

Sometime in the mid to late 70's (probably 1977) Westover had an in flight engine fire on one of their C-123's. The aircraft had experienced #1 engine power loss on previous flight with an undetermined cause. The incident aircraft was being flown on a test hop to further troubleshoot the engine malfunction. During the test hop the number one engine again experienced the malfunction but this time with an uncontrollable engine fire. Luckily the aircraft was recovered at Westover only due to the airmanship of an experienced crew. As a side note, the flight mechanic bailed out of the aircraft due to the intensity of the fire coming into the cargo compartment.



The accident team determined that the root cause of the fire was a ruptured main fuel hose to the number one reciprocating engine. As a result all C-123's were grounded until all liquid carrying lines on the aircraft were replaced. As one can imagine this was a large and somewhat complex task.

Fuel Leak – Night Mission

I was flying a night local on one of the C-123's that had been through the hose replacement maintenance. My memory seems to recall that it was 54-693 (maybe). It was a night local mission in late fall or early winter. I recall it being dark and cool as we took off.

Shortly after takeoff I started the require wing / engine check. As soon as I came off the step box I smelled STRONG fuel fumes. As most former C-123 crew members remember the fuel fumes traveled from the nacelle through the wing roots. That was the most common place to detect the fumes.



I shined my flashlight on the right nacelle and saw **fuel** coming out of the number two recip inboard pork chop panel. It was right in the inboard exhaust flame path and to this day I don't understand why it didn't torch.

I immediately called the pilot on interphone and requested that they shut down the right recip. They did but to my amazement the fuel leak didn't even slow down. (as a side note the nacelle fuel tank recip and jet quick disconnects were side by side in that area.



The drop tank QD was on the other side of the nacelle tank). I then requested that the pilot shut down the right jet. Surprisingly the fuel leak still didn't slow down. The drop tanks hadn't been pressurized yet so the fuel couldn't have been coming from the right tank QD. Luckily I had previously been on a maintenance crew that performed one of the hose replacements and was familiar with the fuel plumbing in the nacelle area.

I knew that the only remaining fuel source in the nacelle area was for the aircraft heaters. As soon as the pilot shut down the heaters the fuel leak stopped. We landed and evacuated the aircraft on the runway. After the aircraft was towed off the runway we took off the pork chop panel and discovered that the heater fuel supply line was the cause of the leak.

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