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Aviation Safety / Eastern Region

Date: 08/29/2024
Subject: ERA24LA356 Pilot Statement
Contact: Lloyd Murphy, Pilot

The following is the statement describing the accident events provided by the pilot via email:

The following statement recounts my events leading to the damage to my BushCaddy LSA aircraft at KCRW (Charleston WV), date of 8/20/2024 at approximately 6 pm in the evening. I was flying from Louisa Virginia to Oklahoma City. I live in Blanchard Oklahoma. Planned overnight in Charleston WV and again in Springfield MO.

I purchased the plane on 8/15/24. On 8/18/24, I flew commercial to Charlotte NC, rented a car and drove to Louisa Virginia. The plane was located at KKKU. I spent 8/19 & 8/20 training with a local instructor, Lakey Harkrader, he was familiar and had time in the BushCaddy. I Flew 6 hrs with the instructor and 1 hour solo at KKKU, with a total of 42 landings in those 2 days. It had been a long time since my original tailwheel training in 1995. And only a few hours flying a tailwheel over the years of 1995 to 2024. The weather was VFR. I got a weather brief on the ForeFlight app on my iPad. I departed KKKU at approximately 1330. I flew to Charlottesville VA to fill up with fuel and pick up a friend of mine, Chet Cornelison, who was a passenger with me on my return trip home. Chet is not a licensed pilot. The sky was clear and the runway at Charlottesville was dry. Atis was reporting winds 020 at 12, gusting to 19. Landed on runway 3 with no issues.

Departed Charlottesville at approximately 1500 enroute to KCRW with 24 gallons of fuel. VFR with clear skies. I requested a VFR flight following with ATC. I had filed an ADSB Deviation Form the night before the flight due to the BushCaddy not having ADSB out, and Charleston was Class C airspace. The flight was approved. It was approximately 3 hrs enroute from Charlottesville to Charleston. Charleston was a planned fuel stop and an overnight stay. I Landed with approximately 5 gallons in the right wing and 9 in the left wing.

10 minutes out of Charleston, I listened to Atis. Winds were reporting 350 at 9. The weather was VFR and the runway was dry. There were no mechanical issues with the plane, the engine was running as expected. On short final, I asked the tower for a wind check, the response was 010 at 8. I touched down on runway 5. The plane did weathervane into the wind and I applied left aileron to lower the upwind wing. I applied the right rudder to get the plane straight on the centerline. The plane swerved to the right, back to the left, right again, then on the next swerve to the left, the tail came around. The right main gear collapsed and folded underneath the fuselage. The right wing fell to the ground. The propeller struck the ground and the engine stopped. I estimate at the time of the ground loop, I was traveling at approximately 20 mph. Approach speed on the BushCaddy is 60 MPH and stall speed is 35 MPH. Neither myself or Chet sustained any injury of any kind. I turned off the ignition and the fuel and informed the tower that we had a ground loop and were disabled on runway 5. Again, there was approximately 5 gallons of 100LL avgas in the right wing tank and 9 gallons in the left wing. There were no fuel leaks, but shortly after, the right tank did leak some fuel onto the runway. I believe it was coming out of the vent due to the down angle of the tank because the right wing was laying on the ground. there was no direct damage to the fuel take. The fuel tank is near the fuselage and holds 12 gallons. The damage to the right wing was on the outer last 6 foot, approximately.

When I got out of the plane and was standing on the runway, I noticed the runway grooving was very deep. In my opinion, that was a factor in the gear collapsing. I Think the right main tire and possibly the rim caught one of the grooves just right and caused the gear to collapse. I believe, had the runway been smooth, the gear would not have collapsed. Again, we were traveling at such a slow speed, approximately 20 MPH, possibly slower.

Emergency vehicles showed up within a few minutes. We were offered medical care, but neither myself or Chet needed that. They did check our vitals.....Pulse and blood pressure. Both were elevated due to the current circumstances but we did not need any further medical attention. When the ambulance arrived, we both declined any treatment or a trip to the hospital. I gave written statements on the scene to the airport fire department, the local police and the ambulance.

This statement is correct and true to the best of my knowledge.