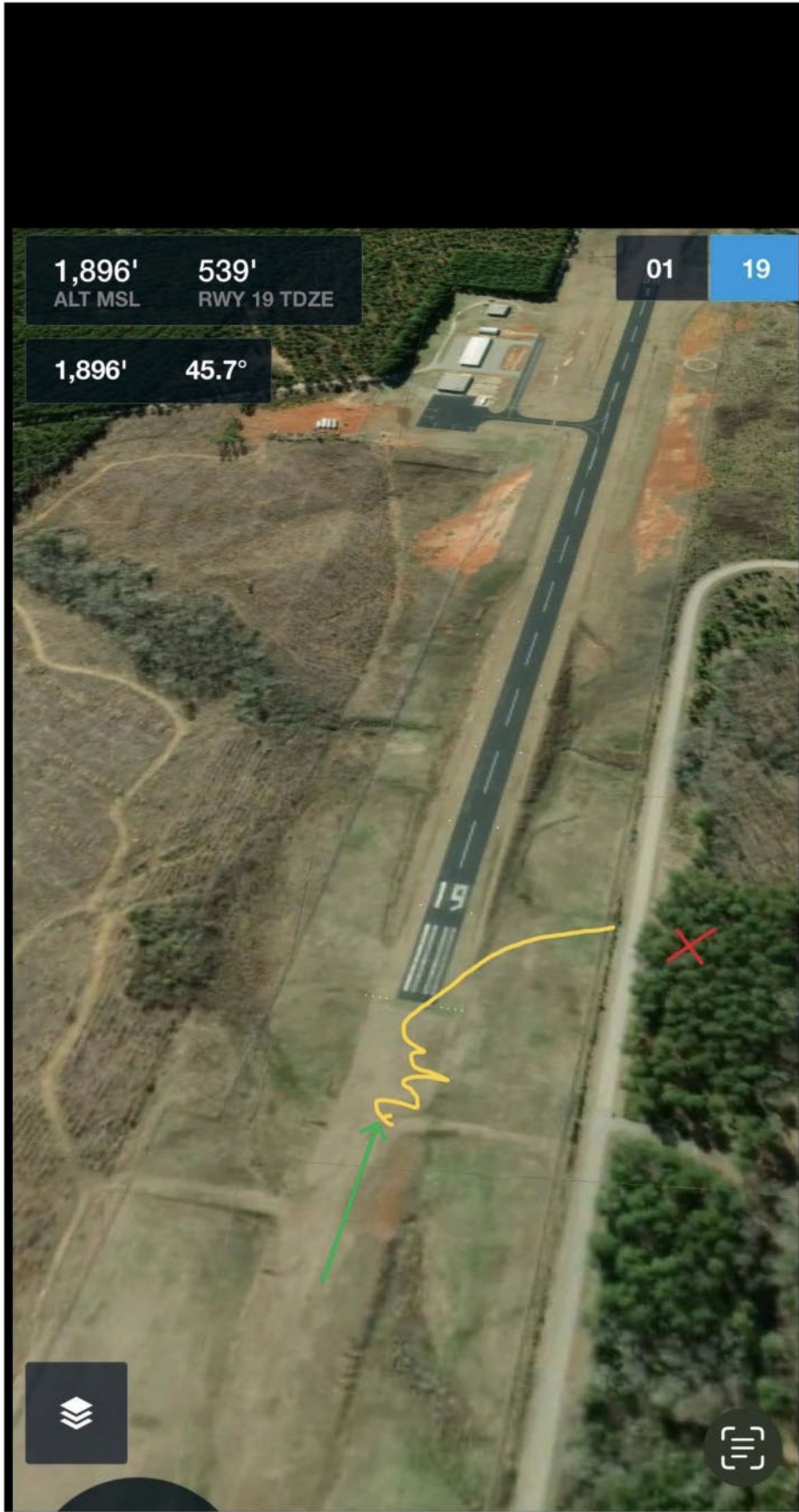
On a return trip from 7A8, Avery County Airport, Spruce Pine, North Carolina, returning to KSGJ, Saint Augustine, Florida. A planned fuel stop at 35A, Union City, South Carolina, was unsuccessful due to the self-service being in-operative. Just before 10 AM on the morning of 6/30/2024 we departed 35A direct to 6J4, Saluda County Airport, Saluda, South Carolina, as an alternative airport for our fuel stop. Approximately 10 miles north of 6J4, ADS-B weather was checked, and it was found that Saluda County Airport does not have automated weather information. We were now less than 10 miles north of the destination airport and the EFIS displayed a small headwind component of approximately 3 to 4 KTS favoring runway 19. We maneuvered for straight in for runway 19 with overhead approach and left break at the numbers.

Post crash Review of ADS-B data, including ground track, airspeed and altitude reveals this overhead was performed with gentle radius turns with correct and controlled air speed and gentle rollout on final, approximately 2500' from the touch down point. The last available ADS-B data point reveals a gentle rollout onto final with ground speed of 69 kts. (The landing configuration stall speed for the RV-9A is 45 kts. And MSL altitude of approximately 1000' and AGL altitude of 400' - 500'.



On short final, a forward slip was initiated as is commonly utilized given the RV-9A has long, high aspect ratio wings and a fixed pitch prop. On short final, as I was descending from above the tree line of the forest immediately to my right and just as I was passing a cut out for a road that is cut through the forest perpendicular to the runway, I experienced a downdraft and Crosswind from the right resulting in marked increased sink rate and weather vaning to the right. Go around procedure was immediately initiated, however, the landing gear encountered the tops of the trees in the adjacent, wooded area, resulting in continued loss of altitude, right wing struck a large tree and remain lodged in the upper portion of the tree. The aircraft came to rest, wedged between two trees, upright, though in a nose down attitude.

Image from ForeFlight "3D" image. The green line is controlled flight on short final. The yellow line is approximately where loss of controlled flight occurs with down draft and weather vaning to the right and occurs approximately where a road cuts through the forest and may have been a factor in the change of incident wind.



The nearest automated weather, is from KAIK, Aiken Regional, 17.5nm to the South and at 10:12 EDT, their ADS-B broadcast list the wind at 270 degrees at 7 mph.

Lastly, several important factors limited the injury from this accident.

1. No post crash fire. We flew from Saint Augustine, Florida, to Avery county airport in North Carolina and did not fuel the aircraft in North Carolina in order to decrease the takeoff weight by approximately 150 pounds to improve the climb performance for a larger safety margin while flying in the North Carolina mountains. At the time of the accident at Saluda county there was approximately 10 gallons of fuel total and range of 1 1/2 hr. Additionally, the right wing was completely sheared off the aircraft, resulting in even less fuel on board.

2. The aircraft came to rest upright, and therefore was easier to exit the cockpit.

3. The sliding canopy appears to have been jettison prior to the crash, also allowing ease of exiting the aircraft. Since the sliding canopy can become jammed with an off field landing I always carry a small pick ax [in] the aircraft glove box and my off field or ditching check list includes unlatching the sliding canopy and very forcefully sliding back the canopy with the goal of jettisoning the canopy prior to the impact. While I do not specifically remember unlatching and jettisoning the canopy, the canopy was found in pristine condition and with the exception of the rear mounts were significantly damaged. This made for quick and easy exiting from the cockpit

4. When I initially purchased the aircraft over 2000 hours ago, I installed an optional submarine belt mounting bracket available from vans aircraft in order to install a motorsport certified five point harness. As part of my pre-takeoff and pre-landing checklist I physically check that the submarine made belts are being utilized and that this five point harness for both pilot and passenger are snug. The NTSB inspector Investigating this accident states she has been investigating small general aviation accident for over 30 years, she felt that this five point harness greatly limited our injuries and despite the cockpit being destroyed, both pilot and passenger suffered no lacerations, nor internal injuries nor clavicle fractures. Both however, did suffer spine fractures consistent with spine compression injuries.