

5/17/14

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[REDACTED]

At 09:56 AM on 05/17/14 I was standing under the left wing of air tanker 45 at the Ft Hanchuca tanker base talking with Jesse Sporman our aircraft crew chief. We watched the aero commander aircraft depart runway 26 and climb to approximately 800 feet above ground level. Engine operation sounded normal until just past the departure end of runway 26. I heard a distinct pop pop sound then silence. The aircraft immediately entered a steep left turn of approximately 45° of bank with no engine sound. It descended at a high rate of descent rolling wings level just as it passed out of view behind rising terrain. We then witnessed a large cloud of dust. My Copilot called 911. I ran into the tanker base and informed them the aero commander had crashed. I then ran back to our aircraft and instructed Jesse to grab our fire extinguishers from our aircraft. We jumped in our company truck and drove across the taxiway debris. We looked for traffic and held short of Runway 26.

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to allow a C-172 to pass. We then proceeded down P taxiway until we located the wreckage. We were the first on scene. Gary one of the pilots was out of the wreckage and walking around dazed. He had a large head wound and seemed concussed. Dennis was trapped in the wreckage. He was half way out of the wreck but pinned. He was very pale, breathing and moaning with every breath but was non responsive. I asked Gary where the master switch for the aircraft was located. He said it was off, it was apparent though that power was still on as I could hear what sounded like a muffled horn going off. I was concerned about power arcing any fuel that may have been in the aircraft ~~at~~ and also any fuel pumps that may still be running. About this time crash rescue arrived on the service road but still had to climb the barb wire fence and make their way to us. I sent Jesse to tell them to call for life flight and comforted Dennis as much as I could telling him that help was here and he was going to be OK. The rescue crew arrived, stabilized the plane and extricated Dennis. We located the aircraft battery and instructed the rescue guy on how to disconnect it.

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I contacted Steve Maxwell the chief pilot for the company who owns/operates the aero commander and informed him of the accident and questioned him on the location of the battery informed him of the status of the crew etc.

We stood back and watched the very professional rescue crew perform their jobs.

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Jesse James Sparman crew chief USFS Tanker 45
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At 0956 local Time I was sitting in the driver Seat of our company work Truck, ~~then~~ Talking with my captain Kevin Maher. We watched as the Aero commander took off on Runway 26. They rotated and went gear up. All looked and sounded normal to this point. Looked away when I heard the engines pop then go silent. Turned back and saw the aircraft make a steep Left Turn. They then Proceeded TO roll the wings level and started heading towards the ground. We lost site of them as the terrain went down out of sight. less than a second later we saw the big dust cloud. Saw no smoke. Grabbed the fire extinguishers out of Tanker 45 and drove to the crash site. Me and Kevin were first on scene. we jumped the fence and ran to the aircraft. One gentleman was out of the Plane waving his ~~own~~ arms at us. His head was covered in blood and he seemed dazed. The other man was Pinned under the aircraft. His body was under the Nose section of the ~~aircraft~~ aircraft.

At that time the crash rescue truck was pulling up. We assisted them with their bass and they took over. The man Pined under the plane was moaning but seemed unresponsive. He was breathing heavy. All of the other first responders began to show up. I entered the fuselage of the aircraft where the tail had broken off, and turned off the ELT as per directed by base ops Personnel. We also assisted the first responders with disconnecting the batteries of the aircraft. The aircraft was in real bad shape. The nose of the aircraft was twisted to the left. The Tail had twisted to the right and snapped off completely. The right wing tip was almost snapped off. The right gear was hanging out of the gear well. The Left wing was flat on the ground.