



The National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Aviation Safety
Central Region
Memorandum for the Record
Witness Interview Summaries
CEN18FA368
St Ignace Michigan
August 31 2018

Paul S. Fullerton
Mackinac County Airport Manager

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On Aug 31st at approximately 8:00 PM I drove to the Mackinac County Airport for a security check. When I arrived there was an aircraft, N500MJ, at the self-service pump. I stopped and talked to the pilot, he finished pumping approximately 35 gallons of 100 LL fuel. He asked for the use of a curtesy car to go to town to eat supper. He indicated that he had just dropped off 5 passengers on Mackinac Island and that he would be back to go pick them up and go back to Wisconsin that night. I returned to my residence, then back to the airport arriving at approximately 9:30PM. The pilot was still here, and we spoke briefly, He indicated that he was going to Mackinac Island and wait over there for another hour for the passengers. Shortly thereafter I noticed he had taxied to runway 07 at approximately 9:45PM. I was in my office and witnessed his departure. The aircraft looked and sounded normal, he departed east bound. Approximately 5 minutes later I received a phone call from 911 dispatch. They inquired if an aircraft had departed recently and explained they had a call from a witness who reported they saw an aircraft go into the lake. I confirmed the departure of N500MJ, I then did look east out over the lake and observed how dark it was. It was later confirmed that the aircraft did not arrive on Mackinac Island. I remained at the airport and observed the search and rescue mission starting. I did observe that it was a very dark night, there were no stars, there was no moonlight and the horizon was indistinguishable.

John and Ellen Bronson

[REDACTED]

They stated they were sitting on their back porch facing the water and witnessed a low flying aircraft taking off from the airport. They stated that the plane was flying extremely low over the water, only about 100 to 200 feet above the surface. They stated that the plane banked to the right and they lost sight of it. Approximately 10 to 15 seconds later they heard what sounded like a crash into the water or an explosion.

Alexander Lemishko

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Senior Air Safety Investigator
NTSB Central Region Aviation