

From: [Sonneson, Steve \(FAA\)](#)
To: [Smith Maja](#)
Subject: spark plug
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Below is what is written on the -9.

THE PILOT STATED THAT HE WAS APPROX. 3 MINUTES OUT FROM COMPTON WOODLEY AIRPORT AT APPROX. 1500 FEET ALTITUDE WHEN THE ENGINE STARTED RUNNING VERY ROUGH. HE DECLARED AN EMERGENCY AND TURNED BACK TO CPM AIRPORT AND WAS GOING TO LAND ON RUNWAY 7. AT THIS POINT, HE REDUCED POWER AND NOTED THAT THE ENGINE APPEARED TO SMOOTH OUT AND HE THEN DECIDED TO LAND ON RUNWAY 25L. THE PILOT MADE A VERY SHORT FINAL APPROACH. AT THIS POINT HE REALIZED THAT HE WAS NOT LINED UP FOR RUNWAY 25L AND MADE CORRECTIONS. THE AIRCRAFT WAS RAPIDLY LOSING ALTITUDE AND EXPERIENCED A VERY HARD LANDING. THE PILOT STATED THAT THE AIRCRAFT BOUNCED AFTER THE HARD LANDING AND VEERED OFF TO THE LEFT. THE AIRCRAFT WENT IN TO THE DIRT ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE RUNWAY AND SPUN AROUND CAUSING THE LEFT MAIN LANDING GEAR TO DEPART THE AIRCRAFT CAUSING SUBSTANTIAL DAMAGE TO THE AIRCRAFT.

ON DECEMBER 8, 2020, THE PILOT/OWNER/ BUILDER OF THE AIRCRAFT STATED THAT HE DISCOVERED THAT A SPARK PLUG HAD CAME LOOSE AND WAS LAYING IN THE BOTTOM OF THE COWLING STILL ATTACHED TO THE SPARK PLUG LEAD (WIRE) AND HE SUSPECTS THAT WAS THE REASON FOR THE ROUGH RUNNING ENGINE. IT IS UNCLEAR AT THIS TIME WHETHER THIS WAS A FAILURE OF A PART OR IF IMPROPER MAINTENANCE WAS THE CAUSE.

ON DECEMBER 17, 2020, INSPECTED AIRCRAFT AT OWNERS HANGAR. THE SPARK PLUG FROM NUMBER 2 CYLINDER BOTTOM POSITION WAS FOUND LAYING LOOSE IN THE ENGINE COMPARTMENT WITH THE IGNITION LEAD STILL ATTACHED. THE SPARK PLUG THREADS AND THREADS IN CYLINDER SHOW NO SIGNS OF DAMAGE INDICATING THAT THE SPARK PLUG WAS NOT INSTALLED CORRECTLY. THIS AIRCRAFT IS IN EXPERIMENTAL CATEGORY AND USES AUTOMOTIVE SPARK PLUGS AND IGNITION SYSTEM. AN ADAPTER IS USED TO CONVERT THE AUTOMOTIVE SPARK PLUGS (14MM) TO FIT AIRCRAFT ENGINE (18MM). THE ADAPTER WAS STILL ATTACHED TO THE SPARK PLUG.

THE ENGINE WAS REPAIRED IN DEC OF 2019 AND REINSTALLED ON THE AIRCRAFT. THE AIRCRAFT OPERATED APPROX. 8 HOURS PRIOR TO FAILURE.

NTSB HAS REQUESTED THE SPARK PLUG TO BE SENT TO THEM FOR ANALYSIS. RECEIVED PLUG ON DEC 17, 2020 TO FORWARD TO NTSB.

Steve Sonneson