

## FLIGHTWORTHY TRULY FLIGHT WORTHY?

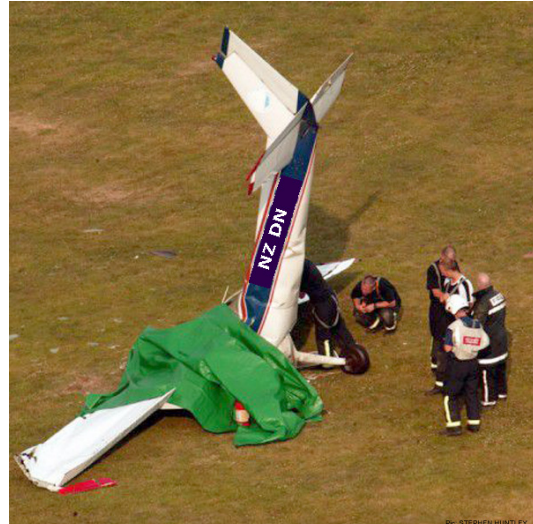
by Mike "SkyKing" King

Despite a rash of crashes recently, Flightworthy Aircraft has again denied that its twin engine series has a problem with its automatic fuel switch device, found on several popular models. According to NTSB spokesman Douglass Farnsley, 17 Flightworthy twins have nosed into the terra firma on takeoff during the past 24 months, with 6 fatalities resulting from these "hard landings."

The controversy centers on a switch used exclusively on Flightworthy twin engined models. The switch is designed to relieve the pilot of the difficult task of figuring out why she is losing power at takeoff in the event of the failure of an engine driven fuel pump. "In the unlikely event that the flawless engine driven fuel pump should fail, this switch automatically causes the auxiliary fuel pump to activate, averting a potentially serious torquing situation," says Flightworthy spokesperson Dusty Stockard.

Critics note that the automatic switch itself may fail, either failing to work when needed or causing the auxiliary fuel pump to activate when the engine driven pump is working. This latter situation can cause the affected engine to flood. On takeoff, this flooding could cause the engine to lose power suddenly, resulting in an imbalance in torque due to the full power operation of the remaining engine. Unless immediately corrected, this situation could rapidly lead to the plane flipping over on its back and nose diving into the ground just to the side of the runway.

Flightworthy denies that it has actually seen any instances of the automatic switch failing, much less causing a crash on takeoff. While acknowledging that several of its models have crashed on takeoff since the switch was introduced, Flightworthy



NTSB Personnel Examine Flightworthy Crash. Pictured are Douglass Farnsley, Chief Inspector; Chris Jensen, Asst. to the Chief; Patty Kake, Press Liaison; and John Ward, a general flunky trying to stay out of the way.

notes that each of the crashes has been attributed to pilot error. "These guys just need to learn how to fly a plane," according to Stockard. "No one is training on engine failure response these days. Loss of one or both engines should never keep a good pilot from landing safely."

NTSB spokesperson Farnsley questions Flightworthy's assessment of its accident rulings. "Sure we say pilot error in a lot of crashes," Farnsley notes. "There's a pilot involved in every crash, after all. We're just saying." Farnsley notes that the NTSB has never actually found evidence that failure of the Flightworthy switch has caused an accident. "The planes are usually too messed up to make that determination."

Stockard says Flightworthy has a spotless record of safety where properly trained and sober pilots react properly to minor inconveniences like engine failures. "You'd think some pilots are just bent on suicide, the way they get in these planes without knowing proper emergency techniques."