Safety Regulation Group
Safety Investigation and Data Department

Follow-up Action on Occurrence Report

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ACCIDENT TO RANS S10 SAKOTA, G-BVCB, AT LOWER WHITLEY, CHESHIRE ON 2 JUNE 2002
(FORCED LANDING AFTER ENGINE STOPPED DUE TO FUEL PROBLEMS)

CAA FACTOR NUMBER	:	F22/2003
FACTOR PUBLICATION DATE	:	07 August 2003
OPERATOR	:	Private
CAA OCCURRENCE NUMBER	:	2002/03564
AAIB REPORT	:	Bulletin 7/2003

SYNOPSIS

(From AAIB Report)

The aircraft was flying from a private airstrip in Cambridgeshire to Blackpool, routing via the Manchester Low Level Corridor. The pilot reported that this was the longest flight he had planned in this aircraft and that, in his eagerness to complete the journey, he cruised at a faster speed than normal. Throughout the flight fuel was being fed from the left tank, and on arrival at the Corridor the pilot recalled that the fuel level in that tank appeared to be low. While transiting the Low Level Corridor the aircraft entered the Liverpool Control Zone and the pilot's concentration was devoted to regaining the correct track and altitude. He next noticed that the fuel in the vapour return line, situated under the instrument panel, was becoming "agitated" and that the reading on the fuel pressure gauge was falling. He switched the electric fuel pump on and selected the fuel to feed from the right tank, which he estimated was half full; although the light was poor, making it difficult for him to see the fuel levels in the tanks clearly. No fuel appeared to flow and the engine stopped. The aircraft was at an altitude of 1,200 feet amsl.

The pilot transmitted a 'MAYDAY' call and selected a field for a forced landing. He commented that, while executing this, he was distracted by a radio request for the number of people on board. On final approach, at a height of approximately 25 feet, the aircraft struck a powerline, cutting it with its propeller. Thereafter, the pilot was not sure of the aircraft's movements. It seemed to turn through 360° before coming to rest in the field the right way up. Although there was substantial damage to the aircraft, the pilot reported that the tubular steel fuselage survived well and he was able to exit normally with only minor injuries. All three emergency services attended the scene. There was no fire.

The same journey had been attempted the day before. The pilot had abandoned that flight after 35 minutes because he smelled fuel and, on investigation, found a slow leak in the vapour return line. He returned, rectified the leak and took the aircraft for a further 20 minute flight, during the course of which fuel was successfully fed from each tank in turn. On completion the aircraft was fully refuelled with AVGAS.

The pilot remarked that there had been no evidence that any fuel had been lost overnight, nor had he been aware of any fuel leak or fumes during the flight. He estimated that the aircraft had been flying for one and a half hours at the time of the accident.

This document is published by the Safety Investigation and Data Department, Safety Regulation Group, Civil Aviation Authority, Aviation House, Gatwick Airport South, West Sussex, RH6 0YR. Tel: 01293 573220 Fax: 01293 573972 Telex: 878753

FOLLOW UP ACTION

The one Safety Recommendation, made by the AAIB following their investigation, is reproduced below, together with the CAA's response.

Recommendation 2003-05

It is recommended that the Popular Flying Association reviews its procedures for ensuring that engineering inspections and relevant documentation are correctly completed, when required, following modification to an aircraft system.

CAA Response

This Recommendation is not addressed to the CAA.

CAA Status - Closed