

Record of Conversation

Name: David Montalvo
Address: Scottsdale FSDO.
Phone: N/A
Date: May 29, 2014 1100hrs.
Description: Interview with Ponderosa Aviation DOP (Steve Maxwell). Interview held at Ponderosa office at Safford AZ.

Conference members: Steve Maxwell and Alan Nicol (Ponderosa), plus Ernie Copeland and David Montalvo from the FSDO.

During a review of all maintenance and flight records for N40TC the inspectors required some clarification of the information provided and had the following discussions:

When asked why N40TC was at FHU the response from Mr. Maxwell was, 'that this aircraft, and pilot Dennis Williams, were to be stationed there to support a forest service contract.'

When asked to clarify the aircraft flight records as the flights on 5/5/2014 to FHU and the gap between to the accident of 5/17. Mr. Maxwell informed us, 'that the plane had not flown since being positioned at FHU and this was the first flight since then.'

When asked what the purpose of the flight was, Mr. Maxwell reported, 'this was an area familiarity flight for pilot Williams with pilot Hardy along as the pilot familiar with the area.'

The inspectors asked if Mr. Williams was a new pilot to their operations. Mr. Maxwell informed that, 'Mr. Williams had been with the company over in California for a couple of years and was being repositioned to FHU.'

The inspectors requested to review Mr. Williams recent training records and copies were provided. Last reoccurring training was held on 3/7/2014. Initial training was held on 5/24/2012.

The inspectors asked about fueling of the aircraft, when was it last fueled up. The response was that, 'when the aircraft was relocated to FHU it was filled up with 22 gallons of Avgas.'
Inspector Montalvo requested a copy of the gas receipt and it was provided.


The inspectors ask for clarification on the maintenance record keeping for Ponderosa, are the airframe and engine records kept in one log or in separate logbooks. Mr. Hall informed us, 'the maintenance records for the entire aircraft are kept in the aircraft log book. There are not separate logbooks. The aircraft log book also contains the flight records of each flight.' The inspectors asked about preflight checks, for instance is there any record of adding oil if needed. The response was, 'that the preflight checks are not recorded in the aircraft log book and no records are kept if oil is needed/added.'

Mr. Maxwell provided a copy of a statement made by SIC pilot Hardy to be reviewed. The statement contained information that both pilots heard a bang after takeoff and then lost power out of both engines. Mr. Maxwell inquired to the inspectors if they knew what would cause that bang. Both inspectors replied that they are on a fact finding part of the investigation and could not provide any reason at this time.

The inspectors asked into the health and well being of SIC pilot Hardy to see if he was in a condition to interview. Mr. Maxwell informed us that, 'it was found immediately after the accident that he had a badly fractured left elbow and went to the hospital on 5/19 or 20 for surgery. While being admitted that hospital found that he had extremely low oxygen in his blood. Further investigation found blood clots in his lung

(not determined which lung) and was immediately put on medications with blood thinners, etc, to address this issue prior to any surgery being performed.'

While SIC Hardy is under these various medications, including pain pills, any further inview by this office will be put off until he is better.


David J. Montalvo
Aviation Safety Inspector

05/30/2014

Statement by Gareth Hardy to Frank Hayes 05/17/2014 at Sierra Vista Regional Hospital @ 1400

Gary was the second pilot in command performing a check/orientation flight with Dennis Williams, incoming pilot for 40TC available for Air Attack services for the Saguaro National Park, based out of Sierra Vista airport.

As the assigned Air Attack, I met Mr. Williams and Gary Hardy at the Ft. Huachuca tanker base the morning of 05/17/14. After brief introductions to base personnel, Hardy, Hayes, and Williams visited about the orientation ride at the airplane before take off. Mr. Williams and I agreed to visit at the airplane about ATGS operations once the brief, non-revenue flight was completed.

Following is the transcript of the interview with Mr. Hardy by Mr. Hayes, at the hospital, prior to Hardy receiving any pain medications.

Both pilots did a thorough preflight inspection and discussion about the airplane operations, controls, safety guidelines, ATGS protocols, etc before starting up both engines. Following start up with no issues or indications of problems, the aircraft was taxied to the hold location short of the primary runway at Sierra Vista/Libby Airfield. The pilot in command completed a thorough run up before clearance and departure. (Hayes observed this runup prior to take-off, and Ramp Manager Mahoney mentioned he thought it extensive in time, confirming Hardy's statement of a thorough and complete run up prior to take off. Based on Hardy, all gauge readings were normal. Both pilots briefed before takeoff on emergency procedures. Prior to roll out, both pilots noted all gauge readings in the "green", initiated takeoff, calling out airspeed, obtained 80 knots and rotated to a take off climb. Gear up was normal. Boost pumps had been activated before take off.

At 300-400 ft. Williams and Hardy felt the aircraft "jolt", and Williams asked Hardy if "he had done anything" to cause the noise or jolt. Hardy responded no, and Williams said they seemed to have lost power, and the plane was not responding. Hardy immediately shut off booster pumps. Williams initiated a slow left turn, attempting to come back to land, but the plane was unresponsive. Hardy said to Williams "we are falling out of the sky, lets keep it flying", and Williams responded, "I am trying"

Hardy remembers seeing the ground approaching and noticed the plane had a right wing dip and nose down attitude. Hardy thought the plane entered and contacted the ground at about a 45° angle, and the right wing contacted the ground first.

Once the plane came to rest, Hardy was able to extract himself, upside down, from his seat belt, and extricate through a narrow break in the fuselage. He observed Williams below him, his lower torso and legs in the cockpit, and upper body outside where the door had come off the plane. He observed there did not seem to be any weight on him, and he was emitting moaning sounds. Hardy remembers shutting down the master switch because the stall buzzer was still active.

Hardy tried to find his cell, realized his elbow had been injured, and then observed there were base personnel on scene. In a few minutes the ambulance arrived and treated him initially for cuts and bruises, and transported him to Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center.