



Witness statement regarding N145AB accident on 3/1/2019

Brian C. Haggerty, Banner Tow Pilot Instructor

Derek Morgan applied for a banner tow pilot position with our company in the fall of 2018 and travelled here for an interview and evaluation flight which we accomplished on 11/18/2018. That evaluation went well. He was offered the job contingent on his completing tailwheel training and obtaining that endorsement prior to commencement of banner pilot training.

Derek did complete his tailwheel training and received the endorsement in Maine. Since he needed to leave his old job and move to Florida from Maine, we mutually agreed that he would begin training with our class on banner field operations scheduled for 1/23/2019. In the succeeding 5 weeks he completed all of our required ground training in the banner field, dual flight training in the Cessna 305A, and solo training flights in the PA-25. Required forms were submitted to FAA, adding Derek to the list of approved pilots on our company's Certificate of Waiver for banner towing. The revised Waiver documents were received on 2/28/2018 so Derek and one other pilot were scheduled to fly their first banners for compensation the following day, 3/1/2018.

On the morning of 3/1/2019 I arrived at the company just before 0800. Derek was already there preparing for his flight. He was scheduled to pick his banner at 1100 and asked me to go over his routing and other details of his flight. He seemed excited and enthusiastic about this banner flight and had what I would characterize as an appropriate level of nervousness. We spent several minutes discussing his assignment which included displaying the banner along Hollywood Beach and continuing to the north all the way to Commercial Pier, just a short distance north of Ft Lauderdale Beach.

Derek and I had flown a routes familiarization flight the previous Sunday, 2/24/2019, which included the "Hollywood Shuffle" off of the beach between Hollywood Blvd., and Dania Pier, as well as the transition north past Ft Lauderdale International airport, the Ft Lauderdale Beach route (route Zulu), and a little further north to turn back southbound at Commercial Pier. During these routes training flights we insure the pilot is aware of the details of the airspace in the Miami/Ft Lauderdale areas, communications, and geographical points for orientation. This flight includes identifying the south and north end points for each route, and demonstrating that the southbound legs should be flown approximately one-half mile off shore; that this distance off shore gives other banners on the northbound display legs enough room to maneuver, even if they have to go around a parasail, and gives the southbound pilot enough

spacing to safely make a right turn back toward the beach to fly northbound no closer than 500 feet from the beach. I also brief each pilot that the wind at the beach is out of the east more often than not and on days with an east wind it is necessary to crab away from the beach to maintain adequate spacing.

In our discussion on the morning of the accident I reminded him the objective of the flight was to show the banner so people at the beach could read it and told him that he had discretion to divide display time among the various areas along his overall route. I suggested that he fly the Hollywood Shuffle a few times then request clearance from Ft Lauderdale Tower to transition north to Commercial Pier then come back slightly south to fly route Zulu along Ft Lauderdale Beach. I also told him if he observed large concentrations of people in a particular stretch along the beach he could racetrack and make an additional pass if he thought it would be productive. We also went over his radio calls and procedures for returning to North Perry, either from Ft Lauderdale Beach area, or Hollywood Beach area if that should be where he was, when it was time to come back to drop the banner.

Shortly before 0900 Derek, two other new hire pilots, and I completed the task of placing a copy of the newly revised Certificate of Waiver in each of 15 company airplanes currently parked at North Perry. This project took about 12 to 15 minutes. Derek returned to the office to review his flight preparations again before going to preflight his airplane. I attended to a few emails, briefed another pilot for his training flight, then drove to the banner field.

In the banner field I conducted a practice session for a Pawnee pilot doing practice banner pick maneuvers then remained in the field to observe Derek Morgan's banner pick and departure. Since this was Derek's first paying banner following completion of training, and as we do for every new banner pilot on their first few actual banners, he was briefed to do some practice banner picks prior to the actual pick and departure. In accordance with our procedures, his first pass across the banner field was to deploy the hook. Hook deployment was normal. The ground crew had him fly 5 or 6 practice picks. He did a go-around on one of these passes I think because he didn't like his set up on the approach. That is fairly normal and was a good decision on his part.

When the ground crew cleared him to pick the banner his approach was stable, pull up point was right and resulted in the banner lifting gently off of the ground at 1059 local time. After our ground crew confirmed the banner was flying properly he switched to North Perry Tower, advised them he was "Delta east," and was directed to contact Ft Lauderdale Tower on 120.2. During this sequence of events Derek was flying the airplane well, communicating well and seemed to be in control and comfortable with the airplane and banner.

After I returned from the banner field I went to my computer to look at our GPS tracker web site for 145AB to see how Derek was doing on his route. By then he should have been established on the Hollywood Shuffle, but the position displayed for 145AB was not refreshing, a common quirk of that system, and it showed the airplane only about 3 miles east of North Perry airport. I conducted a debriefing of the other pilot I had observed earlier in the banner



box, critiquing his flight and showing him videos of his practice picks. I went back to the computer a couple more times to look for 145AB. The display was still not updating.

I don't recall the exact sequence of the next short while that morning but just after 1145 local time I went back to look at the GPS tracker display and it had finally updated. I think I was going to do a historical playback of the track of his flight at this point and don't remember where I was in that process but I noticed that the display of 145AB was just south of Commercial Blvd near Oakland Park Blvd and not over water; not off shore from the beach. He was supposed to stay over the water.

Since we do not normally have radio contact with our airplanes when they are away from North Perry, particularly when they are in the Ft Lauderdale area, sometimes we can communicate with them via text messages to give instructions. At 1151 local I texted Derek, "Map looks like you are on shore - make sure you stay off of the beach" and then "Stay off of the beach over water" Then someone in the office, and I do not recall who it was, said words to the effect that 'one of our airplanes had hit a building in Ft Lauderdale with his banner.' My next thought was that he was across the beach and flying too low with the banner so I texted, "Return to N Perry now" not knowing that he had already impacted a building.

In the past 9 years I have trained approximately 120 pilots to tow banners using these company procedures and these airplanes. Derek Morgan was as qualified and as good a pilot and student as most of them and better than many. I saw nothing in his behavior that morning that would have presaged this tragic outcome.

Respectfully,

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area. A thin horizontal line extends from the right side of the box.

Brian C. Haggerty  
Banner Tow Pilot Instructor

March 2, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

On Friday morning, 3/01/19, when Derek came in, I briefly went over the procedure of how I will text him his schedule every day for the following day's flights. We briefly chatted about that and he said he understood. He seemed in good spirits and happy.

Best regards



Loren Foglia

Administrative Assistant

March 7, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

Friday morning 3/1/19, I spoke to Derek Morgan before his flight. We discussed his route for that day and how he was going to fly it. He was in a good mood and excited about his flight.

Best regards,



Francisco DeAgreia

Pilot

March 11, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

On Friday 3/1/2019, I received a call from Charles asking where Derek Morgan was and for me to tell Derek to be ready at 10:25 a.m.

I ran to the FBO and asked the secretary where Derek was. She said "he's in the bathroom".

I went to the bathroom door and said "hey Derek" and he said "yes". I said to him "Charles has been trying to get a hold of you". About thirty seconds later he came out of the bathroom.

I said "I think Charles wants you to be in the plane by 10:25 a.m." He pulled his phone out of his pocket and said "oh, I left my phone on silent". I told him "he should try to get a hold of Charles".

We walked outside, and he asked me if "I would help him move the aircraft", I said "yes, sure I'll help you". We moved the plane and I asked him "if everything is ok with the aircraft?" he said "yes" and I said "have a safe flight".

Sincerely,


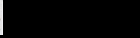
  
Victor Costa



## Preflight Of N145AB witnessed via Nest cam on March 3, 2019

I, Ryan Hiott sat and watched Derek Morgan's Preflight N145AB, through our company Nest camera system. The preflight started by Derek taking the canopy cover off of the airplane and folding it up. I'm really not sure if he puts the canopy cover in the airplane or in the hangar. The next step of this preflight, he took a piece of tape and taped the stall warning switch. He then proceeded to the airplane and turned on the master and looked for the light. Then he went back to the stall warning switch and removed the tape. The next step in Derek's preflight, he went to the left side of the airplane, climbed up on the wing walk and checked his fuel. During the next steps of his pre-flight he was blocked by the fuselage of the airplane, eventually coming around the edge of the left wing. Then, I noticed him go under the wing check for the inspection panels and checked out the wheel assembly, working his way towards the fuselage. Once reaching the fuselage, I observed Derek sump the fuel, then he stood up held it to the sky and dumped it back into the gas tank. He then disappeared behind the cowling on the left side, and he spent a minute or so looking at the left side of the engine. Then he stood up on the wheel and checked the oil, as a result of checking the oil he walked away from the airplane and came back with two quarts of oil. I did observe him pour two quarts of oil into the airplane. After which he closed the oil dipstick door. Then Derek came around the prop running his hand across the left side of the prop then sticking his hand inside the front of the engine, he looked to be checking the alternator belt. The next step in the preflight he checked the right side of the engine touching each spark plug wire methodically. Then he closed the right engine door and proceeded to check the right wheel assembly and continued down the leading edge of the right wing. Once reaching the end of the right wing, Derek looked under the wing and on top of the wing appearing to be checking the screws to make sure all the screws were present.

The next part of his pre-flight was checking the flight controls on the trailing edge of the wing taking his time to check all connections. Once at the fuselage, he worked his way back touching and feeling to the tail section. His inspection of the tail section seemed to be methodical. After inspecting the tail section Derek proceeded to install three tow hooks onto the airplane at this point, I stopped watching.

  
Ryan Hiott  
Aerial Banners Inc.  
Phone:   
Cell: 