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Aviation safety, Eastern Region

Date: December 4, 2025

Subject: ERA26LA028, Pilot/mechanic statement

Contact: [REDACTED], Pilot

Below is a statement provided by [REDACTED], pilot and mechanic for PBY-6A Catalina, N222FT, regarding an accident that occurred on October 3, 2025, in Dayton Tennessee.

I am also the aircraft mechanic, A&P [REDACTED] spending aprox. 8 weeks on the aircraft fixing squawks and completing inspections.

PBY N222FT is on an approved progressive 25hr maintenance program. The aircraft had been on the ground in Dayton TN. for six months for some leaking hydraulic sequence valves. No seals were available for Consolidated aircraft. Ezell Aviation had seals made and sent out a right main gear actuator and sequence valves for the nose gear door pins and right main. After installation of parts, we cycled the main gear actuators and nose gear through several cycles of full up, full down position observing no leaks and maintained full 1000 psi system pressure. We serviced aircraft with 500 gals of avgas, 10 gals of 120W oil and 2 gals of 5606 hydraulic fluid. I arranged communications with a ground crew member with a hand held radio. I preflighted the aircraft for the first test flight with three crew members on board. A full power run up of both engines and system checks were good. Weather was VFR, visibility was better than 10 miles and winds, light and variable. We briefed for a local test flight and emergency procedures. Take off was from Runway 3 at about 1730 local time. At about 300 ft AGL after the landing gear was selected up, the flight engineer noticed we were losing hydraulic fluid from the right gear. The nose gear

and left main had fully retracted and the right gear was about half way up but not in the wheel well. The landing gear was then selected down with the assistance of the Aux hydraulic pump. Only the left main gear indicated down and green. The nose gear was up and the right main was down but not locked. We climbed to aprox. 1500 AGL and circled the field. Aircraft control was transferred to the co-pilot while the flight engineer and I pulled the emergency gear extension checklist and started with the right main gear. We followed the four steps in the procedure and used the right wheel well viewing port and access door to place the extension tool on the gear leg to push it over center. At that time, we had indication that the two main gear were down and two green lights. I checked the left main gear through the left gear viewing port and observed the gear to be over center and locked. We moved forward and followed the eight steps in the procedure to lower the nose gear. After we heard the snap lock go in and observed the nose gear down light on. I went back to the cockpit and reviewed the procedure as complete. We had three landing gear down green lights and no system pressure however we had good brakes through the brake system accumulator. I then briefed the visual approach to runway 3 and planned to fly over the field while communicating with the ground crew who also observed three wheels down. The plan was that after landing we would bring the aircraft to a complete stop and manually pin the gear and tow back to the ramp. At that time I resumed flying duties and called for the landing checklist. We entered the pattern and turning onto final, we completed the final approach checklist. The main gear touchdown was smooth at aprox. 800 ft down the runway. The nose was in the air for aerodynamic braking. At aprox. 1500 ft a could feel the left gear coming up and the left wing start to settle. I considered executing a go-around but felt that decision was now behind me. I was now starting to drift left of center line and applying brake pressure to the right brake for directional control while applying full right rudder. Accelerating back to a takeoff speed I did not think at this time was attainable. We slowed to about 35 or 40K when the left wing hit a taxiway sign and contacted the ground as we departed the left side of the runway and came to rest about 150 left of centerline and aprox. 2500 ft. down the runway. The gear lights still showed three green light with the right main and nose were down while the left gear was collapsed. We then shut down the engines with mixture control, turned off the mags and master switch and exited the aircraft out of the left main entry door with no one sustaining any injuries. There was no fuel spilled or post fire. The airport manager called the fire department which responded on scene about 20 mins after aircraft came to rest. The airport was then notam closed due to the close proximity of the aircraft to the runway. At about 0800 the next morning two truck cranes came to lift the airplane back to its gear and was then towed to the ramp. Post inspection of the aircraft revealed damaged to the last two feet of the keel and step where it made contact with the runway and came to rest on a rock. The left wing float was retracted for landing and only had very minor damage however the lower skin covering the float structure had

a 12"x8" hole from contact with a taxi sign. The structure at this time appears to be undamaged. The left wing shows some wrinkles on top of the wing from the leading edge to the trailing edge about 12 ft from the wing tip. The left main gear hydraulic actuator broke free of the landing gear where it mounts to the gear structure. The right wheel well was coated in hydraulic fluid and appears to be from the hard line mounted from the bottom of the actuator to the sequence valve. Inspection of the rest of the aircraft structure appears to be free of any deformation of skin or missing rivets. Attach points of outer wing panel, strut attach points, pylon and fuselage also appear to be undamaged.

The reason for the test flight was due to the extended maintenance and aircraft inspections that were performed over the last 12 months the aircraft sat at the Mark Anton Airport 2A0. I selected the crew that had the most recency of maintenance and flight experience with this aircraft. After the test flight we planned on local flights to gain currency for the crew then to fly to Cullman AL, KCMD. Looking back at what I would do different would have been to brief the approach to a firm landing to see that the landing gear would support the weight of the aircraft and then do a go-around while we still had flying speed. Then once airborne make the decision on whether a safe landing could be accomplished. What I briefed was to plan a soft landing. When the left gear started to retract, I had lost too much airspeed and was starting to lose direction control because of the adverse yaw this aircraft produces while trying to hold the left wing up. Adding power at this time to start a go-around I felt would not be successful and that decision point was well behind me.