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| Aircraft Type and Registration: | Piper PA-34-200T Seneca II, G-BRXO | |
| No & Type of Engines: | 2 Continental Motors TSIO-360-EB piston engines | |
| Year of Manufacture: | 1979 | |
| Date & Time (UTC): | 23 August 2004 at 1200 hrs | |
| Location: | Stapleford Airfield, Essex | |
| Type of Flight: | Private | |
| Persons on Board: | Crew - 1 | Passengers - None |
| Injuries: | Crew - None | Passengers - N/A |
| Nature of Damage: | Damage to left wing and propeller, shock-loading of left engine, possible damage to landing gear | |
| Commander's Licence: | Basic Commercial Pilot's Licence | |
| Commander's Age: | 68 years | |
| Commander's Flying Experience: | 3,127 hours (of which 1,710 were on type) Last 90 days - 21 hours Last 28 days - 11 hours | |
| Information Source: | Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot | |

History of the flight

The pilot had flown to Stapleford Airfield early in the morning to have a repair carried out to the aircraft's autopilot. When the repair had been completed the pilot was informed by the engineers that only the autopilot computer had been removed to effect the repair.

At midday the pilot departed for the aircraft's home base. Runway 22 was in use, which is partly asphalt (first 600 metres) and latterly grass (477 metres), with a crosswind component of approximately 15 kt from the right. Once the aircraft was airborne the pilot reported that he was "fighting to keep the aircraft's nose up". He tried trimming using the electric elevator trim system but found it did not work. The pilot therefore decided to abandon the takeoff: he landed the aircraft heavily on the remaining grassed runway length and the left propeller touched the ground.

Analysis

On subsequent inspection of the aircraft it was discovered that the elevator trim was in the full nose-down position and that the circuit breaker for the electric trim had been pulled.

The pilot candidly reported that he had not checked the trim prior to departure because he assumed that it been undisturbed during the repair. He accepts that he should have checked the trim, but he believed that the engineers should have pointed out that the circuit breaker had been pulled and they should have returned the trim to the take-off position on completing the autopilot repair work.

Conclusion

The checks carried out by a pilot are fundamentally important for an aircraft's safe operation. In carrying out checks and vital actions, there can be no justification for taking short cuts or making assumptions. Moreover, this accident also highlights the importance of accurately documenting work that has been carried out to an aircraft, especially when it has implications for its subsequent safe operation.