



Memorandum for Record

Fabian Salazar
Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Aviation Safety – Western Pacific Region

NTSB Accident Number: WPR20LA135
Aircraft Registration & Make/Model: Piper PA-23-250
Accident Location: Hemet, CA.
Accident Date: April 30, 2020

Joshua Tirona
Fellow Company Pilot
May 2, 2020

In a telephone interview with Mr. Tirona, he stated that he was employed with the operator for one year, as of April. He flew the Piper Aztec, PA-23-250 but had not flown the accident airplane. He stated that they use a map to know the general location of the sites but use a light bar system to stay on track.

He said that they had been operating in the area since April 24th, and he and the accident pilot stayed at the same hotel. They always coordinated before the flights, during fuel stops and after the flights. He said that the accident pilot used Foreflight on his iPad as an aide to flying, and the airplane had a Garmin 430 on the instrument panel.

He stated that on the day of the accident he received a text form the accident pilot asking, “Are we starting late?” Josh replied with “Let’s start at 0800.” After reviewing the weather, Mr. Tirona texted “Marginal improvement, let push the start time to 0900,” and the accident pilot replied back with “OK.”

They arrived at the airport about 0923. From 0925 to about 1030 they performed their routine flight inspections.

About 1045, the two pilots entered N701DM, the airplane Mr. Tirona would be flying, and determined that N701DM would collect on Flight Plan 241, 240, and 239. N6521Y would collect on Flight Plan 223, and 224.

He stated that normally, the accident pilot would call ATC and relay their activities, but he did not think that he had done that on the day of the accident.

About 1045 to 1110, they waited on weather to clear. About 1110, he reported that the weather was no longer a factor. They planned to refuel in Palm Springs International Airport (PSP).

About 1015, prior to the engine starts, the accident pilot reported that he had a problem with his computer rate and that he kept receiving buffer errors. Mr. Tirona gave the accident pilot his back up hard drive to correct the problem.

About 1120 Mr. Tirona completed his runups and departed Chino Airport (CNO), Chino, California about 1125. Observed no adverse weather conditions while enroute. There was reduced ground visibility, flight visibility was about 10 statute miles. At an undetermined time, N701DM cancelled flight following on frequency 134.0. He was operating about 4 miles west of Palm Springs.

At a time between 1140 to 1210, N701DM received a distress call on frequency 122.22. Mr. Tirona attempted to call the accident pilot without success. Mr. Tirona received a second distress call but it was unintelligible.

He looked on his iPad and observed the accident airplane's icon descending rapidly. He noted the position on the map. He alerted ATC of an aircraft in distress. He looked for smoke on the ground and saw none. He did not hear an ELT alert either. He reported his operations department via cell phone. He requested a ramp check at French Valley Airport. He alerted other aircraft on CTAF frequency to be alert for a red and black Piper Aztec. About 1245 he contacted his operations via cell phone, asking if they had heard from the accident pilot.

About 1305 he was advised that the airplane had been found and he received a phone number to call.



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Francis Salisbury
Director of Maintenance, OCR Aviation
Long Beach

In an interview with the Director of Maintenance (DoM), Francis Salisbury) for OCR Aviation, Long Beach Airport (LGB), he stated that the airplane (N6521Y) had been worked on by OCR Aviation three times.

1. March 20, 2020, for replacement of a cylinder head temperature probe.
2. April 17, 2020, for oil change.
3. April 27, 2020, for oil change and Airworthiness Directives work.

The DoM stated the pilot did not have any other concerns about the airplane. The DoM stated that it was either this Aztec or the other one, but one of them had an issue with an oil leak and another maintenance facility. He also stated that the airplane was well worn.