

Michael Hicks
Air Safety Investigator
OAS-WPR

Date: September 8, 2026

Subject: WPR25LA037

Contact: [REDACTED] -Pilot-in-command (PIC)

The following is a synopsis of communication from the PIC to the NTSB Investigator-in-charge (IIC), following the postaccident examination of N46028.

September 8, 2026@1903pdt

The PIC reported that, on the day before the accident, the airplane had returned from maintenance, and two flights were conducted before it was secured for the night. The following morning, the PIC stated that he arrived at the airplane and conducted a thorough preflight inspection over a 30-minute period. He recalled that, after starting the engine, he conducted an engine run-up, contacted the tower controller, and requested a left crosswind departure to conduct a romantic sunrise flight for his passenger. When asked by the IIC, the pilot stated that, following the engine run-up, he did not apply carburetor heat again until the flight was underway.

He recalled taxiing from the run-up area to the hold-short line, where he waited at idle power for takeoff clearance from the tower controller. He recalled that the elapsed time from engine start to departure was about 15 minutes. He stated that the tower controller cleared the airplane as requested, and he completed his before-takeoff checks before departing runway 16R. He recalled that the initial climb was uneventful; however, after initiating a left turn to the crosswind leg and leveling off at about 1,400 ft agl, the engine began sputtering and experienced a partial loss of power. He made a 180° right turn, but his altitude was insufficient to return to the runway. He identified an open area, set up for an off-airport landing, and struck a bush during the landing, which resulted in the airplane nosing over.

September 10, 2026@1703pdt

The PIC contacted the IIC and reported that the engine was sputtering during the initial climb between 500 ft and 1,000 ft AGL. He turned on the carb heat as soon as he noticed the sputtering about 500 ft agl. The airplane continued to climb, and the PIC initiated a left turn for the crosswind departure even though the engine was sputtering. He stated that he did not notice a decrease in manifold pressure, but he did notice a decrease in engine RPM between 1,000-1,400 ft. Subsequently, the airplane descended about 300 ft, and he initiated a right turn back to the runway. With insufficient altitude to make it back to the runway, he landed the airplane to the nearest suitable off airport landing site.

NOTHING FOLLOWS