

WITNESS STATEMENT

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Western Pacific Region

Date: June 23, 2019
Person Contacted: Jeff Reese
NTSB Accident Number: WPR19FA178

This is my accounting of what I witnessed regarding the Maule Amphib at Sunriver (S21):

My home is in Sunriver on the South end of the airport located on the taxi way. Address is [REDACTED] Sunriver.

At approximately 10:35am June 22nd I was positioned on the east side of my home where I opened the hanger door looking out to the northeast. I witnessed the Maule Amphib just clear of the end of Rwy 18 at 50' to 75' agl. It appeared to be struggling to gain altitude. As the Maule continued over the grassy field below, still struggling to stay aloft, it turned slowly to the left at approximately 45 degrees. The aircraft continued on that heading losing altitude. I then witnessed the aircraft clear the large brush trees lining the Deschutes River. I heard a loud pop, saw the splash and the tail flip over. It took me 5 minutes to get to the scene. I witnessed the Maule inverted in the river.

I noticed a definite power loss with the aircraft. I did not observe any form of engine sputter or misfire.

Additional Witness Statements (excerpted from the Sunriver Police Department's Report)

Ernest Golden

Golden was with his wife and children, he did swim to the plane in an attempt to get to the pilot. Ernest said the water was too cold and the current was too strong.

Jeff Reese

Jeff is an experienced float plane pilot, noticed immediately this airplane was in trouble just after lift off. Jeff noticed the plane was low and not gaining sufficient altitude. Jeff said he was worried the pilot was going to try and put the plane down. Jeff said he saw the landing gear was down and hoped the pilot was not going to try for a water landing. Then the plane disappeared behind the tree line out of Jeff's view. Jeff heard it crash. Jeff's last observation of the plane was, it had hit the tops of some of the trees that were along the edge of the river. The plane was sideways going into the river, heading east, landing gear down.

Eric Richmond

Eric was on the other end of the airport when he heard this plane take off. The plane drew Eric's attention because he owns the same plane, just without the pontoons. Eric made a comment to his wife about it being the same plane they had. Eric said he knew something was wrong, he is familiar with the sound of these engines. The plane was making a different noise. It didn't sound like a mechanical difficulty, it sounded like the pilot had not throttled up enough or the engine was bogging for some reason. A very low lugging sound, not the typical high pitched under power sound. Eric saw the plane go down, but did not know the exact location.