

EYEWITNESS TO HICKORY AIRCRAFT PRIOR TO CRASH

23-1104 Hickory witness NTSB

My comments are in reference to the crash of an aircraft into Lake Hickory, North Carolina on Aug. 13, 2023. Your preliminary report on this incident is NTSB# ERA23LA334.

My wife and I were driving home after church at approximately 11:20 a.m. on NC-127, heading north toward Alexander County. The county line between Alexander and Catawba counties is at the NC-127 bridge over Lake Hickory. As we drove north, we both saw a light aircraft with pontoons flying eastward, just over the trees ahead of us. Before we could reach the bridge, we saw the plane had made an about-face and was now flying westward over the water near the bridge, but at a highly banked angle. Both passes over the water were at such a low altitude we assumed the plane was about to land on the water. The time between seeing the eastward and westward passes was very brief, leading me to believe the aircraft had turned rather sharply not long after the first pass over the bridge.

When our car got to the bridge, we did not see the aircraft in the water or still in the air. Shortly after crossing the bridge we heard sirens and we commented that we hoped the sirens were not for the aircraft. The aircraft's flight was erratic enough to warrant that conclusion. I read in the incident report that the plane was said to contact power lines. There are power lines along side the NC-127 bridge, but they did not appear to be damaged as we drove by. We live approximately a mile from the bridge and we did not experience power loss. I assume there were other lines farther west over the lake.

Once home, I turned on our police scanner and heard reports of the crash and that Caldwell County rescue services were involved. This led me to believe the aircraft had flown much farther westward over the lake than our location.

In general, my comment is that if the aircraft made contact with power lines, it was not the ones next to NC-127 and the erratic flying of the aircraft clearly pointed out that the aircraft was in trouble long before the crash.

Thank you for the good work you do.

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