



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Jennifer Rodi
Air Safety Investigator
Central Region

Person Contacted: Brandon O'Brien – Wildlife Specialist
NTSB Accident Number: CEN17FA050

Narrative:

During the conversation, Mr. O'Brien stated the following:

Mr. O'Brien is a wildlife specialist for the USDA APHIS Wildlife Services. He spoke with the pilot on the morning of the accident, prior to takeoff. There were snow flurries in Worland and the airplane would not take off until the snow flurries passed. The weather in the area they were working was high clouds and unlimited visibility – no snow.

He recalled the pilot calling on the radio, passing the Elk Creek divide, reporting that they were 10 to 15 minutes out. He then proceeded to work another target and was outside of his vehicle. He did not have any further communications with the airplane.



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Person Contacted: Dusty Southworth – Wildlife Specialist
NTSB Accident Number: CEN17FA050

Narrative:

During the conversation, Mr. Southworth stated the following:

Mr. Southworth is a wildlife specialist for the USDA APHIS Wildlife Services. He arrived in the area on the morning of the accident at 0730 and waited for the airplane to arrive in the area. The airplane arrived around 0830 and immediately began working on a target. He observed the airplane flying a draw throughout the morning until around 0945.

He was at a higher elevation than others in the ground crew were and was not able to establish contact with the airplane. He moved to the east and attempted communications again without a response. He utilized his binoculars to scan the area where the airplane was last flying; however, he did not see the airplane.

When asked, he stated that there was nothing abnormal about the flight or the operations that morning. When asked, he stated that the weather was really cold. The wind was around 10 mph and 12 to 14 mph on the ridges.



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Person Contacted: Matt Hotovec – Wildlife Specialist
NTSB Accident Number: CEN17FA050

Narrative:

During the conversation, Mr. Hotovec stated the following:

Mr. Hotovec is a wildlife specialist for the USDA APHIS Wildlife Services. He started working the morning of the accident near Wardel Reservoir at 0730 and recalled that the airplane arrived in the area around 0830. The airplane was delayed in arriving on scene due to a snow storm to the south near Worland.

Mr. Hotovec attended to other targets and work responsibilities through the morning and was not continually in his vehicle with the radio. About 1053 he received a call from Mike asking if he had heard from the airplane. He attempted to contact the crewmember and received no response, so he started looking for the airplane.

When asked he stated that nothing was abnormal with either the pilot or the crewmember that morning. He was not aware of any concerns or issues with either the pilot or the crewmember. He had spoken with the pilot the night before the accident and he sounded great and reported no issues.



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Person Contacted: Michael Burrell – Wildlife Specialist
NTSB Accident Number: CEN17FA050

Narrative:

During the conversation, Mr. Burrell stated the following:

Mr. Burrell is the district supervisor for the USDA APHIS Wildlife Services and has been with the organization for over 15 years. His responsibilities include locating predators on the ground, directing the airplane towards targets, and monitoring the airplanes while they are in the area.

On the morning of the accident, the airplane arrived in the area around 0820 and removed a target. He watched the airplane between 0900 and 0930 make passes on several targets. Around 1000, he was outside of the vehicle with his dog and he could hear the airplane in normal operations – he could hear the engine sound decrease, the sound of gunfire, and then the engine sound increase. He elaborated stating that the sound of the engine decreasing could be due to power changes or the bank angle of the airplane and was normal.

About 1015 he called the airplane to relay a change in their area of focus and did receive a response from the airplane. He asked Matt about 10 minutes later if he heard anything from the airplane, to which he responded no. He repositioned closer to Basin, tried to call the pilot and the crewmember again, and received no response. He then asked Brad to make calls to the airplane, trying multiple frequencies, and again received no response.

He stated that the pilot and the crewmember were good about keeping communications open and always checking in. At 1100, he called the state director to report that the airplane was overdue. At 1115, he called 911 to report a missing airplane.

When asked he commented that neither the pilot nor the crewmember had any issues or concerns that he was aware of. He stated that neither had problems turning down a flight for any reason. They would simply state that they were not going to fly that day.

When asked, he stated that the weather that day was very cold with temperatures around zero degrees, high broken clouds, and winds at 10 knots or less.