

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
Office of Aviation Safety
Washington, DC 20594

November 17, 2006

Witness Factual Report

A. ACCIDENT

Location: Manhattan, New York
Date: October 11, 2006
Time: 1442 Eastern Daylight Time
Aircraft: Cirrus Design SR-20
NTSB Number: DCA07MA003

B. STAFF

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C. SUMMARY

On October 11, 2006, about 1442 eastern daylight time, a Cirrus Design SR-20, N929CD, crashed into an apartment building while maneuvering above Manhattan, New York. The airplane was destroyed by impact forces and a post crash fire. The certificated private pilot owner of the airplane, and a certified flight instructor were fatally injured. Marginal Visual Flight Rules conditions prevailed, and no flight plan was filed for the flight that departed Teterboro Airport (TEB), Teterboro, New Jersey. The personal sightseeing flight was conducted under the provisions of 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91. There were 1 severe and 2 minor injuries on the ground.

D. DETAILS OF INVESTIGATION

Witness information was obtained by reviewing local canvassing reports and interview summaries obtained from the New York City Police Department. Approximately 56 witnesses were identified. The majority of the witnesses identified did not observe the airplane prior to the impact. These witnesses predominately stated that they heard a loud

explosion and observed smoke and fire at the accident site¹. Some witnesses described hearing a “loud increasing” noise prior to impact. Other witnesses described a “high pitch sound” prior to the impact. Several witnesses reported observing debris falling to the ground after hearing the sound of an explosion.

E. EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS

Several of the eyewitnesses reported that they heard a loud noise, and looked up to see the airplane just prior to the impact with the building. The following eyewitness excerpts are intended to summarize the predominate observations of the airplane’s flight path prior to the accident.

A witness working at the Keyspan Energy-Ravenswood Power Plant, located about one-half mile east-southeast of the accident site stated he observed an airplane making steep turns with its wings in a vertical position. The airplane turned right 360 degrees, and began to fly north. The airplane flew over the Roosevelt Island Bridge, turned left slightly, and then flew over Roosevelt Island. The airplane then entered a steep left turn toward the south, which continued until it struck a building in Manhattan.

Two witnesses located on the 28th floor, at 515 East 72nd street observed the airplane from a balcony, on the east side of the building. They reported that the airplane just missed contacting a tall black glass building located across from them. The airplane was “wobbling” from side to side, as it passed in-between the two buildings. One of the witnesses said that the engine sounded “very loud, like it had lots of power.” Both witnesses reported that the airplane entered a left turn, and was pulling up at the time it impacted the building.

A witness located in an apartment on the northeast corner of the 46th floor, at 524 East 72nd street stated he observed the airplane banking left 90 degrees, with its wings at the “twelve and six o’clock position.” He thought the airplane was practicing stunts. The airplane continued to turn, and then straightened out in a position in which it was heading straight toward the building and the apartment he was in. The airplane’s wings were “wobbling, like the pilot was fighting for control.” The airplane then pitched down, and to the right. He was looking through the windows on the north side of the apartment, as the airplane descended below his field of view. He heard an impact and then looked out of the windows on the north side of the apartment. He saw flames and a portion of the airplane falling toward the ground.

¹ Accident site refers the north side of a building located at 524 East 72nd Street. The accident airplane impacted the building about 350 feet above ground level. The majority of the airplane, with the exception of the engine, came to rest on a sidewalk at the base of the building.

F. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Images



Figure 1: Approximate locations of key eyewitnesses referenced in this report.

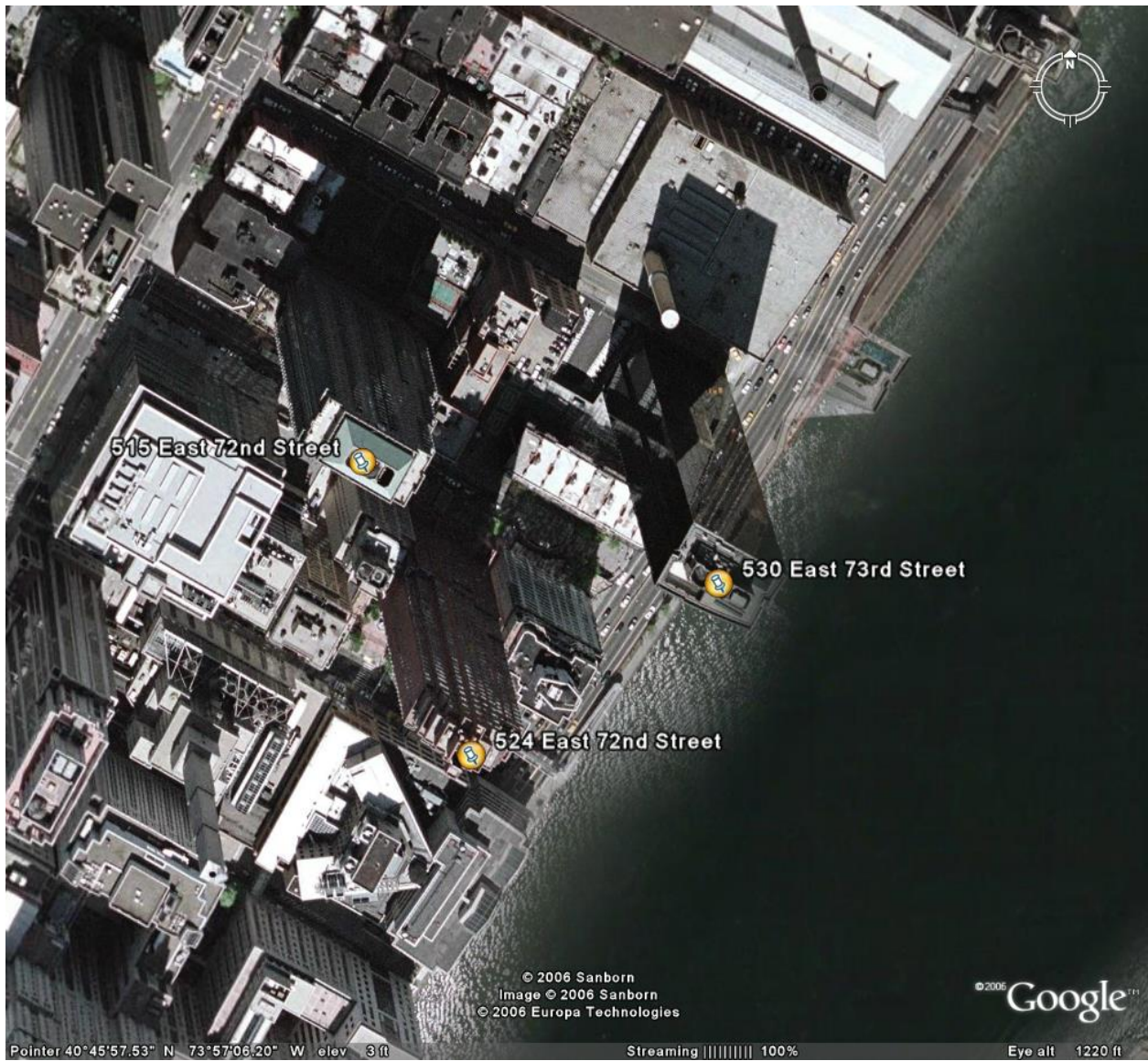


Figure 2: View of buildings surrounding the accident site (524 East 72nd Street).



Figure 3: Airplane’s track as viewed by connecting the observed radar targets. Three separate radar sites are plotted. (John F. Kennedy Airport - Red, Newark Liberty Airport – Green, Westchester County Airport - Blue) Please refer to the Aircraft Performance Factual Report contained in the public docket for specific radar and airplane performance information.

Attachments

- Appendix A: Police Interview Summaries Pertaining to Eyewitnesses
- Appendix B: Eyewitness Statements and Interview Summaries

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