



Michael Hicks
Air Safety Investigator
OAS-WPR

Date: July 23, 2024

Subject: WPR24LA240

Contact: Phil Gandiaga -Pilot/Owner (N2617G)

The following is a synopsis of the communication as relayed to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Investigator-in-charge (IIC), by Mr. Gandiaga, following the postaccident examination of the accident airplane (N2617G).

July 23, 2024@1700pdt (Phone)

The pilot reported that on July 13, 2024, the accident flight was a personal flight to breakfast, about 90 miles north, at Smiley Creek Airport (U87), Smiley Creek, Idaho. Halfway there, he noticed a vibration in the engine area, but the oil temperature and oil pressures were still in the green. He made a 180° turn and headed south, recalling that Fairfield/Frostenson Airfield, Fairfield, Idaho, was behind them when he noticed the vibration. After turning back to the south, the engine lost total power. He spotted a grassy meadow, initiated a forced landing and touched down on the vegetation covered surface. During the landing roll the airplane encountered a ditch and nosed over.

Recent maintenance consisted of the annual inspection that occurred April 26, 2024. The airplane had accumulated about 10.6 hours since the annual inspection, and the engine had accumulated about 1,044.79 hours since being overhauled. When he purchased the airplane, the engine had about 600-800 hours since overhaul.

The pilot stated that he would send the Investigator-in-charge the airframe, propeller, and engine maintenance logs when he submitted the National Transportation Safety Board Pilot Aircraft Accident Report.

June 4, 2026@1305pdt (Phone)

The pilot reported that he had acquired about 362 hours of total flight experience. When asked by the IIC, the pilot reported that his normal operating procedure after leveling off was to configure the airplane for straight and level flight by adjusting the trim to maintain a straight and level flight profile, adjusted the manifold pressure to about 18 inches mercury (InHg), adjusted the mixture to "rich of peak" and closed the cowl flaps. When asked to describe his normal operating procedure for adjusting the mixture to "rich of peak", he stated that he did so by slightly pulling out the mixture control knob until the engine presented a noticeable roughness, and subsequently turned the mixture control knob to the right about three or four rotations to increase the fuel/air mixture until the engine roughness subsided. When asked, what is the average fuel flow that he strived for once the mixture was adjusted, he stated that, "This airplane does not have a fuel flow indicator, but I usually get about 12/13 gallons per hour in N2617G."

According to Section II of the airplane manufacturer's Pilot Operating Handbook, a checklist was provided for cruise flight operations. The Cruising checklist is illustrated in figure 1 and provided instructions for establishing cruise flight. Step No. 4 of the checklist instructed the pilot to lean the mixture by pulling the control knob out until the engine becomes rough and enrichen mixture slightly beyond this point.

CRUISING.

- (1) Select cruising power setting from range charts (figure 6-3) for desired range and speed.**
- (2) Maximum recommended power setting for cruise is 23 inches manifold pressure and 2450 RPM.**
- (3) After speed has stabilized, trim airplane with adjustable stabilizer control wheel.**
- (4) Lean mixture as follows: pull mixture control out until engine becomes rough; then, enrichen mixture slightly beyond this point. Any change in altitude, power, or carburetor heat will require a change in lean mixture setting. Do not lean mixture with power setting above 23 inches of manifold pressure and 2450 RPM.**
- (5) Check engine instruments for indications within their normal operating range (green arcs).**

Figure 1: Airplane manufacturer's Cruising checklist.

NOTHING FOLLOWS