

Event Report

Date: February 4, 2025

Pilot Information

Name: Levaughn Battick

Aircraft details

Aircraft type: Cessna 172 Skyhawk

Aircraft operator: Mid TN Aviation Academy

Location of Event: KCKV

Details of Event:

On Monday, February 3th 2025, my training flight was scheduled for 2:45 PM. I arrived at the hangar where the aircraft was. The aircraft was not grounded in Flight Schedule Pro (FSP), the software used at the school to track aircraft status. Had it been grounded, I wouldn't have been able to check it out and there would be no preflight and flight. It was not grounded hence I conducted a brief pre-flight inspection. The cowling screws were in place, and the aircraft seemed airworthy and intact to the best of my knowledge. Since there were no indications of any issues and I had flown the aircraft less than 24 hours ago, I proceeded with the flight.

The take-off was normal and the aircraft performed as expected. However, shortly after I climbed to approximately 3,000 feet, within about a minute of levelling off, the cowling suddenly detached. The incident was abrupt with no prior warning signs. My visibility was severely obstructed, and I began losing altitude. The aircraft was not able to climb. Assessing the situation, my priority was to land the aircraft safely and as soon as possible. I declared an emergency with Forth Campbell Approach and returned the aircraft to the airport. Despite not being able to see the runway, I was able to perform an emergency landing with no physical injuries and minimal damage to the aircraft in the RWY safety area.

After landing I checked on my student to ensure he was unharmed. Once confirmed, we exited the aircraft, where the emergency services were already waiting. They asked if we okay and I assured them we were. I then called my chief Mr. Don and informed him about what had just occurred with my aircraft. He informed me that the aircraft had been undergoing maintenance and should not have been flown. I replied that there were no signs or indications of the aircraft being in maintenance. According to standard procedure, aircrafts undergoing maintenance require clear documentation where it must be grounded in FSP, preventing instructors from checking them out. This procedure was not observed according to protocol leading to the oversight.

Additionally, my chief suggested that the cowling screws were not in place physically. However, that's incorrect; if the screws had been missing the cowling would have detached much earlier. Moreover,

most of the screws were still in place after landing (please see pictures below, taken shortly after landing).



Picture 1: Cowling condition after landing – most screws still in place.



Picture 2: Cowling condition after landing, some screws missing possibly during detachment.



Picture 3: Cowling condition after landing – all 3 screws on top of cowling present.

I am available to provide further information or clarification if needed.

Sincerely,

Levaughn Battick

Certified Flight Instructor