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Date: May 21, 2025

Subject: ERA25LA207, Flight Instructors Statement

Contact: Sean Swift, Flight Instructor, Jack Brown Seaplane Base INC

The Following is a statement sent to Anthony Pujado of the FAA Orlando Flight Standards District Office regarding an accident involving Piper PA-18-150 Amphibian, N38BS.

Date: March 29, 2025

Time: 11:50 AM

Location: Lake Jesse, F57

On March 29, 2025, at approximately 11:50 AM, I was conducting a mock check ride with a student for the Airplane Single Engine Sea rating. The pre-flight inspection was carried out according to the standard checklist for the aircraft. We added a quart of oil, sumped all fuel tanks, and ensured that all components of the aircraft were in proper working order. I closely supervised the inspection as the student completed each task.

Following the pre-flight inspection, I instructed the student to provide a passenger safety briefing, as well as a briefing on the use of the life vest in the event of an emergency. With the pre-flight complete, we were ready to get onto the water.

At this point, weekend boating traffic was beginning to increase. As we started the engine start checklist, I observed at least three boats on the water: one along the east shoreline, one just in front of the base heading west toward the western shoreline, and another on the southern end of the lake. To avoid any potential conflict, we decided to wait for the boat traffic to clear the vicinity of the ramp before starting the engine.

The wind was blowing at approximately 12 knots, gusting 24 knots from the southeast.

Consequently, we planned to initiate our takeoff from the northwest corner of the lake, into the southeast wind. While waiting for the boat traffic to dissipate, we taxied along the north side of the lake to allow the engine to warm up. Upon completing our engine run-up checklist, everything appeared to be in order, with all readings within the expected parameters.

As we lined up for takeoff, we observed several jet skiers entering the water from the southeastern shore and heading toward the western shoreline. We opted to wait until the jet skiers cleared the area before beginning our takeoff roll. Once the jet skiers had moved to the middle of the western shoreline, we conducted our pre-takeoff checklist and initiated the takeoff, being sure to keep the jet skiers in our line of site.

The student was at the controls while I was on the communications. We began the takeoff run, got onto the step and were quickly airborne, climbing out smoothly. However, at approximately 300 feet indicated, the engine began to sputter. The sputtering stopped momentarily but resumed after about two seconds. At this point, I called "My controls" to the student and immediately initiated a descending left turn toward the eastern shoreline of the lake to remain over the water.

Given our altitude, we were not in a position to clear the trees at the southern end of the lake to make an emergency landing in Lake Idyllwild. I also chose not to make right traffic due to the reduced available area and the presence of jet skiers and a pontoon boat. As we completed the left turn over the eastern shoreline of Lake Jesse, the engine continued to sputter as we found ourselves in a tailwind.

Before I could maneuver the aircraft into a more favorable crosswind landing position, the engine went quiet. At this point, I made the decision not to initiate any further turns that might induce a spin. We then experienced mechanical turbulence from the southeastern tree line. The aircraft caught the downdraft and began descending rapidly toward the water. Despite the rapid descent, I was able to bring the plane into a wings-level attitude before impact, but the aircraft struck the water with significant force.

Upon impact, the aircraft sustained damage to the left strut that connects the left float to the fuselage, as a result of the initial impact with the water. This impact caused the propeller to puncture the left float and led to a bent wing strut. Despite the damage, the aircraft remained afloat. I immediately opened the hatch and instructed my student to evacuate the aircraft, leaving all belongings behind and standing on the

floats. Both my student and I got out of the aircraft safely without injuries. The plane was towed back to the base and pulled out of the water. Given the low altitude, and our limited options, I believe this maneuver, though not ideal, was necessary to provide us with the best possible outcome under the circumstances.

-Sean Swift