

On August 28 2016 I was an eye witness to the accident that occurred on Rock Creek Airstrip. The events that I recall were after leaving Mark and Darrell off at the Missoula Airport (KMSO) We were to meet at the airstrip in approximately 25 minutes. Upon arriving at the airstrip and parking midfield along the runway I was asked to relocate due to being on "private property". Once I relocated at the far west end I had established communication with the airplane. They were going to fly overhead to observe the field and check for wind conditions and return for a normal landing. The airplane flew over head and re entered the traffic pattern. On a long final Mark radioed that they were inbound to land. The airplane was on a normal stabilized approach to landing. And no abnormal radio traffic was heard.

At approximately 15 feet above touch down zone the airplane began a climbing right hand turn. I would estimate a 30 to 40 degree bank was entered. The airplane continued its turn heading for the Interstate appearing to collide with the tree tops and disappearing behind them, a plume of black smoke was immediately seen. Because of the distance I was unable to determine whether the airplane had full or partial power to the engine at that time. After unloading my family out of my vehicle I rushed down the runway and proceeded to the aircraft. By the time I had arrived the airplane was engulfed in flame. The area was checked for anyone possibly being in the brush and to confirm there was no one who had exited the aircraft. The aircraft burned until the volunteer fire department arrived approximately 20 minutes after the accident.

Mark had previous experience landing at this airstrip prior, and had made three takeoff and landings earlier that morning prior to flying to Missoula from Ronan.

I would estimate Mark had five to eight flight hours in this particular aircraft prior to this day. He had been working on the purchase for several months, however had access to it over the last few months.

Darrell had some previous experience riding in the front seat of small aircraft, however had no formal flight training.

In my mind there is no explainable reason the aircraft would purposely enter a right turn when there was so much remaining runway ahead. And I do not believe that with the momentum the aircraft had it was in a stalled condition. There were no abnormal winds that afternoon and the wind speed I would estimate to be 6kts to a maximum of 8kts predominately down the runway, west to east.

Eric R Komberec
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