

Inspector's Statement

On September 11, 2020, I arrived at the Joe's Bayou Boat Launch at [REDACTED] in Destin Florida, to investigate the accident of Banner Tow aircraft N7366Z. The Piper Pawnee PA-25-235 was still in the water sunk up to the cockpit window ledge in about eight feet of water at the side of the boat dock. The Boat tow company arrived and pulled the aircraft over to the boat ramp area and the pilot jumped in the water and connected the straps to the left mid-strut area.

The crane on scene then hooked up and lifted the aircraft inward to ramp, then released back into water. I watched as the left forward strut bent upward under the stress and weight of aircraft. I noticed during the pull that there was impact damage to the inboard leading edge of left wing and left wing tip trailing edge damage. The straps were repositioned on the most inboard ends of both forward struts at the fuselage attach point, then the aircraft was lifted out of the water to the top of boat ramp.

I photographed the aircraft and removed cockpit documents for investigation. Both inboard leading edges had impact damage and sheetmetal roll back directly aft. It is this inspector's opinion that the wings spar area and left tip damage occurred during the impact, not the seven mile tow from the Gulf of Mexico to boat ramp by boat.

The pilot, (Mr. Nicholas Kaddatz) stated that there are two tanks in the aircraft. The aft auxiliary tank where the hopper was previously installed under the crop dusting configuration, and the main tank, in front of the auxiliary tank. The process of fuel management was by time and landmarks only. He stated that he had to "sit up in the seat to look over the instrument panel to see the mechanical fuel gauge" in the main tank. He stated he would turn on fuel pump to transfer fuel from the auxiliary fuel tank to main when reaching Pensacola. When the engine quit he thought it was carburetor icing and pulled the carb heat knob first. He then realized that it may be the fuel switching on the fuel pump and "I went full mixture and full throttle" and still nothing happened. He also stated that as a contributing factor at the time was a busy Air Traffic Control period of the flight, distracting him from the fuel time.

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