For Immediate Release
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Plane Crash Albert Whitted Airport

We are currently assisting the FAA with the investigation of a plane crash which took place at about 2:06 p.m. this afternoon at Albert Whitted Airport, 107 8th Avenue SE, St. Petersburg.

The plane, a 1951 Cessna L19 “Bird Dog” owned by Advertising Air Force which is based at the airport, ditched in the waters of Tampa Bay, about 300 to 400 yards SE of the Coast Guard Base at Bayboro Harbor.

The pilot, the only occupant of the plane, managed to evacuate from the cockpit after it entered the water and remained sitting on top of the plane until a rescue team from the Coast Guard arrived to pick him up. He was checked by paramedics and appears to be uninjured.

The pilot, Robert L. Gilchrist, 36, an employee of the Advertising Air Force, told officers on the scene he had just picked up an advertising banner at the airport and was starting to climb when he began to experience engine failure and was forced to ditch the plane in to the water.

The plane is still submerged and preparations for recovery are ongoing. The FAA has been notified and will be the investigating agency.

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