

National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Aviation Safety

Washington, DC 20594



DCA22MA193

WITNESS FACTUAL

March 1, 2023

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A. ACCIDENT

Location: Freeland, Washington
Date: September 4, 2022
Time: 1509 Pacific daylight time
Airplane: de Havilland DHC-3, N725TH

B. WITNESS FACTUAL

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 National Transportation Safety Board
 Washington, DC

Group Chair Eric M. Gutierrez
 National Transportation Safety Board
 Federal Way, WA

SUMMARY

Multiple witnesses located near the accident site reported that the airplane was in level flight before it entered a slight climb, then pitched downward and entered a near-vertical descent. The airplane continued in a nose-low, near-vertical descent until it impacted the water in Mutiny Bay. Several witnesses described the airplane as "spinning," "rotating," or "spiraling" during various phases of the steep descent. One witness reported hearing engine/propeller noise and noted that they did not hear any "pitch change" in the noise.

C. FACTUAL INFORMATION

1.0 Witness Reported Information

Numerous people contacted the National Transportation Safety Board to provide information about the accident. The information varied from direct observation of the airplane accident, persons who have flown in the accident airplane previously, and notifications of possible airplane debris.

Nine witnesses near the accident site, who were in various locations, reported, the accident airplane was in level flight before it entered a slight climb followed by a pitch downwards to a near-vertical decent. A witness reported, "the airplane was similar to a child with a toy airplane, dive bombing into a bathtub." Another witness reported that, "It was spinning and heading nose first towards the water." Four of the nine witness reported, they traveled to the accident site via boat to assist.

A pilot near the accident location reported that, he was in a much smaller, lighter, airplane (Cessna 120), headed southbound, and passed Whidbey Island around 2:30 PDT. Between 1500 ft and 2000 ft above ground level (agl) and encountered turbulence/windshear.

Fourteen people reported that they had previously flown in the accident airplane and provided information about their flight. Some of the individuals provided photos and or videos of their flight.

Five reports of debris were received. Local law enforcement responded to the locations of the debris to collect and or evaluate the items reported.

2.0 Meteorological Information

At 1515 Pacific daylight time, the automated weather observation station at the Jefferson County International Airport (0S9), Port Townsend, Washington, located 10 miles southwest of the accident location, reported wind from 310° at 10 knots, visibility 10 statute miles, few 4000 ft, few 7500 ft, broken 9000 ft, temperature 20°C, dew point 14°C, and an altimeter setting of 30.02 inches of mercury.

Submitted by:

Eric M. Gutierrez
Air Safety Investigator