



MEMORANDUM for RECORD

Ralph E. Hicks
Senior Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region Aviation

Date: June 11, 2020
Person Contacted: Mike Pope, Pilot of N8JR
NTSB Accident Number: ERA19FA248 – Elizabethton, TN

This investigator interviewed Mr. Pope by telephone. He reported the following:

Mr. Pope acknowledged that, during the accident flight, they were maneuvering around clouds, maneuvering around other traffic, and were looking for landmarks on the ground (ridgelines) to help them find 0A9. In retrospect, he did not feel that any of these issues caused a distraction for the crew or increased their workload more than a routine VFR flight. He did mention that if there was a distraction, it was on short final approach when they received the terrain warning in the cockpit. He stated that you could see the terrain, and he may have even said out loud that he could see it. That was the only distraction at the time that may have affected his approach, because it was on short final. Everything else was “pretty normal.” The clouds were up high so the weather during the approach was great.

Note: Mr. Pope called this investigator back a few hours after the interview to clarify his comments on the TAWS alert and its possible distraction. In retrospect, he recalled getting the TAWS alert, but he could see the terrain and did not feel that this contributed to the outcome. He felt the initial touchdown was too hard, possibly from an inadequate flare.

Mr. Pope stated that he was well rested for the flight. He didn't have any issues with sleep or any other personal distractions that would have affected his performance. He had plenty of sleep the night before.

Mr. Pope was asked if he felt that there may have been repercussions from Jeff (the copilot), Dale Jr., or his wife if he they had elected to discontinue the approach and go around. “Absolutely not.”

Checklist use: They used a printed hard card, the abbreviated cockpit checklist. How did they use it? He stated that the way they have always done it was “challenge and response.” They had flown together so much that they knew what the other was doing. “Sometimes good, sometimes bad. Challenge and response was what we were shooting for.” Not all checklist items would be verbalized. When the checklist was initiated, would you call for the checklist or would you just start doing the items? “It would just start happening.”