

Accident at Old Rhinebeck on 7/28/2024

Airboss Statement

Pre-show briefing was conducted on time and as scheduled at 1:00pm on 7/28/2024.

Coming out of the briefing I observed the pilots to have sequestered themselves and were discussing their multi-ship activities.

The airshow began on time at 2:30pm same day and proceeded normally.

There were no malfunctions or changes to the plan or schedule in advance of the event in question taking place.

At the start of the Bombing Raid multi-ship act, approximately 3:20, I observed each aircraft depart in succession.

There was a total of six aircraft in the air.

They formed up in their V formation and made the first pass down the showline, on that day due to the prevailing winds, heading to the north.

After the first pass, and while looping back around in a right turn for the second pass the pilots transitioned to an echelon formation as briefed and discussed.

On that second showline pass, as is previously discussed and choreographed, the aircraft transition out of the echelon formation one by one via a pull up into a climbing turn away from the formation culminating into a 180 degree turn that puts them on the back stretch and establishes a line in trail of the full complement of aircraft, each following behind the aircraft in front of them, after which the performance proceeds with aircraft operating independently in trail of each other and no longer in formation.

During this transition from echelon to line-in-trail, I observed the #4 and #5 aircraft lineup with appearance of being stacked on top of each other and then make contact, with what was perceived as a slight "bump". They then immediately separated. The aircraft on top, the Great Lakes, #5, pulled up and to the right. The aircraft on bottom, the Bucker, #4, was observed in a shallow descending turn to the left. Aircraft #'s 1-3 had already made their normal turn outs exiting the formation and were heading south to reposition for next steps. They were not involved in the event. Aircraft #6 followed #4 in a standoff position. This concluded the primary initial event.

I observed #5, the Great Lakes, pull up and to the right and begin an orbit. He appeared to be in full control of the aircraft at all times.

I observed #4, the Bucker, in a shallow descending turn which then crossed the north end of the runway, effectively in a left crosswind for the active runway. I then observed him behind me through the trees on a pseudo-downwind, over Norton Road which parallels the runway. He was low and I could hear his propeller making unusual noise. I then understood fully that he was disabled. I then lost sight and sound of him.

In these moments I put attention back to the airshow box and observed the #'s 1-3 aircraft continuing in orbit on the east side of the airfield. #5 was also observed remaining in orbit within the box.

I observed the #6 aircraft follow the disabled Bucker around westward, behind the property.

I then observed the #6 aircraft reappear south of the field in full view. I did not see the disabled Bucker reappear. I then decided he was most likely not returning to the field. I dispatched ground crew in our UTV with the EMT to go find the disabled Bucker. They proceeded to do so. Other senior ground crew were observed responding on foot to the south end of the property. I signaled airshow staff to call 911, and then proceeded to do so as well.

I then turned my attention to the runway and verified it was clear and did not require additional action to assure its availability.

I then observed the other five aircraft begin to make their individual approaches and recover to the airfield in an orderly fashion.

I vacated the observation tower to assist pilots as they recovered to the airfield.

I informed the announcer that the final flying act of the airshow would not be flown and issued a ground stop for all aircraft at that time.

I checked briefly with other pilots that there were no further issues. With all flight ops ceased and all other aircraft secured on the field, I then proceeded down to the south end of the property to determine next steps for the disabled Bucker. I observed full EMS response and ascertained that the pilot appeared unharmed.

With knowledge that there were no apparent injuries, I indicated to non-affected pilots and ground crew to head for the meeting room to conduct a de-brief.

NYS Troopers responding to the scene asked for statements from the pilots involved as well as from me. These were provided. Fire Department on-scene commander asked if FAA should be notified. I said yes. He proceeded to place notification through his own channels.

I placed a call to the Saddle Brook FSDO and did not get through to anyone in person. I then placed a call to Wayne Vanstenburg directly and left him a voicemail.

I then joined the de-brief in progress and we discussed the event and the immediate aftermath and response.

EMS and NYS Troopers departed.

We maintained security of the Bucker crash site overnight Sunday into Monday.

I emailed Front Line Ops Manager on Monday morning and he responded promptly.

We maintained security of the crash site Monday throughout and overnight into Tuesday.

FAA arrived on site Tuesday morning.

On Tuesday, 7/30/2024, Aerodrome management and its Board of Trustees made formal decision to cancel the next immediate airshow to the public, regularly scheduled for 8/3/2024, as well as any and all flight ops for that day, and in its place conduct a Safety Stand Down and Review for the entire airshow operation from 2-4pm, with breakout sessions to occur after as warranted.

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Clayton Hammond



7/31/2024

Rhinebeck Aerodrome Museum