



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

Date: 08/19/2026

Subject: ERA26LA300 - Pilot Telephone Interview

Contact: [REDACTED]

The pilot was interviewed by telephone on this date. The pilot stated that he was uninjured and that the passenger is still in the hospital but is to be released next week.

The airplane was a Great Lakes biplane built by Waco Classic Aircraft. The pilot had owned another Great Lakes in the past but sold it about 10 years ago. He bought this one about 3 years ago, and has "hundreds" of hours in the two. He also has extensive flight experience in a number of aircraft he owns or has owned, including a Stearman biplane, a Piper J3 Cub, a Beecraft Baron, an L-39 military trainer jet, a North American T6 trainer, an R44 helicopter, a Honda jet, and others, including being an active glider pilot. He has never been a professional pilot.

The accident flight was a local flight from Seminole Glider Port (6FL0), a residential airport with a N/S 4000 ft grass runway. The pilot's home is at the northern end of the runway. The runway has a 1,200 ft cleared extended centerline clearway on the northern end. The pilot stated that his practice, when landing to the south, was to descend over the clearway so that he touched down as close as possible to the end of the runway so that he could turn directly into his home or with minimum back taxi without using brakes. He used a target speed for his approaches and judges his descent rate visually to touch down on the very end of the runway. On that day, he had departed to the north, but on his return he was landing to the south. He described the weather as CAVU, with little or no wind.

The passenger on the accident flight was a larger man with broad shoulders. The pilot stated that he was more used to flying alone or carrying smaller individuals. The passenger sits in the front, with the pilot in the rear cockpit. On this flight, as he made a left turn from base to final he was "on-speed" with his usual 65-70 kt but was having trouble seeing past the front passenger to see his aiming point. As he leaned over the left side to see ahead, he believes that he may have drifted or rolled to the left and that he was also was in a higher than normal sink rate due to failing to account for the heavier than normal passenger. At that point, the left wing hit a tree on the left side of the clearway and spun the airplane around and to the ground. The airplane slid onto the road at the northern end of the runway and burst into flames. He extricated himself from the airplane and helped his passenger out.

The pilot reiterated that there was no mechanical issue with the airplane or any weather issues. He repeated that he had no excuse, and that he feels that he must have become complacent and that he didn't take into account the heavier than normal load in planning his approach.

The pilot was called back on 08/28/2026 and was asked for information to complete SAFTI entries to include flight time matrix, passenger information, and minor entries.