



MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

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

NTSB Accident Number: WPR18LA070
Aircraft Registration & Make/Model: N4027W; Piper PA-32-300
Accident Location: Reno, Nevada
Accident Date: January 17, 2018

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

Interview #1 Summary

David Dragoli
Director of Maintenance, Advanced Aviation, Reno

Interview date and time: April 24, 2018; 1530 PT

According to Mr. Dragoli, he started with Advanced Aviation, Reno in July 2017. At the time of the accident they employed two part time apprentices, an airframe and powerplant mechanic, another airframe and powerplant mechanic with inspection authorization, and himself who was also a certified mechanic with inspection authorization.

The apprentices are responsible for disassembling interiors and taking panels off for inspections. Mr. Dragoli stated that he doesn't have a scheduling sheet for employee assignments; only a whiteboard to show the status of each aircraft.

His airframe and powerplant mechanic was asked to install a JPI engine monitor. He thinks the mechanic removed the fuel line to check if they had the right size nipples for the installation. The mechanic told someone on his team that he put a wrench on the fuel line and that it was tight.

Mr. Dragoli reported that he never cautioned his team to restrict people from taking airplanes from the hangar without talking to the maintenance staff. He further remarked that this was a lack of communication.



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Interview #1 Summary

Bryan Herter
Airplane Owner

Interview date and time: April 24, 2018; 1429 PT

Mr. Herter stated that he is a part owner of Advanced Aviation, which runs the maintenance facility responsible for performing a recent JP instruments installation on his airplane, N4027W. At the time of the accident, the maintenance facility employed 4 people, which included 3 airframe and powerplant mechanics and a director of maintenance, the mechanic with inspection authority. The owner reported that he purchased the accident airplane in late December 2017 and was working on an insurance checkout at the time of the accident. He purchased a JP instruments engine monitoring system and had asked his maintenance department to install the unit.

On the day of the accident, the owner and his flight instructor had decided to fly to a to build some time for the owner's insurance checkout and test the engine monitor. They pulled the airplane out of the hangar and they both preflighted the airplane. During this time they confirmed the airplane had 50 gallons of fuel onboard. The engine start was normal; however, they were delayed taxiing to the run-up area due to a departing airplane. Once they reached the engine run-up area they observed a 100 rpm drop in both magnetos, constant fuel pressure, and verified that

the JPI was working normally. After they received their takeoff clearance, they taxied the airplane to runway 16L and added full power. The takeoff roll was uneventful as was the liftoff from the runway. They entered a 1,000 fpm climb, but as the airplane reached about 300 ft the engine completely stopped producing power and the avionics continued to function. The instructor took over the flight controls and the owner informed the tower that they were declaring an emergency. The instructor entered a right turn as they were cleared to land on runway 16R. During the turn, the owner surmised that the instructor became fixated on runway 25 as he maintained a hard right bank. After observing the stall light illuminate for 1-2 seconds, the owner announced they were stalling and that he was taking the airplane. The owner shoved the nose forward hard and the airplane began to "fly" again. He flared the airplane over gravel, approximately 10 ft above the ground, and the airplane impacted the ground hard, slid through gravel and came to rest.

Interview #2 Summary

Bryan Herter
Airplane Owner

Interview date and time: April 24, 2018; 1600 PT

Mr. Herter stated that the airplane had been uncowed by the maintenance team to work on the airplane and cowed back up the day before the accident. The owner believed it was implied that the airplane was ready to fly again; he never asked a mechanic if the airplane was ready to return to service.

Interview #3 Summary

Bryan Herter
Airplane Owner

Interview date and time: December 19, 2018; 1755 PT

According to Mr. Herter, both Mr. Phillips (his instructor) and he inspected the engine before the airplane was cowed up and everything looked secure. The owner then assumed that the airplane was finished and ready for return to service as both the owner and the instructor assumed the fuel system had never been opened since it was not primary to the JPI; like the EGTs were.

As a result of this accident, the maintenance facility now ensures there is a second set of eyes to review other mechanics' work and they also have a policy to verify that an airplane is finished and ready for return to service before it is flown.



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Interview #1 Summary

Robert Stave
Mechanic

Interview date and time: December 17, 2018; 0706 PT

Mr. Stave reported that he was an aircraft mechanic for the United States Air Force for about 24 years. He was not employed as an aircraft mechanic from 2009 – 2017 after leaving the military. He was subsequently employed by Advanced Aviation as an aircraft mechanic in September 2017 and his employment was terminated in February 2018.

Approximately 3 days before the accident, the mechanic was asked to install a JP instruments engine monitor. As he had never performed such an installation, he was being trained by another mechanic. He was asked to install the fuel sending unit portion of the engine monitor, so he elected to take the fuel line to the pump off. He then discovered that the fittings they purchased to install the sending unit did not fit, so the training mechanic asked for him to reinstall the fuel line. Mr. Stave was unable to get a wrench on the nut, so he borrowed someone else's wrench and tightened the nut. He believed it had it on all the way, but after the accident he opined that the must have caught the wrench on another nut that felt tight to him. He subsequently informed the training mechanic that he had put the fuel line back on.

When he started with the company, he was told that they record the entire job; not each component. At the time of the event, Mr. Stave was working on another aircraft and thought the owner and instructor were going to perform an operational check of the airplane without any intent to fly it. He didn't think the airplane had been returned to service since the installation had not yet been completed. The company subsequently terminated his employment, stating he was a liability as a result of the accident.



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Interview #1 Summary

Steven Phillips

Flight Instructor and Pilot-in-Command of Accident Airplane

Interview date and time: December 18, 2018; 1248 PT

Mr. Phillips reported that he was the pilot-in-command of the accident flight as the owner required 20 hours until he could be insured. In their pretakeoff briefings they had agreed that Mr. Phillips would assume control of the airplane in an emergency. When the airplane lost engine power there were few landing options as the area forward of them were city streets and a large ditch, so he elected to return to the airport. The stall light illuminated during the turn and they both pushed the nose down. The instructor that he lost his memory at this point, but as they flew together frequently, he imagined they would have pushed the nose down together.