



Record of Conversation

Dan Baker
Senior Air Safety Investigator
Central Region

Date: 03/27/2020
Subject: CEN20LA132, Witness Interview – Aubrey Price

Mr. Price was a witness to the airplane accident involving N5553C at Mid-Way Airport, TX, on March 25, 2020. He said he was standing outside with Mr. David Wheeler when the airplane took off. He said the airplane did not sound right, like the prop rpm was pulled back. He said the pilot could have landed on the runway, but when he reached about 50 feet the airplane started a right turn and then turned back to the left, which was downwind with about 30 knots of tailwind. The airplane descended and hit the ground.

Mr. Price said Mr. Wheeler had conducted the last annual inspection of the airplane sometime in September, 2019, and the airplane had not flown since then. He said Mr. Wheeler had helped the pilot before he took off and they had sumped a lot of water out of the fuel tanks.



Record of Conversation

Dan Baker
Senior Air Safety Investigator
Central Region

Date: 03/27/2020
Subject: CEN20LA132, Witness Interview – David Wheeler

Mr. Wheeler was a witness to the airplane accident involving N5553C at Mid-Way Airport, TX, on March 25, 2020. He stated he is a multi-engine rated commercial pilot and he holds certificates for AMP/IA.

Mr. Wheeler said he performed the last annual inspection on the accident airplane in September, 2019, and he believed the airplane had not flown for about two years prior to that. During the annual inspection he completely drained the fuel tanks and ran the airplane for about 45 minutes without any problems noted. He had anticipated the pilot was going to pick up the airplane following the annual inspection, but for an unknown reason the pilot did not. When the pilot arrived to pick up the airplane prior to the accident flight, Mr. Wheeler helped him sump several cups of water from the tanks before the airplane was fueled. He told the pilot to sump all the tanks again and to taxi the airplane for a while and do a good run-up before flying it. The pilot told him he didn't have time for that and needed to get going.

Mr. Wheeler said the airplane became airborne quickly, but the engine was not performing. He saw the airplane start a right turn and then make a left turn before hitting the ground. He thought the pilot was trying to turn and make a downwind landing on the airfield. He said there was plenty of runway available to land on and there was half a mile of open space past the runway for the pilot to land on and he didn't need to turn back to the runway.



Record of Conversation

Dan Baker
Senior Air Safety Investigator
Central Region

Date: 03/27/2020
Subject: CEN20LA132, Witness Interview – Ken Lantz

Mr. Lantz was a witness to the airplane accident involving N5553C at Mid-Way Airport, TX, on March 25, 2020. He said he is an experienced pilot with Cessna 210 time, an airplane mechanic, and that he is part owner of the local FBO.

Mr. Lantz said the airplane had flown very little in the past three years and had sat outside most of that time. He was not aware that the plane had flown at all in the past three months. He saw the airplane depart and it was clear the engine was not making takeoff power, like the throttle or propeller were pulled back. The airplane reached about 100 feet agl, made a right turn and then a hard left turn. The airplane descended into the ground and cartwheeled two times before coming to rest upright. He responded to the airplane and noted the flap selector was at 10° and the flap indicator was at 5°. He thought the pilot had probably begun to lower the flaps and they were in transit before the airplane hit the ground.

Mr. Lantz provided assistance to the FAA inspector that responded to the scene. He said they sumped the left and right header fuel tanks. The left sump valve was initially stuck. Multiple sump cups of liquid containing water and contaminants were drained from the tanks. He said the right header tank did not produce fuel until 11 or 12 cups were sumped.



March 27, 2020

Dear Mr. Baker,

On the afternoon of March 24, 2020 at approximately 1615 hours Mr. Dave Wheeler requested fuel for Cessna 210 N5553C on behalf of the owner, Mr. Lee Hoskins. I arrived at the aircraft with the 100LL truck to begin fueling. I bonded the aircraft to the truck (grounded) and set up to fuel the right wing. At this point, Mr. Wheeler was taking a fuel sample from the right-wing fuel sump. He then asked me to move to the left wing and begin fueling instead of the right wing because "he was getting a lot of stuff" out of the right wing.

I proceeded to move the ladder and fueling nozzle to the left wing. I pumped approximately 5 gallons into the left wing. This topped off the left-wing fuel tank. I did not observe any rust or debris around this fuel cap (left hand fuel tank). I then proceeded back to the right-hand wing fuel tank, set up the latter, and began fueling. At this point, the owner (Mr. Hoskins) and Mr. Wheeler walked back to the FBO. While fueling the right-hand fuel tank, I observed rust on the filler neck, rust on the fuel cap itself, and rust stains of the fuel cap gasket. I proceeded to top off the right-hand fuel tank with a total of 41.2 gallons delivered to both the left and right fuel tanks.

Upon completion of refueling, I secured the ladder, fueling hose, and bonding cable to the truck, completed my safety check, and returned to the FBO. At this point, Mr. Hoskins payed for the fuel. After a brief conversation with Mr. Wheeler, Mr. Hoskins proceeded to the aircraft.

I certify that the above statements and information is true, accurate, and factual to the best of my knowledge.

Sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]

Brady Coleman
Southern Start Aviation Line Personnel

