

Statement regarding Preparation of N153QS Ferry Fuel Tank System in May 2023

In late April or early May 2023, I was informed that Southern Cross Aviation would be ferrying the N153QS from Santa Rosa, California to Fiji. While waiting for Southern Cross to confirm the departure date, Southern Cross requested that I prepare the ferry fuel tank system for installation on N153QS.

During the second week of May, I made the following preparations of the ferry fuel tank system at the Santa Rosa Airport:

1. Removed right-side heat duct to expose the fuel tank vents.
2. Placed 3 "Turtle Pac" fuel tanks in the cabin.
3. Installed tie-down rings in the floor rails.
4. Connected the fuel hose attached to the forward Turtle Pac to the fuel pump box.
5. Attached a second hose from the fuel pump box to the #1 right-side fuel cell vent.
6. Connected the fuel hoses attached to middle and aft Turtle Pacs to the valves that feed the aft fuel pump box.
7. Connected a fuel hose from the fuel pump box to the right-side #8 fuel cell vent.
8. Confirmed that the fuel pumps were receiving electrical power using a meter.
9. Filled the Turtle Pacs with air with the valves closed in the supply lines, and confirmed that the Turtle Pacs were not leaking air.
10. Opened the valves in the supply lines and vented the air out of the Turtle Pacs via the aircraft vent system.
11. Laid out the tie down straps over the Turtle Pacs.

I did not complete the installation or take any further actions to prepare for the flight. Full installation of the ferry fuel tank system, including completion of the logbook entry, could not be completed until the ferry tanks were fueled, which I was not able to accomplish at the time due to Southern Cross's unknown departure date. (It would have been unsafe to put fuel in the Turtle Pacs multiple days before the departure.)

If I had completed the fueling and installation process, I would have prepared a draft logbook entry for review by Southern Cross's mechanic, Dean Rushfeldt, who possessed the necessary data for the N153QS's ferry fuel tank system and was one of the only individuals authorized to sign the FAA Form 337 for this ferry fuel tank system. Mr. Rushfeldt would then tell me whether he approved of the logbook entry (if so, I would sign it), and he also would provide me with a copy of the completed FAA Form 337. This is the procedure I followed for previous N153QS ferry flights.

I did not prepare the logbook entry for Mr. Rushfeldt's review for the accident flight because, as stated above, I did not complete the full installation of the ferry fuel tank system. In addition, Southern Cross was sending Mr. Rushfeldt, along with another pilot, to Santa Rosa Airport operate the ferry flight.

After completing items 1-11, I spoke with Mr. Rushfeldt by phone and informed him of the steps I had taken to prepare the aircraft for the ferry flight. Based on this conversation, Mr. Rushfeldt understood that he would be responsible for the final installation of the ferry fuel tank system, including preparing the logbook entry and FAA Form 337, when he arrived at Santa Rosa Airport to inspect the aircraft for the flight.

I was not present at the Santa Rosa Airport on May 19, 2023, when Mr. Rushfeldt inspected the aircraft, fueled the Turtle Pacs, and completed the installation. I also was not present at Santa Rosa Airport on May 20, 2023, when N153QS departed. Because I was not at the airport on either day, I do not know for certain if Mr. Rushfeldt or Southern Cross's pilot, Lance Maclean, completed the logbook entry or FAA Form 337 prior to the flight's departure.


James Kitti