



Investigator: Gene Rambo
Title: Air Safety Investigator
Division: AS – Eastern Region

Date: 09 July 2026

Subject: ERA26LA259 – Pilot Interview

Contact: [REDACTED]

I spoke with the pilot by telephone on this date. Initially asked about his injuries, he stated that he had broken his collarbone and had stitches in his scalp. Those injuries, he said, were caused when he was inverted and released his seatbelt and fell to the ground (ceiling). The pilot had been flying since 1981, and owned the accident airplane, a Maule M5, since July 2000. He has extensive experience in this airplane and is comfortable with it.

The pilot is a farmer, and has an uncharted grass airstrip on his property adjacent to the Mississippi River. He often uses the airplane to fly to nearby towns to pick up farm equipment parts, as it is a far drive to reach a river crossing. He maintains a hangar for the airplane at Union City Airport as well. The annual inspection had just been completed on 5/18/2026, and his Biennial Flight Review was done on 06/29/2026. He has a Basic Med medical certificate.

On the day of the accident, the pilot was flying for pleasure. It was his habit to land as close to the end of his grass runway as possible, rather than farther down the 1200-foot runway. The runway is surrounded by fields of soybeans, which are unusually tall and thick this year. On short final, the pilot stated that it was his impression that a slight headwind suddenly disappeared, and the wheels settled into the crops several feet shy of the runway. The wheels tangled in the vines and the airplane flipped over onto its back on the first part of the runway. He was not injured until he released his seatbelt.

The pilot affirmed that there were no mechanical issues with the aircraft, and that the accident was his own fault.