



Ryan Enders
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Eastern Region

Date: June 17, 2025

Subject: ERA25LA226 Front Seat Passenger Interview

Contact: Adam Smith

Mr. Smith was contacted via telephone to discuss the accident of N15PM. The following is a summary of that conversation.

Mr. Smith stated that the plan was to fly to Murfreesboro, TN. He stated that he is not a pilot but had been in a few small airplanes before. They were flying North towards the airport and about 7 miles from the destination at about 6000 to 7000 ft when the pilot radioed to the airport stating his request to land. ATC wanted them to "fly around" to the far runway because of the wind direction and the pilot began to descend. About 3 miles from the airport and at about 3000 ft, the pilot radioed to the tower stating that they needed to land on the runway they were facing because the engine was not responding. The tower responded and confirmed the runway was clear for them to land straight in. About 30 seconds later, the pilot radioed back to the tower and stated that they would not be able to make the runway. They saw a field on the left side of the airplane and attempted to make an emergency landing there.

Mr. Smith commented that the engine failed, but he had headphones on so he was unsure if the engine totally stopped running. He was not sure if the engine was idling or if it had totally stopped. He could tell that it was a serious problem based on the pilot's facial expressions and he did not want to ask him questions to let him concentrate on the situation. As they banked towards the open field, he noticed that it was a cemetery but noticed that they were low and would not make it. He said that they were not gliding well and that the ground was coming quickly. The airplane almost made the field but contacted trees just a few feet before it. The airplane contacted a couple of trees and then immediately went nose down in a split second.

Mr. Smith discussed evacuating the airplane and the extent of his and the other occupant's injuries.

He was asked how he knew the pilot. He stated that the pilot was his cousin and that they attend the same gym. This was the first time he had flown with him.

Mr. Smith was asked if the pilot performed a preflight inspection of the airplane. He replied that they did not get to the airport at the same time. The pilot had "everything lined up" and the airplane was fueled before he arrived. When he arrived, they got in the airplane and started up. The pilot did a couple of checks and the engine idled before they took off. Mr. Smith also commented that he wanted to pay the pilot for fuel, but the pilot stated that everything was handled, so he was unsure how much the airplane had in it.

Mr. Smith added that the pilot did switch the fuel tanks during the flight and that he had done that during the duration of the flight. He stated that they were in the air about 2 hours and that the flight was mostly in a straight line, but that they did have to go around a couple of cloud formations.

The IIC asked Mr. Smith to describe the loss of engine power again. He described that as they were descending, he didn't notice anything unusual until the pilot asked the tower for a straight in landing. At that point he knew there was a problem but did not ask questions so that the pilot could concentrate. Mr. Smith was asked if the engine power ever returned after it was initially lost. He replied that it didn't ever come back and that if it had, they would have been able to make it to the cemetery. His gut tells him that the engine went off and stayed off.

-End of conversation