

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Office of Aviation Safety
Washington, D.C. 20594

December 4, 2020

Attachment 1 – Eyewitness Interviews

Record of Conversation

OPERATIONAL FACTORS

ANC20LA074AB



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

NTSB Accident Number: ANC20LA074AB, Soldotna, Alaska

Interviewee: Mr. Sean Endsley

Date: August 1, 2020

Location: Via Teleconference

Time: 1527 CDT (1127 ADT)

Via Telephone: Shawn Etcher (NTSB) and Mr. Endsley

During the interview Mr. Endsley provided the following information:

He worked at a powerplant that was located just south of the accident location. He was out sweeping off gravel from their pad they have when he heard an airplane's propeller noise change. That change got his attention and as he looked up, he observed a "darker" airplane traveling from east to west and it was the larger airplane. He further stated that the area has a "descent amount of aircraft" traffic and that day there was "quite a bit" he remembered seeing about 5 airplanes in the area around the time of the impact. He further provided that the local airport is southwest of the powerplant.

He then continued that the "smaller lighter" airplane was coming from the south traveling to the north just prior to impact. He estimated that from the time he first saw the two airplanes until they impacted was enough time to speak about two words. He then observed the bigger airplane lose a wing and began to spiral down, similar to a "flat spin." He estimated that it made two (2) revolutions before he lost sight of it in the trees. He did not see the other plane after the collision and wasn't sure if it had been "obliterated" by the impact.

When asked about how far from the event he was located, he estimated he was about 200 yards to the south, as the accident occurred to the north of the powerplant.

When asked to further describe what he meant by an airplane's propeller sound change, he stated that when he heard airplanes depart in the area they are at takeoff power and then during their climb out he hears the propeller change to a "cruise speed." He further provided that the sound change he heard was as if the airplane went from a cruise speed to an "evasive" speed, sounded similar to the pilot "giving more gas to get away."

When asked to describe what he could recall with the airplanes impacting, he stated the airplane traveling east to west incurred a side impact which "ripped off" one of the wings. That airplane

traveled about 100 yards while spiraling down. He further described the spiral as the airplane was “level” after the impact and then began “slowly tilting” until he lost sight of it. The other airplane, although not completely sure what impacted first, impacted with what he thought was the front part of the airplane, similar to a “T-bone” accident.

When asked from his vantage point which direction and which wing he thought was separated from the airplane, he stated that the bigger airplane was traveling from his right to left and the impact occurred right behind or near the pilot of the aircraft and to the aft of the airplane. He thought the left wing was the one that had separated.

When asked to describe what he did after he saw the impact, he stated that there was some other employees about 100 feet ahead of him and he was telling them to look out, although he did not think they saw it until he told them to look out. At which time he then went into their building to call 9-1-1. On his way in, there were 6 linemen that heard the impact and were coming out of the building. He directed them to the accident scene which he thought was near the church, a tobacco shop, and nearby restaurant. After he called 9-1-1, he went towards the accident scene to begin search and rescue. As he arrived at the highway, he noticed small white trash bags, small tackle pouches, and “lightweight” items strewn about as well as “black fiberglass,” from what he assumed was the airplane, in the roadway. Soon after he arrived on scene, troopers began to arrive; he and another person began directing them to the accident scene.

He further stated that he had heard that the bigger airplane had departed from Longmere Lake, which would have been normal since that lake is known for charter operations since it is a bigger and longer lake.

When asked what he could recall about the weather that day, he stated that it was blue skies and the sun would have been behind the plane that was traveling from the south to the north. He described the sun as warm and “pretty bright;” however, he clarified that in Alaska the sun sits low on the horizon.

Interview concluded at 1549 CDT (1149 ADT)

Addendum to statement.

On August 3, 2020 at 1022 CDT (0722 ADT) Mr. Endsley called and stated he recalled that the rotation of the airplane’s spiral was counterclockwise.

End



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

NTSB Accident Number: ANC20LA074AB, Soldotna, Alaska

Interviewee: Ms. Chriss Erwin

Date: August 1, 2020

Location: Via Teleconference

Time: 1245 CDT (0945 ADT)

Via Telephone: Shawn Etcher (NTSB) and Ms. Erwin

During the interview Ms. Erwin provided the following information:

She did not actually witness the collision. The first thing, she recalled seeing was the fuselage and left wing. She described it as “disintegrating” and “falling apart” in the air. She further provided that the left side of the airplane appeared to be intact. She estimated that they were about 100 yards from the event as debris was falling down all around them and she was close enough she saw the airplane falling apart. After they pulled over to the side of the road and contacted 9-1-1 was when she noticed debris all around them and some of the debris included a black hoodie on the road. She never observed the right wing of the airplane.

When asked if she could describe the airplane she observed, she stated that it was yellow and red, and similar to airplanes that are used for charter flights. She remembers because it looked similar to a friend’s airplane, but she knew it wasn’t her friend.

When asked what first drew her attention to the airplane, she stated that the airplane was close and “way to low” if it was going into Mackey Lake. There was no audible event that drew her attention to it nor was there any explosion that she observed.

When asked if she could recall her location and which direction she was facing, she stated that they were on Sterling Highway, headed into Soldotna and thought she was facing west. She further stated that when she saw the airplane it was directly to her right and she could see it out her window. She further stated she was in the right passenger seat and her niece was driving the car. She further stated that her niece was unable to see the event as the roof of the car was blocking her view.

When asked if she could recall the weather or sun position that morning, she stated that the sun would have been behind them and was already up. She did not notice any clouds and did not think there were any clouds in the sky.

When asked if there was anything remarkable about the weather or the sun, she stated “no” and that the sun was not “super bright.”

When asked if she had observed the other airplane, she stated she did not know there were two airplanes involved until later in the day when she had heard it. However, she stated she had not heard of the other pilot involved but knew the pilot of the charter flight.

She further stated that she provided her name and number to others at the scene but decided to move her car to be out of the way of first responders.

Interview concluded at 1303 CDT (0903 ADT)