

Fabian Salazar
Air Safety Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: August 18, 2022

Subject: WPR22FA309 / Record of Conversation

Contact: Tyler Earnest, Witness

The witness stated that about 1500 local time, he was in an airplane practicing the VOR A approach at WVI. At the time of his observation, he was directly over the airport, about 1,300 ft mean sea level (msl). He first noticed the radio communication between the two airplanes on the common traffic advisory frequency (CTAF) and realized that they were getting close to each other. He focused his attention on the final approach for runway 20. He stated that he observed the Cessna 340 moving very quickly, "much quicker than for landing." He heard the Cessna 152 call a go-around and saw the Cessna 152 turn final. He stated that "the Cessna 340 was right on his [Cessna 152's] tail end and at that moment, the Cessna 340 tried to bank to the right." The witness recalled that "the Cessna 340's left wing hit the wing of the Cessna 152." He stated that the Cessna 152 spiraled down to the ground. The Cessna 340 regained control momentarily and flew underneath the witnesses' airplane then started to lose control and descended to the ground where it impacted and exploded.

The witness stated that he was communicating with NORCAL earlier and did not hear if the Cessna 152 was making traffic calls prior to when the witness tuned to the CTAF. He also stated that he was overhead and could not see if the Cessna 340's landing gear was down. He did not see anything trailing from the Cessna 340 after the collision and may have been focusing his attention on the Cessna 152.

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Contact: Jonathan Thornton, Witness

The witness stated that he was a DPE, and he was giving a check ride. He was standing on the taxiway ramp near a King Air airplane, watching the applicant conduct a preflight inspection and watching other airplanes at the airport. He first heard a noise and that caused him to look down the runway. At that time, he did not realize that there had been an accident. He saw the Cessna 340 as it came across while under full power. He could not tell if it was one engine or two engines, but he was certain that the one or two engines were at full power. He saw smoke trailing on the left side. He thought the airplane was about 200 to 300 feet [above the ground]. He thought that the airplane may have been on a single engine because the landing gear was up, and he was not accelerating. He stated that the airplane was straight and level for some time; from the moment he heard the noise. About 300 ft, it looked like a VMC roll; he did not know if the pilot was trying to turn but it made a nice left-hand slow roll. He stated that the airplane banked 90°, lost his lift, the nose came down and struck the ground in about a 90° bank and a 45° nose-down attitude. He said that there was a huge fireball. He stated that he could not see any of the accident area because of the huge fire. He added that he gives multi-engine check rides and when he saw the Cessna 340, he “looked to see if he was full power, gear up, flaps up, and he was all of those things, and he was straight and level.”

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Contact: Brenda Castillo, Witness

The witness stated that she was an accounting technician at the airport and worked in the unicom room, so she heard the radio traffic. Her office has a large window that opens to the airport. She stated that they listen to the CTAF in case there is a fuel order. Prior to the accident an airplane landed and asked over the CTAF "hey is the fuel truck in service." She said that was what caught her attention of the radio. She stated that she heard one of the pilots state something like "Oh I see you, your right behind me, and "you're coming in pretty fast." She said that was when she grabbed her cell phone and just clicked a photo. She said that she did see it happen and she heard it on the radio. She then went into Alex's office and said that they needed to follow the emergency procedures. She said that they have an emergency procedure that they follow.

When asked about what she saw she stated that she saw the two airplanes hit but she could not tell what extent they hit. She said that the first airplane when straight down and the larger airplane kept going. She said that she watched it until it went out of sight. She pointed out that there is a large hangar that obstructed her vision. When asked, she said that the airplane did not appear to have impact damage to the front of the airplane. She agreed that the weather was "nice and pretty like today." She stated that the Cessna 340 comes in about 3 to 4 times a month. She said that the [Cessna 340] pilot comes to the airport, sometimes with his dog, and sometimes with his wife and the dog. She recalled that the airplane was at the airport earlier in the month and then back in July. She said that he would come in on a Friday and then takeoff on a Sunday or Monday. She said the other airplane [Cessna 152] was registered to United Flight Services so they are familiar with it because it gets fuel

here. She stated that the Cessna 152 was in the traffic pattern for a while and then she heard the other airplane call that he was three miles out.

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Contact: Alexandra Aguado, Witness

The witness stated that she was an administrative analyst at the airport and worked in an office that faces the runway. She said that she was on her computer and heard Brenda saying, "oh my God, Oh my God." She turned straight [toward the runway] and saw debris and then something fall, which she assumed was the airplane. She heard a loud noise. She said that she knew something fell but she did not see the other airplane. She said that when Brenda came into her office, they started using the emergency procedures. They called 911, and the FAA. She said the within minutes they saw the police arrive. They also closed the runway. They did get a call from TRACON regarding the ELT for one of the airplanes.

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: Fwd: Watsonville Crash Witness
Date: Friday, August 19, 2022 3:27:23 PM
Attachments: [20220818_145607.jpg](#)

Hi Fabian and Andrew
this came into the witness email box. This is 1 of 2 reports on the midair.

Be safe.

Regards
Erik

Erik R Grosf
NTSB
Chief Special Operations Div.
[REDACTED]

From: Tyler Croley [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, August 19, 2022 18:08
To: eyewitnessreport
Subject: Watsonville Crash Witness

[CAUTION] This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click any links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

This was during my Multi Engine checkride, I had just finished the oral portion and move along to preflighting our baron.

After preflighting I heard a loud bang towards the arrival end of Runway 20, and saw something falling out of the sky, unknowing what it was at the time (Allegedly was a C152 eith an instructor and student), I then see the Cessna 340 struggling to go around with something leaking from his left wingtip, It appeared to be recovering but shortly after began to roll to the left and lost directional control due to a left engine failure. He nosodived to left into the ground near a hangar and immediately exploded. I was close enough to feel the heat from the fireball.

Please call if you have any questions I will be happy to help the investigation.

[REDACTED] is my number.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Fwd: Watsonville air collision
Date: Monday, August 22, 2022 7:27:02 PM

Regards
Erik

Erik R Grosf
NTSB
Chief Special Operations Div.
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: Michael Peno [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, August 22, 2022 19:44
To: eyewitnessreport
Subject: Watsonville air collision

[CAUTION] This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click any links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

My name is Michael peno. I was dining for lunch with my girlfriend on Thursday August 18th on the patio of Ella's. Unfortunately we both witnessed the impact of the two planes and the dropping of the one engine Cessna. I witnessed the double engine Cessna after the impact but did not see it crash. Just a very large plume of smoke. There were 3 young pilots that flew in and were about to have lunch and a couple with their dog who also witnessed this tragedy. I didn't want to speak to the media but if my eye witness account helps at all please reach me at [REDACTED] I've never witnessed a situation of this magnitude before and hope this is a appropriate way to contact you.

Sincerely,

Michael K Peno.

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: Fwd: Mid-air collision Watsonville, Ca 8/18
Date: Sunday, August 21, 2022 1:20:33 AM

FYSA another witness to the collision.

Regards

Erik

Erik R Grosf
NTSB
Chief Special Operations Div.
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: James Taylor [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, August 20, 2022 23:00
To: eyewitnessreport
Subject: Mid-air collision Watsonville, Ca 8/18

[CAUTION] This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click any links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello,

My name is James Taylor and I can be reached at [REDACTED]. My wife (Susan Riddle-Taylor) and I witnessed the collision and a few seconds leading up to the crash. We live at [REDACTED] Freedom, CA and from our back yard we had a clear view of the collision. The property behind our home has 2 houses on it and we were able to view the collision because it occurred in the field of view between those houses. My wife and I were standing about 10 feet apart and both had a clear view. I thought that might be helpful to map where the single engine plane was because you can use where we were standing and the houses that narrow our field of view to draw out the location. If you need photos from where we were standing of our field of view or would like to have an investigator come take photos themselves, please let me know so we can arrange a time and date.

I enjoy watching the planes land so I usually turn to watch them pass when I hear the engines on approach. From my vantage point, the twin engine Cessna was on approach to runway 20 coming straight at it. The single engine Cessna was flying northwest, perpendicular to runway 20, crossing just before the start of the runway before the planes collided. That was what drew my concern, because I never see planes in that location flying that direction, they always come from the direction the twin engine Cessna was coming from. The twin engine Cessna banked hard to the right (at what appeared to be 90*) a few hundred feet before the collision but had not had time to make much of a turn (maybe moving 10* right) when the planes made contact. The collision was a T-bone with the single engine Cessna hitting the twin engine Cessna. After the collision, the twin engine Cessna

continued forward and I lost visual as it went behind a house. The single engine Cessna seemed to lose all momentum and fell nearly straight down. I also saw one of the wings, I believe from the single engine plane but not certain, fall nearly straight down from the collision separated from its aircraft.

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: Fwd: Crash
Date: Friday, August 19, 2022 3:29:08 PM

2 of 2
Regards
Erik

Erik R Grosf
NTSB
Chief Special Operations Div.
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: Leslie D [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, August 19, 2022 18:09
To: eyewitnessreport
Subject: Crash

[CAUTION] This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click any links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I was sitting in the parking lot at Ella's when the crash happened. I didn't see the plane collision but I watched the second plane trying to stay in the air and then lower into the hangar.

If you'd like a testimony about what I saw, you can call me at [REDACTED] or email me here.

-- Leslie Drate, Aptos

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Watsonville Plane Crash 8/18/22 WITNESS
Date: Monday, August 22, 2022 2:41:53 PM

FYI another witness.

Regards,

Erik

From: Virginia Mendoza-Hernandez [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, August 22, 2022 5:36 PM
To: eyewitnessreport [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Watsonville Plane Crash 8/18/22 WITNESS

[CAUTION] This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click any links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

“Be **kinder than necessary because everyone** you meet is fighting some **kind** of battle.”
-J.M. Barrie

On Aug 22, 2022, at 11:21 AM, eyewitnessreport [REDACTED] wrote:

Hi Virginia,

Thank for contacting us. Yes, please send your phone # so I can send it to the investigators assigned to this case.

Regards,

Erik

Erik R Grosf
Chief-Special Operations Division (MD-5)
NTSB HQ- Washington DC

-----Original Message-----

From: Virginia Mendoza-Hernandez [REDACTED]

Sent: Monday, August 22, 2022 2:16 PM

To: eyewitnessreport [REDACTED]

Subject: Watsonville Plane Crash 8/18/22 WITNESS

[CAUTION] This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click any links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello,

I witnessed the 2 plane crashing last Thursday 8/18/22 at the Freedom Municipal Airport.

If you would like speak to me you may reply and I will respond with my phone number.

Virginia M.

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From: [REDACTED]
Subject: ****IMPORTANT****Watsonville Midair
Date: Saturday, August 20, 2022 9:33:15 AM

FYI a pilot witness.

Regards,
Erik

Erik R Grosf
Chief-Special Operations Division
NTSB HQ-DC

From: Tyler Sorensen [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, August 20, 2022 10:10
To: eyewitnessreport [REDACTED]
Subject: Watsonville Midair

[CAUTION] This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click any links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

My name is Tyler Sorensen, I was the pilot in N90FL and witnessed the midair collision between the 340 and 152 at Watsonville. I'm not sure if I can provide anything new of merit, But my cell info is [REDACTED]. If you need a statement I'd be happy to provide it. Thanks,

-Tyler

Sent from my iPhone