

Stephen Stein
Senior Aviation Accident Investigator
Aviation Safety - Western Pacific Region

Date: December 21, 2023

Subject: WPR23LA216 - Santa Monica, California - Record of Conversation

Contact: Bennett Geoff, Owner of accident airplane

Mr. Geoff stated that he asked the operator (Santa Monica Flyers) to repair the airplane since they were responsible for the collision with the fuel truck. According to him, the operator's fuel pump wasn't working so they decided to tow the aircraft to the airport fuel station. Something got loose and the airplane began to drift towards several airplanes and a hill so the driver of the truck turned to block the airplane's path. The airplane ran into the fuel truck and damaged the airplane. The insurance company wanted to use a maintenance facility in Colorado to complete the repairs. The maintenance facility in Santa Monica (Bill's Air Center) spent 10 hours inspecting the airplane and told the owner they could repair everything, but that they didn't have the time. As a result they suggested that the owner ferry the airplane to the facility in Colorado. The owner told the mechanics to get the airplane ready to fly with a ferry permit and the mechanic told the owner that a ferry permit wasn't required.

The owner stated that he took a video that summarized the damage on May 12, 2023 at 1926. The collision with the fuel truck occurred on May 8, 2023 about 1200.



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Date: December 14, 2023

Subject: WPR23LA216 - Santa Monica, California - Record of Conversation

Contact: Dennis Leigh-Taylor, Maintenance facility (Bill's Air Center)

Mr. Leigh-Taylor stated that they completed an inspection of the accident airplane, and after reviewing photos of the fractured bolt on the airplane before the accident, it appears they overlooked the fractured bolt from the torque link assembly. They did not do any repairs to the airplane. The airplane went on the maintenance flight (accident flight) right after they completed their inspection of the airplane. The mechanic stated that he couldn't understand how so many people (including the flight instructor) missed the fractured bolt. According to Mr. Leigh-Taylor, he employed multiple people at the time, but none of them were involved in the inspection except for him.

The NTSB investigator-in-charge asked what protective measures he might employ to prevent this from happening again and Mr. Leigh-Taylor stated he would ensure all future inspections include the torque link assembly. Also require that the torque link assembly be removed and measured and checked for stretching on the top and bottom.



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Subject: WPR23LA216 - Santa Monica, California - Record of Conversation

Contact: Oliver Maclean, Operator (Santa Monica Flyers)

Mr. Maclean stated that the company was using its pick up truck to tow the airplane when something came loose, the airplane disconnected from the tow bar on the truck and started to veer right. As the airplane was closing in on a group of parked airplanes the driver of the truck pulled into the airplane's path to block it. The collision with the truck resulted in damage to the right strut.