



Lucas Winn
Aviation Accident Investigator
Aviation Safety, Eastern Region

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Subject: ERA25LA112, Inspectors Statement

Contact: Bruce Vestal, Aviation Safety Inspector, South Carolina FSDO

The following is a statement sent to the NTSB by Bruce Vestal of the FAA by email.

Good morning, I have completed my investigation of the accident of N84048, a Cessna 172 K serial number 17258314. The accident occurred during landing at the Rock Hill, SC airport (KUZA) on 2/9/2025.

There was one person on board the aircraft, a student pilot practicing take off and landings preparing for a DPE check ride for initial Private Pilot, the student pilot did not report any injuries from the accident the first responders or airport personnel. According to a text message that was sent from the student pilot to a FAA Front Line Manager of the SC FSDO, "Plane weathervaned to the right. Instead of hitting left rudder (which I think in retrospect would have been the appropriate reaction), I gave it throttle to try to takeoff again before going into grass. As it began to take off, the prevailing wind picked up the right wing, it tilted to the left, and the left wing clipped the ground".

I was assigned the accident on 2/10/2025, I made telephone contact with the student pilot, Mr. William "Tim" Smoak around 0930 and schedule a meeting with him at the Rock Hill airport FBO since that was more convenient for him than driving to the SC FSDO in West Columbia, SC. At 1419 I receive an email from John Adams Hodge, Attorney Hodge & Associates, LLC that he asked by Mr. Smoak to assist in the accident involving N84048. I relayed that information to my Front-Line Manager, based on the initial student pilot text statement, the student pilot portion of the

investigation has been assigned to an Operations Inspector (Mr. Billy Marlowe) and was only to complete the airworthiness portion of the accident investigation and complete the initial 8020-23.

I traveled to Rock Hill airport on 2/11/2025 and met with Mr. Smoak, Mr. Smoak was very nice but only presented a single piece of paper with the following information that his attorney said to present, Total flight time 166.7, time in the last 90 days 14.0, copy of CFI solo endorsement dated 2/9/2025 and email address. I accepted, thanked Mr. Smoak for his time as I knew Inspector Marlowe from our office would be conducting an investigation regarding the student pilot and the flight operation of N84048 accident.

I then met with the owner (Kevin Kyser) of the ACES Flight School, A Part 61 Operation at the Rock Hill airport. Mr. Kyser presented the aircraft maintenance records for N84048 and I performed a records review. The records were very well organized and in sections listed by, Airframe, Engine, Propeller, Avionics, Airworthiness Directives, 337's, ICA's, 8130.s, Yellow Tags. ACES Flight School has its own A&P/IA mechanics on staff. The A&P/IA mechanics that were currently performing maintenance on N84048 were checked and their A&P / IA certificates were valid.

N84048 100 hour and Annual inspections were properly documented in the maintenance records, the Altimeter and Transponder certifications were properly documented by a 145 repair station, airworthiness directives are being tracked with recurring AD's being complied with and documented in the maintenance records along with the ELT and battery replacement times. I completed my review of the aircraft records. The mechanics had the proper tech data for the aircraft, engine, propeller and appliances, tooling was checked, and calibration records were present, mechanics were able to show traceably for parts present. I then made way to the aircraft that had been recovered and was tied down on the ramp.

You have the pictures, the aircraft is pretty much destroyed, Kevin Kyser told me yesterday the insurance company has totaled the aircraft, he also said he was going to try to buy the aircraft for the insurance company, I asked him if he would send me an email to that fact or send me something from the insurance company to that fact.

As far as the aircraft, I completed a walkaround, that flight controls were all attached, the engine was pretty much held on by two cargo straps, you can see from the accident scene photos the engine mount and none gear was broken off, there was some additional damage for the aircraft being recovered for the accident scene since the nose gear and right main gear was tore off during the accident. There is

major structural damage in the nose firewall lower cabin area right lower main landing gear area, major damage throughout the left and right wings, buckling around both rear flap wing attach points, major damage to the left and right rear horizontal stabilizers, instrument panel has come loose on the pilots side., major damage on the engine mount.