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Aviation Accident Investigator
Aviation Safety, Eastern Region

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Subject: ERA25LA122, Inspectors Statement

Contact: Thomas Gilbert, Aviation Safety Inspector, FAA Allentown FSDO

The following was submitted to the NTSB by Thomas Gilbert at the Allentown Flight Standards Office and was extracted from a draft FAA form 8020-23.

PILOT WILLIAM WRIGHT WAS UNINJURED AND GAVE A VERBAL STATEMENT. HE SAID HE TOOK OFF AND ENGINE POWER REDUCED TO NEAR IDLE ABOUT 200 FEET AGL. HE TURNED FOR AND LANDED IN THE OPEN PARKING LOT. HE STATED THAT HE FORGOT TO REMOVE COWL PLUGS BEFORE TAKEOFF. THE AIRCRAFT WAS RESTING INVERTED AND LARGELY INTACT. THE NOSE GEAR WAS BROKEN OFF AND THE CANOPY WAS REMOVED. OBVIOUS AIRCRAFT DAMAGE INCLUDES RIGHT WING OBD SECTION DAMAGE, RIGHT FUSELAGE BELLY STRUCTURE AT GEAR MOUNT BUCKLED AND TORN, LEFT AILERON DAMAGED, VERTICAL STABILIZER AND RUDDER DAMAGED, BELLY SKIN DAMAGE, PROP AND COWL DAMAGE. THIS DAMAGE MEETS THE THRESHOLD FOR SUBSTANTIAL DAMAGE PER §830.2.

GROUND SCARRING SUGGESTED THE AIRCRAFT LANDED ON A HEADING OF APPROXIMATELY 70 DEGREES, BOUNCED ONCE AND TOUCHED DOWN AGAIN ON THE NOSE GEAR 55 FEET LATER, AND CAME TO REST INVERTED 99 FEET FROM INITIAL TOUCH DOWN POINT.

THE AIRWORTHINESS CERTIFICATE, ASSOCIATED LIMITATIONS, REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE, AIRCRAFT AND ENGINE MANUALS, AND A PLAUSIBLE WEIGHT AND BALANCE WERE ABOARD THE AIRCRAFT. MAINTENANCE RECORD REVIEW SHOWED THAT THE LAST ANNUAL CONDITION INSPECTION WAS

CONDUCTED NINE MONTHS AND 133 HOURS PREVIOUS ON 5/10/2024 AT 1229 HOURS HOBBS TIME; AS WELL AS TWO ENGINE OIL CHANGES.

EXAMINATION OF THE AIRCRAFT SHOWED THAT FUEL WAS PRESENT IN BOTH TANKS AND THE GASCOLATOR ON THE FIREWALL. A GASCOLATOR FUEL SAMPLE SHOWED AUTOGAS WITHOUT OBVIOUS CONTAMINATION. FUEL VALVE WAS FOUND IN THE LEFT TANK POSITION. NO OBVIOUS DEFECTS WITH THE IGNITION SYSTEM WERE NOTED. THROTTLE AND CARBURETOR HEAT CONTROLS WERE CONTINUOUS AND CORRECT. RUDDER, ELEVATOR, AND AILERON CONTROLS WERE CONTINUOUS AND CORRECT. FOAM COWL PLUGS WERE FOUND IN THE RIGHT UPPER COWL OPENING, THE CENTER COWL OPENING, AND IN THE HOSE WHERE THE INDUCTION AIR FILTER SHOULD HAVE BEEN.

THE PILOT STATED THAT HE HAD REMOVED THE INDUCTION AIR FILTER THE DAY BEFORE AND FORGOT TO REINSTALL IT. HE REMARKED THAT THE COWL PLUG MUST HAVE GOTTEN SUCKED INTO THE INLET HOSE DURING INITIAL CLIMB, CAUSING THE ENGINE POWER LOSS. NO PREIMPACT ANOMALIES WERE NOTED IN THE AIRCRAFT RECORDS OR WITH THE AIRCRAFT AND ENGINE THAT WOULD HAVE PRECLUDED NORMAL OPERATION EXCEPT THE INDUCTION AIR INLET HOSE WAS OBSTRUCTED BY A FOAM COWL PLUG.