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AS-CEN

Date: 9/13/2023
Subject: CEN22LA253
Contact: Duane Havis - Pilot

Spoke with Mr. Havis via telephone. He provided information regarding his pilot certificates, ratings, hours and other pertinent information. When asked to describe the accident sequence he said that the flight was a maintenance test flight following the completion of a 100-hour inspection of the airplane. The airplane preflight, taxi, run-up and pretakeoff checks were normal. Takeoff was normal and the airplane was performing well. After takeoff from AUS, he made a turn to the west and was intending to fly to the Breakaway Airpark, but about 5 minutes after takeoff he detected light blue-gray smoke in the cockpit. He initially thought this was related to the electrical system and he elected to return to AUS. He informed ATC of his intention and received a vector back to AUS. Within a few seconds the smoke intensity greatly increased, and the smoke was now thick and black and filled the cockpit. He opened the window in an attempt to clear smoke from the cockpit. He noted that he could not even see the instrument panel. He opened the side windows to attempt to clear the smoke, which helped, but there was still a lot of smoke. ATC informed him that he had lost altitude and he attempted to increase engine power, but the engine didn't respond. It was then he noticed that the engine temperature gauges were all in the red. ATC attempted to help by providing him with options for a forced landing, but he elected to land the airplane in a body of water that he could see directly below the airplane. He glided to the water, crossed a bridge and impacted the water. The cockpit filled with water, and he was able to open the door, remove his harness and get out of the airplane. Once out, a paddleboarder who was on the water came to provide assistance.