

Eckrote Debra

From: Michael Todd [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, January 13, 2019 9:58 AM
To: Eckrote Debra
Subject: Re: Witness report for accident involving N800KE

Importance: High

Hi Debra,

Thank your calling me back regarding this tragic accident. The only good to come of it is if fellow pilots learn from it and avoid repeating the events that led up to the crash. Here are the things I remember:

On the morning of the accident, my wife and I had flown our Cessna 180 to the Whidbey Airpark (W10) to meet friends for breakfast, landing there at about 9:35 local time. The weather in the Whidbey Island area was excellent, with clear skies, unrestricted visibility and light winds out of the east at most of the surrounding airports. On our approach to land on runway 34 at W10, I noticed that there was a slight easterly wind above the tree tops, but there was no turbulence, and the wind on the runway was calm. The runway is surrounded by high trees, with those to the north being particularly imposing. The runway is not visible from downwind on either east or west side of the runway due to the high trees. With calm winds, many pilots prefer to land to the north and takeoff to the south, but most of the aircraft that use this field can take off or land either direction if the wind dictates.

At about 11:10, we taxied our 180 out of the parking area at the southwest side of the airport, planning to depart runway 16. As we made our way northbound along the grass area west of the runway which is normally used as a taxiway, I heard two RV type aircraft on the CTAF, reporting entering the traffic pattern to land on runway 16. As we reached a point adjacent to the north end of the runway, we held short of the runway, with our aircraft still facing north to watch for the arriving aircraft and allow them to land prior to our departure. We watched as the first of the RV's turned a close in left base leg and begin its turn to final. From our position, the aircraft appeared to be at an appropriate altitude for his close in turn to final, but the approach from the north requires the aircraft to be close to the tops of the trees to get down to the approach end of runway 16. As the aircraft made the turn to final, the nose suddenly dropped and the aircraft rolled to the left. As the aircraft disappeared behind the trees, the aircraft attitude appeared nearly vertical nose down, and the rotation to the left continued. I made a radio transmission in the blind on the CTAF advising that we had observed an aircraft spin into the trees to the north of the runway. I had a brief exchange on the radio with the pilot of the second RV, and made it clear to him that it was the preceding RV that we had seen go down. That second RV then began to circle over the area where we had seen the aircraft go into the trees, and I advised him when he appeared to be directly over the crash site. That pilot soon advised that he could see the wreckage and transmitted a Mayday message. One of the airport managers was on foot with a hand held radio and he advised on the CTAF that 911 had been called, and that he and others were headed toward the area. We took off in the 180 with hopes we could circle overhead and help direct those on the ground. Unfortunately, from a safe altitude above the traffic pattern, we could not see the wreckage, although we observed the First Responders and emergency vehicles arrive and begin to make their way into the dense forest. Several other aircraft were beginning to circle the area, so we decided we had done everything we could to help, and that our safest choice was to leave the area.

The preceding is factual to the best of my knowledge, but as one who has taught spins, I'll offer my editorial comment off the record: The takeaways for me is that the aircraft was close in to the runway as he flew his base leg and turn to final. There would have been a slight tailwind on base. Because the runway is in a fairly narrow slot in the trees, it is impossible to see from downwind, and doesn't come into view until turning final. A close in base with a tailwind could require some quick maneuvering to line up on final, with lots of distraction. It's a perfect setup for a classic stall-spin, which I believe is what we witnessed.

Sincerely,

Michael Todd
ATP&CFI [REDACTED]

On Jan 12, 2019, at 2:58 PM, Eckrote Debra <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Hello Mike, thank you again for calling in and providing a statement of what you observed regarding the accident involving the RV-8A, N800KE. As I mentioned, would you please provide a written statement of what you observed and email it to me at the address below. Your observations will greatly help in determining the cause of this accident.

Thanks again

Debra J. Eckrote
Regional Chief
NTSB Western Pacific Region
[REDACTED]

Federal Way, WA 98003

Office: [REDACTED]

Cell: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

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