

Starr Blum
Air Safety Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Memorandum of Record – Phone Conversation with Pilot

WPR23LA085

Aircraft Registration & Make/Model: N518DT / Auto-Gyro Cavalon

Accident Departure Airport: Benson Municipal (E95)

Accident Date: December 19, 2022

Per a phone conversation with pilot David Thompson, he recalled the accident. He went through normal preflight procedures including running the engine to warm up the oil while checking weather. Winds were calm. On taxi out he checked the nose wheel steering by applying left and right rudder. He reports that the steering was smooth and normal. After taxiing on the runway for departure there was a slight delay due to dropping a pen. He then spun the rotor up and released the brake. He tilted the rotor and slowly added power. The nose wheel lifted 5-6" off the runway, about 700 ft from the runway threshold about 45-50 mph. The nose dropped for unknown reasons.

David reported that his takeoff technique is to keep the nose wheel lightly in contact with the runway to aid in steering and he waits for the gyroplane to start flying to about 10 ft above ground level before applying forward cyclic. He did not recall applying forward cyclic in the takeoff sequence. He also stated he has not flown into any airports other than have smooth paved runways and in 600 cycles of the airplane flying, he has not had any significant hard landings.

During a follow-up conversation with David, he stated based on the evidence of the crease in the nose strut aligned perpendicularly to the longitudinal axis and the amount of rudder needed to compensate for P-factor, the nosewheel impacted the runway at an angle which collapsed the strut.