

# Inspector Statement

## Telephone interviews

Date: June 16, 2020

Time: 10:00 am CDT

Location: Fargo Flight Standards Office

[REDACTED]  
Fargo, ND, 58104

Inspector John O. Kline's office  
[REDACTED]

Interviewing Inspector: John O. Kline

Subject: Aircraft accident,

June 13, 2020

Mandan, ND,

N836JC, RV 8

### 1<sup>st</sup> Person interviewed

Name: Michael Gunia

[REDACTED]  
Linton, ND 58552  
[REDACTED]

I called Mr. Gunia and requesting information about the accident. Mr. Gunia stated he was there at the time of the accident and saw the accident, as much as he could observe at his location, which was a hangar on the Mandan Airport (Y19). Mr. Gunia stated he saw the aircraft taxi to the runway, only at midway not using the full runway, for a southbound departure. Mr. Gunia said it was very windy and he noticed the wind swung the aircraft around and the pilot, Mr. Joel Pfliger, continued a 360-degree turn on the ramp, then continued to taxi to the runway (midfield). Mr. Gunia thought that if Mr. Pfliger would of used the whole runway, instead of just half, midfield, it would of gave Mr. Pfliger more time to prepare for his takeoff, due to the winds that day. Mr. Gunia stated he noticed the elevator was up during this time and stayed up. Mr. Gunia went on to say that once the aircraft took off it immediately went straight up and only flew approximately 50 feet high before it made a left bank and went straight down and impacted the ground. Mr. Gunia stated that he was standing next to Mr. Daniel Vanbuskirk (see the next # 2 interview), at this time, who said to Mr. Gunia, that he had mentioned to the pilot, Mr. Pfliger, just prior to his taxiing, to be sure to remove the seat belt that was secured around the back control stick. Mr. Vanbuskirk stated to Mr. Gunia, as soon as the aircraft crashed, he said to Mr. Gunia that Mr. Pfliger forgot to remove the back seat belt from the back control stick (Mr. Vanbuskirk's opinion at the time). Mr. Gunia and Mr. Vanbuskirk both got over to the aircraft to try to pull the pilot out, but the aircraft was already engulfed in flames and they were unable to remove the pilot. Mr. Gunia stated that he still observed the aircraft elevator in the full up position at the crash site but as the fire continued the elevator slowly lowered down.

-End of interview-

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Person interviewed

Name: Daniel Vanbuskirk

[REDACTED]  
Bismarck, ND  
[REDACTED]

I contacted Mr. Daniel Vanbuskirk concerning his witnessing the aircraft accident at Mandan, ND. Mr. Vanbuskirk stated that he had just had a meeting with Mr. Pfliger, and others, just prior to Mr. Pfliger's departure. Mr. Vanbuskirk and Mr. Pfliger walked over to Mr. Pfliger's RV-8 aircraft, N836JC after the meeting. Mr. Vanbuskirk noticed right away that the back, passenger, control stick had the safety belt strapped around the control stick and pulled back. Mr. Vanbuskirk stated this was done to hold the aircraft's flight controls during wind while parked. Mr. Vanbuskirk stated to Mr. Pfliger to be sure you remove the safety belt from around the back seat control before you depart. Mr. Vanbuskirk then left the area where Mr. Pfliger and aircraft was. Mr. Vanbuskirk said he could not tell if Mr. Pfliger removed the belt in back from his viewing angle, from the hangar he had walked back to. Mr. Vanbuskirk only saw, to the best he could, see from his viewing angle, that Mr. Pfliger turn around very quick while in the cockpit but couldn't see what he was doing. Mr. Vanbuskirk had noticed, all this time that the aircraft taxied and take off, that the aircraft elevator was always up. Mr. Vanbuskirk knew the wind was high and that Mr. Pfliger's aircraft turned around many times, possibly due to the wind. Mr. Vanbuskirk saw Mr. Pfliger only taxi midfield of the runway and did not use the entire length of the runway for his take-off. Mr. Vanbuskirk said he saw Mr. Pfliger do his take off roll at a high rate of speed. Mr. Vanbuskirk saw the aircraft take-off surprising fast, go straight up, vertically, and roll left and then straight down to the ground. At that time, Mr. Vanbuskirk stated that he told Mr. Gunia that he (Mr. Pfliger) that I am sure he had not released the belt from the back control stick. Mr. Vanbuskirk stated he always say the elevator in the up position. He and Mr. Gunia went to the crash but was unable to remove Mr. Pfliger due to the crash fire at the time. Mr. Vanbuskirk observed that the elevator was in an up position and slowly dropped as the fire continued.

-End of interview-

 Digitally signed by JOHN O KLINE  
Date: 2020.07.09 07:20:02 -05'00'

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