

David E. Tanner

Valley Springs, CA 95252

June 30th, 2025

Re: Sam Kittle's Incident June 20th, 2025 at 11:53 AM

On June 20th, I was on a return flight from Sacramento International airport to Calaveras County Airport (KCPU). I was a short distance ahead of Sam Kittle in his Luscombe N28545. I listened to AWOS from KCPU and it reported winds were 310° @ 10 MPH. On short final near the end of the runway on 31, I experienced a pushing sensation somewhat like a wave of air just before touchdown. My plane then changed direction quickly which I was able to correct with left rudder. Two other planes that landed behind me experienced similar conditions. After landing, I taxied my plane over to fuel. The next plane followed me. Once I finished fueling and was standing on my wing, I had a clear view of Sam Kittle's landing. He lined up well on final and touched down with his main gear. He carried down the runway in a well-controlled manor at least halfway down 31. He then lowered his tail wheel and suddenly the plane dropped the left wing, and the right wing came up abruptly. Sam quickly regained level wings still in line with 31. Immediately after that, I witnessed the tail of his plane getting lifted by a spiraling up drafting wind which forced the plane's direction to the left and pushed it off the runway and over a bank on the left of 31. Sam was able to maintain level wings but the very severe spiraling wind with extreme lift had already redirected the planes direction. The plane then quickly went beyond my view. There were several people who witnessed the incident and quickly went to check on Sam. Sam was fine but his Luscombe had been damaged from the sudden impact at the bottom of the bank.

I believe that the extreme wind conditions that I, and several other aircraft, experienced were unexpected and there was no way for AWOS to report changes in time for each of our landings. The 2nd aircraft that was behind me was forced to go around twice before he was able to land. The 3rd aircraft described his landing as similar to mine. Sam's aircraft was the lightest of all the other aircraft and was more severely impacted by the spiraling updraft. As this condition is invisible to the eye, what I witnessed by Sam Kittle was a great attempt to maintain his aircrafts direction, but in my opinion, a 750 lb. aircraft has little resistance to this extreme weather condition we all witnessed.

Best regards,

David E. Tanner



CALAVERAS COUNTY AIRPORT

Incident of N28545

June 20, 2025

Approximate 11:53 am, Pacific time

Statement by Alaina Belli, Calaveras County Airport Manager

On June 20, 2025, at approximately 11:53 am I witnessed pilot Stacy "Sam" Kittle in his plane N28545, depart the side of the runway shortly after touchdown suffer a "ground loop", and the aircraft continued into the weeds and over a short embankment off the west side of the runway.

Approximately 20 minutes before the incident, I noted a tumbleweed blowing by from the southeast moving towards the northwest even though the wind-tee inside the segmented circle indicated the prevailing winds were coming from the northwest and favoring a landing on runway 31. I made a mental note about the potential of dust-devils and erratic winds.

After seeing the tumbleweed blow by from an unexpected direction, and just before the ground loop incident, I heard on the radio of a pilot who decided to go around due to the nature of the winds on the runway. I looked at the AWOS monitor located inside the lobby and saw that the winds had moved quickly from the NW to the South and Southwest orientation before quickly moving back to the northwest. Pilot Marc Barenfeld said over the radio something to the effect of "Sam, watch out for the winds".

While speaking with another pilot who was at the fueling area, out of the corner of my eye, I saw aircraft N28545 land on the main tires, not too far to the left of the segmented circle from my perspective. I resumed my conversation with the pilot, and I heard them exclaim that Sam was going off the side of the runway. I looked over to the west side of the runway just in time to see N28545 leave the graveled area next to runway 31 and run over the side of the side of the embankment. This location is best described as between the 2 runway lights just to the south of the A2 connector to the taxiway. I could see the full bottom view of the aircraft as it traveled over the embankment, into the weeds that are about 3 feet tall. Note that the sides of the runway have been cleared of grass and weeds to about 30' on each side of the runway, where it is level enough to be mowed. The aircraft had traveled beyond the mowed area at approximately a 45-degree angle in a westerly direction.

Several bystanders on the ground also witnessed the aircraft leave the runway and travel over the edge of the un-mowed area and they responded to assist the downed aircraft. Once I arrived at the scene, bystander/pilot Joshua Brewer was on the cellphone with 911 and it was determined that pilot Sam Kittle was uninjured, and that EMS and the fire department were not needed at that time.

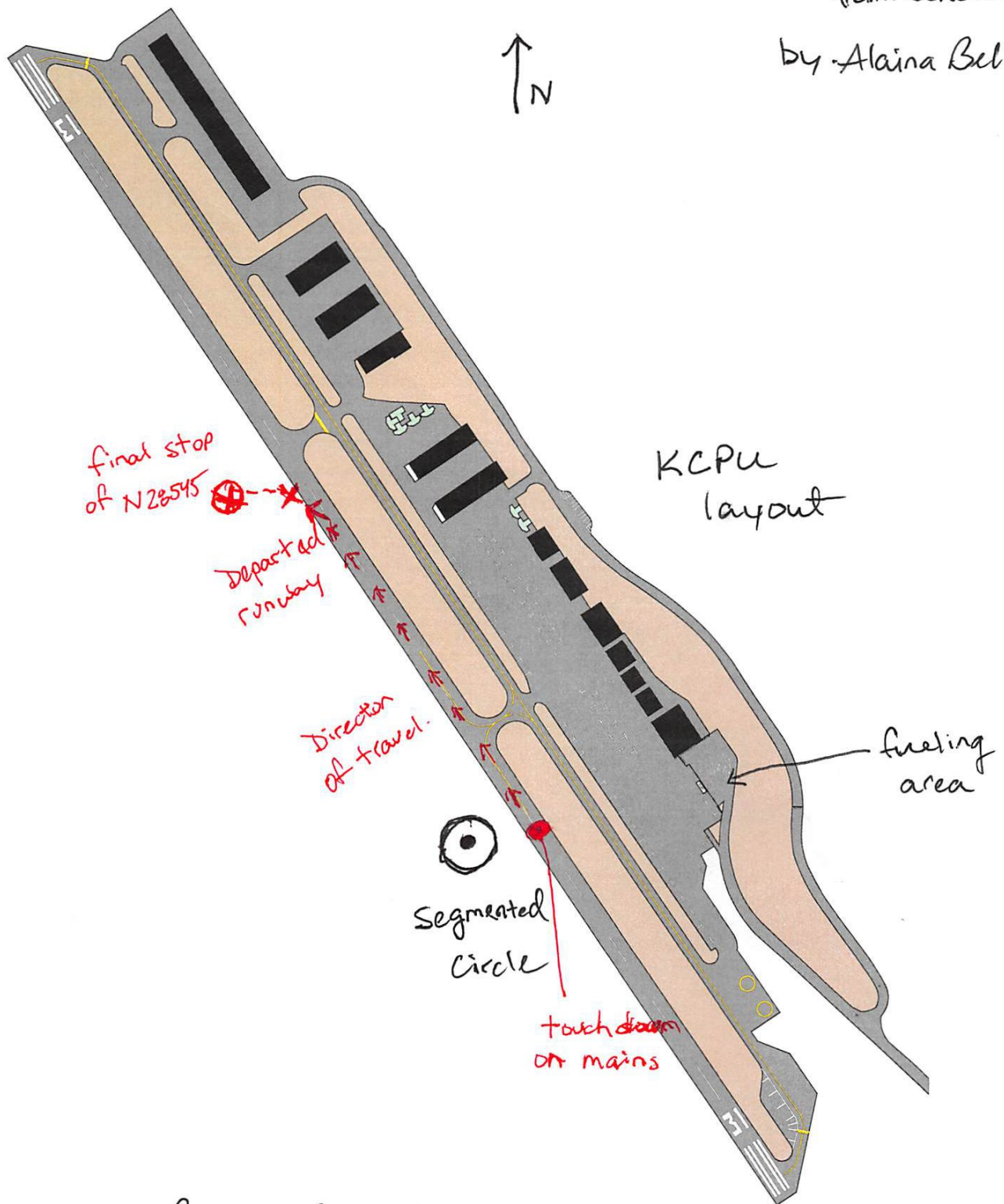
I have attached a schematic of the approximate location of when N28545 touched down on the mains and where the aircraft departed the runway and the safety zone that is parallel to the 31 runway.

Calaveras County Airport, [REDACTED], San Andreas, CA 95249

Phone: [REDACTED] – text or call

Email: [REDACTED]

6.30.2025 drawing
N 28545 Incident
from June 20, 2025
by Alaina Belli



Calaveras County Airport
San Andreas, California USA