



The National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Aviation Safety
Central Region
Memorandum for the Record
Witness and Personnel
Statement Summaries
CEN19FA270
New Orleans, Louisiana
August 16, 2019

Cameraman for Fox News 8
Chris Russell
[REDACTED]

My coworker and I were at the Lakefront Airport to cover a news story with the pilot of the airplane. It was a very long and hot day. Once the pilot finally taxied over to where we were, we did our interview and then he explained in detail to Nancy the safety procedures and what to do in case of emergency. The longer it took for the pilot to explain things and prepare for flight, the more Nancy felt uneasy, but she said she would still go through with doing the story no matter how worried she was. After the pilot and Nancy Parker (passenger) prepared to depart, it appeared the pilot had problems starting his engine. He tried two to three times to get the engine going and then it finally started. The plane taxied over to the runway and sat for a while. From my vantage point which was at the outside stairs of the terminal restaurant, on the tarmac, it appeared that the pilot turned the plane slightly to move out of the way of other planes. I don't know why but they sat there for at least 5 or 10 more minutes and another plane had to pass by them. I could not tell from that angle if they had any type of problems, but it did seem odd to me for the plane to move to the side for so long. After sitting for a while, it appeared that the pilot was cleared for takeoff. As they picked up speed to take off towards the end of the runway, it looked like the plane almost lost control, and I thought it was going to flip over. The tail of the plane jerked to the right as the front appeared to jerk up and left with a little smoke. Then the plane straightened up and ascended into the air. As they began to bank to left, I noticed smoke beginning to come from the engine off on and I heard a slight sound of the engine. It sounded like a sputter or like it had some type of trouble. Maybe a minute or less after the airplane left my sight, the airport manager received a call saying the plane went down. We did not see the impact, but we did see black smoke from where we were. We immediately drove to the scene which was about a half mile or so off airport property and discovered the plane smashed on the ground and fully engulfed in flames.

Witness
Brad Wallace
[REDACTED]

Stated that he saw the aircraft flying. Aircraft was unstable, wiggling, and the engine sputtering and then came down impacting the ground. He ran over to the scene to try to help but it burst into flames.

Witness
Raymond Hymel

Stated that he was sitting in a security trailer facing a window when he saw a red streak go by the window and heard the crash. He stated he did not hear an engine running.

Donald Harris
ATP, CFI, A&P, IA
[REDACTED]

Stated that he saw the aircraft a few months ago and it looked like it was always in pretty good shape and well taken of.

Wendy Bell, General Manager, Flight Line First
New Orleans Lakefront Airport
[REDACTED]

On Friday, August 16th, Franklin called us at 11:00 am to request fuel. Our linemen drove our AVGAS truck to the T-Hangar where the Pitts is located. The line guy parked Avgas fuel truck in front of his aircraft. Franklin was very particular about his aircraft and preferred to fuel his aircraft himself. The line guy gave the fuel hose to Franklin, and he fueled the aircraft himself. On arrival at Franklin’s hangar the line guy saw Donald Harris in Franklin’s T-hangar. It appeared that they were working on the aircraft together.

Refueling Record:

67327	08/16/19	PN600DF						
	08/16/19	F Fuel 100LL	8.00	5.150	41.20	3.83	45.03	
		[REDACTED]						45.03

Alexander Lemishko
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