

STATEMENT

Mitchell L. Sutterfield



Mr. Sutterfield stated he is 15 years old and arrived in Lakeland, Florida, on April 7, 2001, to work as a volunteer at Sun N' Fun at the ultra light airfield. He was assigned to work on the flight line in the vicinity of the second gate located down from the East End of the runway. N695DH was also parked in the vicinity of his work location. The pilot of N695DH came up and asked him if it would be ok for him to park his airplane in his area. Mitchell Sutterfield stated he was kidding the pilot by stating that he could park there if he would give him a ride. The pilot informed him that he would give him a ride but asked him to complete a release and waiver form. He agreed and completed the form and his grandfather Oscar Sutterfield was the witness to his signature. They walked back to the airplane and the pilot informed him that the lap belt for his seat did not work, because the buckle was missing, and that he would have to use the shoulder harness as a restraint. He entered the airplane and put on the shoulder harness, which fit loosely. The pilot did not give him any other briefing, nor did the pilot perform a weight and balance or any type of performance planning for their flight. The pilot asked him how much he weighed and he informed him that he weighed 190 lbs. The pilot stated that he weighed about the same. The pilot started the engine and they taxied back down the runway to the west. During the back taxi to the west the pilot checked the engine power by increasing and decreasing the throttle. When they arrived near the end of the runway one of the flight line personnel asked to see the pilot's yellow form. The pilot informed him that he did not have it with him, that it was in his other airplane. They pulled the airplane over to the side of the runway and shut the airplane down. They both exited the airplane and pushed the airplane backwards out of the way. The pilot walked down to his other airplane, obtained the yellow form, and presented it to the flight line personnel. They got back in the airplane, and the pilot started the engine. They had to wait for other traffic before they could depart. They eventually taxied into position, and departed from runway 09 at about 1839 EST. The pilot applied full power and they started their takeoff roll. A short time later the pilot pulled back on the controls to rotate and the tail collided with the ground slowing the airplane down. He lowered the nose, regained airspeed,

and attempted to rotate again, the tail collided with the ground again. The pilot lowered the nose again to gain airspeed, and attempted to rotate again with the same results. He observed the end of the runway approaching and could see the ditch. He tightened his shoulder harness and grabbed it with his hands. The pilot said something, but he could not understand him. The pilot pulled the throttle back but did not attempt to use the brakes; they went off the end of the runway and collided with the ditch. When asked at any time during the takeoff roll if the pilot attempted to abort the takeoff Mr. Sutterfield said no. When asked what injuries he sustained, Mr. Sutterfield stated he had a broken left leg, broken right foot, broken toes, torn tendons, cuts and abrasions.

Read the statement back to Mr. Sutterfield and he agreed with the statement.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Carroll A. (Corky) Smith", is written over a solid black rectangular redaction box.

Carroll A (Corky) Smith
Senior Air Safety Investigator
April 11, 2001

STATEMENT

Gordon W. Buffington



Mr. Buffington stated he flies a six chuter powered parachute, and he does not hold an FAA certificate or rating. Mr. Buffington stated he has about **40** to 50 hours total flight time. On April **9,2001**, Mr. Buffington stated he was located at the ultra light strip at the departure end of runway 09 by the gate on the flight line located at Lakeland-Linder Regional Airport, Lakeland, Florida. He was talking with Mr. Ledoux and he looking westbound at about **1840** EST. Mr. Buffington observed the accident airplane on the takeoff roll. The airplane was past the mid field point of the runway when it bounced into the air and turned side ways to the right. The airplane came back down on the runway and straighten out. He heard an increase in engine power, followed by a decrease in engine power, and then he did not hear any more engine sound. The airplane passed their location doing about 55 mph on the ground (hot). He did not notice any braking action. The airplane continued down the runway and into a ditch estimated at about **9** feet deep. He and Mr. Ledoux ran to the crash site to assist. Mr. Ledoux entered the ditch first. Mr. Ledoux informed him that the ditch was difficult cross and to inform emergency personnel to go to the other side. The EMS personnel, and Lakeland Police arrived about 3 to **4** minutes after he got out of the ditch, and they took over the scene. Mi-. Buffington stated that the pilot had taken off downwind.

Read the statement back to Mr. Buffington and he agreed with the statement.



Carrol **A.** (Corky) Smith


Senior **Air** Safety Investigator
April 10,2001

STATEMENT

Billy W. King

Mr. King stated he holds a private airplane certificate with ratings for airplane single engine land, and he has about 300 hours total flight time. On April 9, 2001, Mr. King stated that he was located about 20 feet east of the ultralight tower located at Lakeland-Linder Regional Airport, Lakeland, Florida. He observed the airplane taxi west bound down the grass strip for takeoff. He heard the announcer state the Pelican was taking off. The Pelican passed an airplane that had previously been blocking his view about 1/3 down the runway. At about mid field the airplane became airborne about 2 to 3 feet high, and then the airplane settled back on the ground. The airplane did this about two more times. The airplane appeared to be sluggish as if it was underpowered or over loaded. The pilot continued down the runway. He temporarily lost sight of the airplane due to his view being blocked by another airplane. When he came into view he was at the end of the runway near the bushes. The section flipped up and disappeared from view except for the tail section. Somebody standing near him stated the wind had changed and it appeared that the pilot had taken off down wind.

Read the statement back to Mr. King and he agreed with the statement.


Carrol A. (Corky) Smith
Senior Air Safety Investigator
April 10, 2001

STATEMENT

Adelbert C. Cross

Mr. Cross stated he is a private pilot ASEL, sailplane, twin engine home built ultra light with about 3000 hours total flight time. On April 9, 2001, Mr. Cross stated he was located at the ultra light strip at the departure end of runway 09 located at Lakeland-Linder Regional Airport, Lakeland, Florida. He was giving a TV interview when he heard an impact sound. He looked towards the end of the runway and saw the left wing of the airplane in a ditch off the end of the runway. The airplane crashed at about 1840 EST. Mr. Cross stated that Mr. Ledoux and Mr. Buffington ran to the crash site ahead of him. Upon arrival the pilot appeared to be in shock and sustained fractures on his legs with facial injuries and was trapped in the airplane. The pilot's seatbelt was on. Mr. Cross stated he unbuckled the seatbelt and asked Mr. Ledoux to turn off the master switch. Mr. Buffington was holding the passenger's head, and Mr. Ledoux was holding his finger on a ruptured **fuel** line to prevent fuel from escaping. EMS personnel arrived about 5 to 10 minutes after the accident and took over the scene. Mr. Cross stated he had landed on the same runway about 10 minutes before the accident with a tailwind and runway 09 had been the active runway all day.

Read the statement back to Mr. Cross and he agreed with the statement.



Carrol A. (Corky) Smith
Senior Air Safety Investigator
April 10, 2001



STATEMENT

Joseph P. Ledoux



Mr. Ledoux stated he flies a parasender one, and does not hold an FAA certificate or rating. Mr. Ledoux stated he has about 150 hours total flight time. On April 9, 2001, Mr. Ledoux stated he was located at the ultra light strip at the departure end of runway 09 by the gate on the flight line located at Lakeland-Linder Regional Airport, Lakeland, Florida. He was talking with Mr. Buffington and looking eastbound at an undetermined time. M. Buffington stated look out. He immediately turned and looked and observed the accident airplane on takeoff run on the last 1/3 of the runway. He heard a change in engine noise (reduction in power) followed by an increase in engine power as if the pilot was indecisive in what he wanted to do. The airplane continued down the runway. Mr. Ledoux stated he kept waiting for the pilot to put the brakes on but he did not appear to do so. The airplane continued down the runway and went into a pretty deep ditch estimated at about 12 to 15 feet deep. He and Mr. Buffington started running to the ditch to assist and they were the first to arrive. There was also another person who jumped the fence from the other side. Mr. Ledoux saw a fuel leak and stopped it with his finger. Mr. Cross was on the left side of the airplane assisting the pilot. Mr. Ledoux stated he reached in and turned the ignition switch off. The emergency personnel arrived about five minutes after the accident and took over the scene. When he exited the ditch he returned to the flight line and noticed that the pilot had taken off downwind.

Read the statement back to Mr. Ledoux and he agreed with the statement.




Carrol A. (Corky) Smith
Senior Air Safety Investigator
April 10, 2001


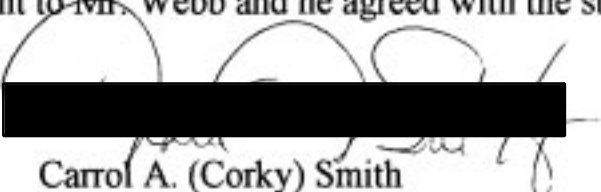
STATEMENT

James A. Webb



Mr. Webb stated he is a commercial pilot with ratings for ASEL, rotorcraft, and instrument airplane. On April 9, 2001, 15 minutes before the accident, Mr. Webb stated he walked over to the ultra light tower and informed the security guard Tom Baker, telephone number  that he needed to talk to the tower to recommend them changing the direction of the runway due to a tail wind condition that was currently in effect on runway 09. The security guard informed him to go up stairs and he met with a Jeff Jackson, Air Operations, and telephone number (863) 859-5024. He informed Mr. Jackson of his recommendation. Mr. Jackson stated he would call someone and see what he wanted to do. Mr. Jackson also commented that the flag is popping. A little while later he observed a four-wheeler with a ramp flag come over to the tower. Mr. Jackson left the tower and went down stairs to talk to the operator of the four-wheeler. He could not hear the conversation but observed the man who was driving the four-wheeler shrug his shoulders during the conversation. At about 1835, he was standing by the fence at the control tower and he observed N695DH taxi west bound down the runway for takeoff. The airplane had two personnel on board. The airplane made a 180-degree turn and started its takeoff roll at about 1840 EST. It sounded like the pilot fire walled the engine. The airplane reached a good speed but he did not observe the airplane rotate and takeoff. When the airplane was about 2/3 down the runway, he heard a slight decrease in engine power estimated about 20%, followed by an increase in engine power. The airplane still did not rotate and went off the end of the runway at about 45 to 50 mph into the ditch.

Read the statement to Mr. Webb and he agreed with the statement.



Carrol A. (Corky) Smith
Senior Air Safety Investigator
April 9, 2001