



Scott Johnson
Aviation Safety Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: 30 JUL 2023

Subject: WPR23FA286 / Glendive, MT / Email Statement

Contact: Darren Sackman / Accident property owner

Friday July 28, 2023 I witnessed a small airplane flying low north of my home [REDACTED] Glendive MT. The plane caught my attention because it was flying low, and I knew it was too low to make it the airport. I watched it for a few seconds and I heard a loud pop (engine backfire is what it sounded like). Instantly after the popping noise, the plane spiraled out of the sky and I lost sight of the plane. I could hear the plane hit the ground and it exploded into a huge cloud of black smoke.

I took off running to my pickup and called 911 at 2:10 pm. I had a water fire extinguisher in my pickup and was on the scene within a minute or two. I was able to put the grass fire out around the airplane, but I was unable to put the airplane fire out. There was nothing I could do for the pilot. Airport manager arrived shortly after and was able to put the airplane fire out.

Darren Sackman.



Scott Johnson
Aviation Safety Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: 29 JUL 2023

Subject: WPR23FA286 / Glendive, MT / Interview

Contact: Craig Hostetler / GDV Airport Manager

The airport manager (AM) noticed N2442 taxi up at around sundown at KGDV. The pilot stated he had descended out of 9000ft from Kalispell, Montana. The AM commented how quiet the engine was on taxi up and gave the pilot their courtesy car expecting his return at 9-10 the following morning. The pilot ended up getting accommodations around 2am, delaying his arrival until around noon the next day. The pilot seemed as if he was not in a hurry to depart, as he was meticulous in filtering automotive gas that the AM assisted the pilot with. The AM recall's the pilot filtering 15-16 gallons into his airplane. In discussing the performance of the Italian homebuilt, he and other pilots convinced the pilot of N2442 to not continue to Oshkosh, WI as the event was ending within the next few days. They were however, expecting a fly by before N2442 would depart the area. The cruise speed for this experimental airplane was fast at just under 200Kts.

The AM remembers the takeoff sounding more of what he expected on an airplane engine, a full power takeoff with no abnormalities. He noticed both mains retract however, the nose wheel was still visible and didn't completely retract. Once airborne the airplane didn't climb as fast as the AM expected and slowly climbed to only reach 3-400 feet. N2442 seemed to make a turn towards town, low and slow. In the turn at about 1.5 miles from the airport he watched N2442's wing drop, and approximately 2 turns of a flat spin develop with 45-60 degrees nose down as it descended behind terrain. The AM jumped in the airport firetruck and was on scene within minutes. He immediately was able to extinguish the fire, unfortunately the pilot had expired.



Scott Johnson
Aviation Safety Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: 09 APR 2025

Subject: WPR23FA286 / Glendive, MT / Phone conversation

Contact: Al Youngwerth / Acquaintance of Pilot

Alex and Al had both built their 51% build Risen airplanes the same time in Italy. Alex had spent a few days at Al's house in Bosie, ID. Alberto Porto, owner of Porto Aviation Group, was primarily at Al's hanger doing work on Al's airplane a few days prior to the accident. Alex did request from Alberto, and received assistance troubleshooting Alex's high fuel consumption, intermittent rough running issue and engine low fuel pressure problems with N2442. A missing o-ring gasket in the gascolator seemed to be part of the issue and Al warned Alex about continuing to operate the airplane without replacing the gasket. A radiator modification was also done to N2442 to attempt to bring engine temperatures down during ground and higher air temperature operations.

Al spoke of Alex as well trained pilot but lacking in operational knowledge. Al said Alex liked flying IFR because, "they just tell you exactly what to do." Al mentioned to Alex, when he observed N2442 taxiing to Al's hanger with his parachute locking pin installed, that flying that way was not a good idea.

I asked Al if he had nose gear issues after doing the radiator mod to his own airplane, He responded "no."