



NTSB RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Adam Gerhardt
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GAA – General Aviation Accident Investigation

Date: 7/2/2015
Persons Contacted: Nathanael David Smith (Student Pilot) / Sage Teichert (Flight Instructor)
NTSB Accident Number: GAA15CA153

Narrative:

The following record is a summary of a conversation that occurred over the telephone with the flight instructor and student pilot. The student pilot reported that he departed Rexburg Airport (KRXE) around 5:30AM MDT and landed at Joslin Field (KTWF) around 7:00AM. He reported that the flight was uneventful and he then departed for Challis (KLLJ) around 7:30AM. The student pilot stated that he knew the density altitude would be high, and he also stated that his flight instructor taught him the dangers of density altitude.

The student pilot reported that he planned to go through the Copper Basin Valley, about 5 or 10 miles south of Copper Basin airport (0U2). The student pilot explained that he became disoriented to the west of Smiley Mountain. He reported that he made somewhat of a steep turn and found himself flying down a valley toward Smiley Mountain. When he entered the valley he said he became concerned with trying to turn around; he was concerned with his distance from the canyon walls.

The student pilot reported that he attempted to put the airplane into a climb in the canyon, around 70 knots, to clear the ridge line. After the attempt to climb, he heard the stall warning horn intermittently and realized he could not make it over the ridge line. The student pilot said he then became focused on the emergency landing and set up to land into the terrain. He stated that he hit the first tree around 55 knots and then the airplane came to rest in the terrain. The student pilot confirmed that the left wing separated from the airplane upon impact.

The flight instructor stated that this flight plan was chosen mainly due to the student's flight time requirements for his training. During this part of the conversation, the student pilot's experience in mountainous terrain was questioned. The flight instructor explained that the student pilot should have had more mountainous flight training for this planned route and ultimately should not have been flying in this valley/ terrain.