



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Stephen Stein
Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Aviation Safety – Western Pacific Region

NTSB Accident Number: WPR17LA177
Aircraft Registration & Make/Model: N70LA; Air Tractor AT-802A
Accident Location: Wells, Nevada
Accident Date: July 31, 2017

Note: The following interview was documented by the Investigator –In-Charge (IIC), Stephen Stein.

Interview #1 Summary

Kyle Shroeder
Aviation Safety Investigator, Air Tractor

E-mail correspondence date and time: August 10, 2017; 1138 PT

Mr. Shroeder held a brief meeting with a number of their pilots to discuss the tailwheel locking mechanism and its affect on takeoffs, landings, and cruise flight operations. Below is the summary of the comments that were provided to Mr. Shroeder:

- “1) The primary use of the tailwheel lock is to assist in taxiing straight in a crosswind.
- 2) On landing with an unlocked tailwheel, you would definitely notice it as soon as the tailwheel touches down due to a significant shimmy. (On a rough grass or dirt strip, it may not be as noticeable.)
- 3) An unlocked tailwheel on landing will not cause the aircraft to dart off the runway or lose control, the shimmy is the primary symptom of an unlocked tailwheel.

4) If the tailwheel is unlocked in flight, the pilot would not notice any unusual flying characteristics or vibrations. Additionally, the airloads on the tailwheel likely wouldn't be enough to move the tailwheel back to centered against the force of the lock pin.

5) If the pilot lands with the tailwheel unlocked and notices the shimmy, moving the lock lever to "locked" may or may not successfully lock the tailwheel until the aircraft has slowed enough to alleviate the shimmy."



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Interview #1 Summary

Jolene Supp
Airport Manager, Wells, Nevada

Interview date and time: August 24, 2017; 1241 PT

According to the LWL airport manager, the airport is equipped with two windsocks; both located south of runway 26 about midfield. She further remarked that in the summertime the area is occupied with thermals and other weather phenomena. Each year she receives reports from pilots who experience unforeseen rapid yaw moments, and losses of directional control, both in the airport traffic pattern and on the ground, sometimes accompanied by an impact with a runway light. These sudden changes in flight performance are reported during times of wind circulation and thermal activity.



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Interview #1 Summary

Julien Capers
Accident Pilot

Interview date and time: August 7, 2017; 1210 PT

Mr. Capers reported that he did not encounter any mechanical malfunctions or anomalies with the powerplant or the control system, with the exception of the landing phase of the accident flight when he was unable to maintain the airplane on the runway centerline. The accident pilot further stated that he lost both aileron and rudder authority during the accident sequence, but was able to move both the rudder and the aileron, only in part due to damage, after the airplane came to rest.

According to the pilot, he lost control as soon as the tail started to come down, but he is uncertain if the tail made contact with the ground or not. He did not observe a shimmy or vibration in flight or on the ground.

The accident pilot stated that he believes he landed in a thermal.