


RECORD OF	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> VISIT	<input type="checkbox"/> CONFERENCE OR	<input type="checkbox"/> TELEPHONE CALL	TIME 1:45 PM	DATE 12/07/2022
NAME (S) OF PERSON (S) CONTACTED OR IN CONFERENCE AND LOCATION Patrick G. Merkle				ROUTING	
				SYMBOL	INITIALS
Michael T. Bevan, ASI					
James C. Kelly, ASI					
SUBJECT Interview with Mr. Merkle regarding his crash into a high tension line tower in N201RF on 27, November 2022					
DIGEST Before starting the discussion I gave him a PBR brochure and let him read it. He said that in the morning before departing for KHPN he obtained a briefing from the 1800wxbrief.com website, the Leidos contract flight service website, and then made a further call to the (800)wxbrief briefing number before departure. The flight up was made IFR without incident, with a significant tailwind, and he cancelled IFR about 30 miles from HPN and approached the airport and landed VFR. Before returning to GAI he again obtained a briefing in the 1400 EDT to 1415 EDT neighborhood. He said he filed an IFR flight plan during this briefing but was unable to open it in on departure and had to refile in the air. He departed HPN on the PROP1 departure. His return flight was without incident until he reached the neighborhood of EMI and Wooly intersection. He was planning to fly the GAI RNAV A approach, but was changed to the GAI RNAV 14 approach because of the low ceilings and visibility. He made a significant diversion from his course when entering the approach change into his GPS, which he blamed on selecting a similarly named intersection. He used the time flying a heading to correct his course to straighten out his GPS entries.					
CONCLUSION, ACTION TAKEN, OR REQUIRED It was clear in this interview that the pilot did not have a good understanding of the use of the GPS in the aircraft, or how to properly fly a GPS approach. It was also clear that he admitted to failing to properly monitor his altitude once he had sighted the ground, however he very carefully did not specifically admit to intentionally descending below minimums.					
DATE 12/07/2022	TITLE Aviation Safety Inspector			SIGNATURE 	

DIGEST (CONT)

He noted that while he was flying at this point that the cloud tops were at about 2700 feet.

He also said that in a lot of situations he will use an IFLY 740 VFR portable GPS to avoid the more complex keystrokes needed in operating the Garmin 430W.

When he turned onto the final approach course he noticed that there was no LPV glideslope showing. He discounted that and continued in. He did not consider that he was then effectively flying an LNAV approach with much higher minimums. When questioned about whether the GPS had transitioned into approach mode, he did not appear to really understand the question.

He had set an altitude alarm for 800 feet. When he reached 1200 feet he sighted the ground and said that he could not recall his altitude between that point and the crash. He said he was responding to the Siren call of seeing the ground. He did not notice the 800 foot alarm and was very busy keeping contact with the ground through the side window and working at "pulling the airport out of the soup" when he saw the power lines. He specifically stated that he was familiar with the power lines and believed he was on the airport side of them. He also said that he was flying without the landing light at that point, since it would have made it more difficult to see the airport through the fog.

He said that he never flew an approach on the autopilot, the autopilot was not capable of flying a coupled glide slope and that he found the control movements from the autopilot difficult to deal with while he was controlling the descent.

He repeatedly said that he was an excellent pilot, and talked about his high quality landings in the Mooney.