



Bureau of Land Management

Elevated SAFECOM 13-0506, Single Engine Air Tanker N896WP, Wells, NV.

July 16, 2013

SUMMARY. On July 16, 2013 at 2027 MDT¹, N896WP, a Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT), landed at the Wells, Nevada municipal airport after conducting aerial firefighting operations. The mishap pilot taxied the aircraft to the unmanned fuel pump for refueling. The mishap pilot stopped the aircraft approximately 8-10 feet in front of the fuel pump and called the SEAT Base Manager (SEMG) to report in. After the SEMG acknowledged the mishap pilot with a return time, the mishap pilot became distracted and allowed the aircraft to drift forward and impact the fuel pump. The mishap pilot immediately shut down the aircraft. The aircraft engine and propellers were damaged along with fuel pump equipment. No one was injured.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The mishap pilot was flying N896WP, an AT-802 SEAT, under an Exclusive Use contract with the Bureau of Land Management.

The mishap pilot departed Battle Mountain, Nevada in support of the Wieland fire. After completing his mission, the mishap pilot departed the area enroute to the Wells, Nevada municipal airport. The mishap pilot landed at 2027 MDT. Sunset was at 2012. The required land time was 2042 (sunset plus 30 minutes). Civil twilight was 2044.

Weather for Wells, NV:

<u>Time</u>	<u>Temp</u>	<u>Dew Pt.</u>	<u>RH</u>	<u>ALT</u>	<u>Wind</u>	<u>Sky conditions</u>
8:00pm	89°	37.9°	16%	29.74	SSW 7 mph	clear
9:00pm	85°	50°	30%	29.74	ENE 9 mph	clear

The mishap pilot positioned the aircraft approximately 8 -10 feet in front of fuel pump for refueling (post-shutdown) and feathered the propeller. The mishap pilot stated that visibility was degraded due to lack of ambient lighting as the ramp area was not well lit and there were no lights in the refueling area.² The nose taxi lights were on steady and the wing lights were off. With the aircraft stopped (the mishap pilot was holding the brakes), the mishap pilot called the SEMG and reported in.³

¹ All times are Mountain Daylight Time (MDT) unless noted otherwise.

² The AT-802 aircraft has two nose mounted lights and retractable wing lights.

³ The mishap pilot stated that his normal procedure is to set parking brake after shutting down the engine.

The mishap pilot stated that while he was writing down the time from the SEMG, he became distracted and did not notice the aircraft drift into the fuel pump. He further stated that the poor ambient lighting didn't allow him to perceive movement of the aircraft. Although the propeller was feathered, the turbo propeller engine still emits some residual thrust. When the propellers impacted the fuel pump equipment, the mishap pilot shut down the engine.

The SEMG stated that approximately 20 seconds after he called with the return time, he heard a "clunk" or "thud" type of sound. (This amount of time differs with the time frame stated by the mishap pilot.)

After the mishap, the pilot and SEMG inspected the fuel pump for any leak that might have resulted for the impact. They did not observe any leakage but did shut off all electrical power to the fuel pump as a precaution.

Damage to the aircraft propeller.



Damage to the fuel pump equipment.



FINDINGS.

1. The mishap pilot was qualified to perform fire suppression missions.
2. The mishap pilot landed at the Wells, NV municipal airport at 2027 MDT.
3. The mishap pilot taxied to the fuel pump and parked head-on to the fuel pump.
4. General procedure for the SEAT base is to enter the fuel pump area from the south.
5. The SEMG stated that the other SEAT pilots park sideways to the pump, not facing the pump.
6. According to the SEMG and the airport manager, the ramp slopes to the west, perpendicular to the mishap aircraft / fuel pump axis.
7. The mishap pilot feathered the propeller but did not set the parking brake.
8. The mishap pilot radioed the SEMG to get his chock time.
9. The SEMG responded with a chock time for the mishap pilot.
10. The mishap pilot stated that he was distracted by writing down the time and was unaware that the aircraft was drifting into the fuel pump.

11. The SEMG stated that approximately 20 seconds elapsed between reporting the chock time and hearing the aircraft impact the fuel pump equipment.
12. The mishap pilot denied using the phone, texting, emailing or other distractions (other than writing down the chock time) while in the cockpit.
13. The fuel pump area did not have dedicated lighting.
14. AT-802 aircraft have two nose mounted taxi lights and two 600 watt retractable wing lights. The nose taxi lights were on, the wing lights were off.
15. Mishap pilot had previously been counseled by the contractor in regards to his extracurricular personal activities and the potential impact on his ability to safely operate in the aerial firefighting environment.
16. The mishap pilot's DOI Airplane Pilot Qualification card was suspended in accordance with 351 DM 3.6G1.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. Contractor completes a comprehensive review of mishap pilot's assigned collateral duties and any extracurricular personal activities to determine the impact on his ability to adequately compartmentalize competing priorities and safely operate in the aerial firefighting environment.
2. Mishap pilot provide training to other vendor operators on the lessons learned from this mishap.
3. Mishap pilot review company SOP on ramp and refueling procedures and revise as needed.
4. Mishap pilot develop recommendations and best practices for the Wells, NV municipal airport ramp /fueling area and forward them to the BLM Nevada State Aviation Manager (SAM) via the OAS Aviation Safety and Program Evaluations Department.
5. Mishap pilot successfully complete a check ride prior to being issued a DOI Airplane Pilot Qualification card.