

INSPECTOR STATEMENT

Accident #

**Pilot NAME: Craig Comstock
N929DE SR 22**

Narrative Statement:

On 7/10/17 Inspector Dan Michaelsen and I went to Corydon to inspect the crash site and take interview witnesses.

The first witnesses that were interviewed were Steven Henkle () and Benny Davis (). Mr. Davis is the owner of the Corydon airport (0E9) and a pilot. Mr. Henkle is not a pilot but has been around aircraft and stated that he knew something was wrong because the aircraft was not climbing. When questioned if the aircraft made any strange sounds, he stated he couldn't tell due to other noises such as boats near where he was. Mr. Henkle stated the aircraft banked and then he lost sight of the aircraft over the rising terrain.

Mr. Davis didn't see the aircraft depart, but his relative came running up to him saying an aircraft (he thought) was going to crash in the lake. Mr. Davis looked at the plane, got in his cub and located the spot the aircraft went down in the trees, which allowed first responders to find the site. During that time people and were on the roads trying to locate the aircraft. Mr. Henkle was the first onsite where "the wife waived him down." It was stated she was "cut up, bloody, and in shock" yet she walked up and down the hill 3-4 times. Mr. Henkle stated she "crawled over" the pilot and slid down the wing. I questioned about crawling over the pilot. Both witnesses thought the pilot was flying from the right seat. Mr. Davis stated he estimated the aircraft was able to climb 500-600 feet before descending.

Mr. Davis stated that the pilot (Craig Comstock) "just got the plane" and it was his first time landing it on grass. Mr. Comstock told Mr. Davis that it handled the grass "great" and didn't have any problems. Mr. Davis reported that these "meetings" are held regularly at the airport and Mr. Comstock comes to them "almost all the time." Mr. Davis also stated that Mr. Comstock flies "all over" and goes to Chicago.

Both people stated that the "engine cut off." At this time Emergency Response Manager, Bill Byrns () stated that the pilot was in stable condition but had several broken ribs, broken pelvis, broken back, and internal bleeding. He also updated us that Mrs. Comstock was also transported by ground ambulance during the night to Des Moines. It was reported that she had a broken leg in addition to severe lacerations on her leg.

We then went out to interview Mr. R.J Olmstead (). Mr. Olmstead is a pilot who witnessed the departure. He stated the aircraft "didn't sound right" as it took off and then turned north, which "was weird because the wind was from the southwest." Mr. Olmstead's perception was that the pilot "messed with the constant speed (course pitch)" to try to fix the problem because the "tone" changed. He stated that the aircraft seemed to turn back but he kept losing altitude. Before he "broke the crest of the ridge" so he couldn't see the aircraft anymore, Mr. Olmstead stated that the pilot was "fighting the stall and did a really good job keeping the bird in the air." He stated he witness the aircraft in a very high pitch up attitude where he saw all the surfaces of the aircraft. Mr. Olmstead states that he estimates that aircraft did not get more than 150-200 feet AGL "if he was lucky," but also acknowledges that it's difficult to determine height due to the terrain and reiterated that the engine didn't sputter or cough, the tone just notably changed.

Mr. Olmstead also stated that the aircraft was new to the pilot (bought in May) but had flown a lot even to Cape Girard.

The last witness was Mr. Justin Abel ([REDACTED]) who was standing next to Mr. Olmstead when the aircraft departed. Mr. Able is not a pilot but has been around them with friends. He stated that he heard from Mr. Henkle (who found the wife) that she stated the engine completely quit and wouldn't restart. Mr. Abel witnessed the "noise sounded really weird." He stated it sounded "like a ping pong ball going back and forth between two pieces of sheet metal...ping, ping, ping." (the sound he made reminded this inspector of the pinging from arcade ping pong ball machine.) Mr. Abel stated it was humid and all the aircraft would lift off then the wheels would touch again before really departing (this could also be due to the runway not being flat). The last thing Mr. Abel stated was that when the aircraft went by, he smelled something "sweet." He described the fuel smelled like "when you are making fudge and have melted the sugar."

Inspector Name:

Work Address:

Work Phone:

Signature:

Date: