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Eastern Region

Date: February 20, 2025
Subject: ERA25LA118 Student Pilot Interview
Contact: Cristian Abarca

Mr. Abarca was contacted via telephone to discuss the accident of N1159K. The following is a summary of that conversation:

Mr. Abarca confirmed that he was the student pilot onboard N1159K. He was asked to explain the accidents events. He stated that this was a night flight and that they had already completed three landings. The landings were smooth and there were no issues. He stated as he was preparing for the fourth landing, his instructor stated that this would be a simulated engine out scenario. Mr. Abarca set up to land with the simulated engine out and commented that there was a bit of a head wind. He also commented that the airplane was descending quickly, but felt that they would make the runway.

Mr. Abarca continued by stating that there were "1 or 2" lights on the side of the runway that were illuminated, but none in the center of the runway. He stated that he could not judge how high he was because of the lights not working, but stated that he was "aiming for the numbers". As the airplane approached the runway, he head a noise that was similar to hitting a pothole in a car and he assumed that a tire went flat, but then a vibration worsened. After that, they were attempting to keep the airplane on the centerline in an effort to stay on the runway.

Mr. Abarca stated that the instructor took over the airplane and the radio communications immediately after the pothole feeling.

Mr. Abarca was asked to clarify which runway lights were working and which ones were inoperable. He stated that there were a couple of lights to the left and to the

right of the runway. Three lights on each side of the runway were working, but the lights "in the middle" were not working. Since there were no lights in the center, it made it difficult to judge the landing.

Mr. Abarca was asked if there were any problems with the airplane prior to the accident and he responded with "no". He then stated that he believed they may have landed the airplane a "little flat". He was asked if they touched down before the threshold and he responded that they did not touchdown prior to the threshold and that it was on the runway but "flat". He stated that it was on pavement and not on grass, but he also felt they may have hit one of the lights that were not working.

Mr. Abarca was asked how many flight hours he had at the time of the accident. He replied with 55-60 hours.

-End of conversation

Mr. Abarca was contacted via telephone again on February 20 for follow-up questions. The following is a summary of that conversation.

Mr. Abarca was asked if the inoperative runway lights were out for the previous landings. He replied that only the three lights on each side, green in color, were working for the entire flight and previous three landings. Mr. Abarca was asked if he and his instructor discussed the runway lights being inoperative. He replied with "no" and that he was unsure if the instructor knew that they were even inoperative.

Mr. Abarca was asked if he could identify which lights were operating if he saw an aerial photo. He stated that he could and provided the email address

[REDACTED]

-End of conversation

An email with an aerial photograph of the approach end of runway 27 was sent to Mr. Abarca on February 20, 2025. He replied the same day with a different photograph of the same approach end showing which lights were operating and which lights were not working. The photograph from Mr. Abarca is below.

