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Aviation Accident Investigator
AS-WPR

Date: September 11, 2024

Subject: Accident Involving N71899, WPR24LA294

Contact: David Rudd, Pilot/Owner

Mr. Rudd was contacted by phone and provided the following information:

- Before departing for the accident flight, he fueled the airplane to its maximum capacity of 24 gallons. The airplane burned about 6.5 gallons per hour, so he expected over 3.5 hours of endurance.
- During the flight, he monitored the fuel gauges, and noted the fuel levels were depleting faster than he expected. Additionally, the left fuel tank appeared to be lower than the right, which was unusual.
- He was unsure of his observations because he described the fuel gauges as "inaccurate." He further stated they were difficult to read because the needles tended to bounce.
- While entering the traffic pattern for landing, the engine lost total power. The pilot was able to restart the engine, however the engine would run briefly before failing. The pilot restarted the engine several times more, with the engine running briefly before losing total power each time.
- When the airplane was about three miles from the runway, the pilot realized he was unable to reach the airport. He performed a forced landing in a field, during which the airplane impacted a barb-wire fence and nosed over, coming to rest inverted.

- After the accident, the pilot asked a friend to help him recover the airplane from the field. During recovery, they noticed fluid streaking on the belly of the airplane.
- After the airplane was flipped back onto its wheels, they began to remove the interior carpets to facilitate the removal of the hardware securing the wing struts to the fuselage. They discovered the carpets and insulation were soaked in fuel. Additionally, fuel staining was seen on the interior of the airplane's skin below the left fuel selector.
- After the airplane's wings were removed, they plumbed a fuel can to the fuel line in the left wing root area. The fuel was seen to leak from the left fuel selector.