

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Office of Aviation Safety

Central Region

Appendix A: Compilation of Summarized Witness Emails

(A) Adam Levesque [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

On the morning of December 28, 2019, me and my girlfriend and her family were helping her sister move out of her apartment at [REDACTED], Lafayette Louisiana. At approximately 9:20 me and my girlfriends' father in law Scott Holmes were standing outside loading some items in the cargo trailer when I heard the sound of an airplane's engine. I noticed something different about the engines it sounded like the engines power was surging. Then suddenly to the west of us through the overcast layer at an extremely low altitude we saw an airplane bank right then hard left and continue turning left and descending almost completely over our heads towards the north. Before we lost sight of the plane it was at least 85% upside down before it crashed, then we saw the plumes of black smoke. I tried to contact 911 about the crash three times and each time it was busy. Five minutes later we heard the sirens.

(B) Amanda McElfresh [REDACTED] (APTS) [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

I wanted to share some information regarding the December 28, 2019 plane crash in Lafayette, Louisiana. I was inside my apartment at the time and did not visually witness the crash, but I did hear the entire incident. In the seconds before the crash, I heard a very distinct sound of an engine dying or rapidly losing power. This sound lasted for only a few seconds before I heard a crashing sound followed by at least one explosion-type sound. I am certainly no expert, but based on what I heard, I believe the plane had a serious power loss or mechanical failure shortly after takeoff. The engine was whining and sounded as if it was immediately losing strength.

(C) Audrey Benoit [REDACTED] (APTS) [REDACTED]

On Saturday, December 28th, this is what I heard from within my apartment. When the plane was over-head, it sounded as if the engine was straining and that something was loose in the engine...there was a loud rattling sound that lasted as long as it was over-head. Then I heard the plane hit the electric lines. There was a loud popping sound then the electricity went out. I went outside to see what in the world happened. I saw the plane on fire and I knew it would be bad news.

(D) Cheryl Brooks [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

I'm emailing in reference to the plane crash. I was in my back yard and I heard then saw a low flying aircraft. There was noise coming from the engine and it was flying quite low which concerned me. I did not see the crash but I'm just reporting what I heard and saw before the crash.

(E) Clara Courville [REDACTED] (APTS) [REDACTED]

The plane crash happened December 28. I did not hear a plane. I heard a thud and a ripping noise and then there was an explosion. The electric lights stop for a second then came back on only a second, then the lights cut off. I live in building [REDACTED] and apartment [REDACTED]. The lights came back on at 1:00 o'clock.

(F) Daniel Landry [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

I did not actually witness the crash but did see the plane pass directly over me approximately 3 seconds before I heard the first boom. I was walking my dog on Barracuda street and heard the sound of an approaching plane. As I looked up the plane came into visibility from a tree line flying very low. It was really pitched to the left and disappeared behind another tree rapidly. We were about 1/2 mile from the post office.

(G) Dennis DeVaney [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

The plane that crashed yesterday flew directly over my house very, very low. Maybe 150 ft. off the ground. Both engines were running what sounded like full throttle. The plane was flying level, but pitched up and down very quickly barely missing powerlines behind the apt. Complex. After clearing that set of lines, it nose dived into the lines on Verot School. I saw the arc and heard the power surge, then heard the plane crash. A few seconds later the fireball rose. I got in my car and drove over there and videoed. That was at 9:26 am. I have the video which you are welcome to have. It looked like a control issue as both engines were lit and very loud. I was sitting on my deck and saw this just before the crash. There was nothing I could do on scene yesterday. Everything was on fire. There was no smoke [coming from the airplane in flight]. Plane was flying straight and level, but was pitching up and down quickly. The powerlines behind the apartments are between 60-70 ft high est. After clearing them, the plane nosed down hard and went from my view, hit the powerlines on Verot School. I saw a huge blue arc, and a loud hum. Heard the plane crash and seconds later, saw the fireball. The engines sounded full [throttle] no sputtering. Plane was not banking. Gear was up.

(H) Duke Word [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

I want to give you information about what I heard at the time of the recent airplane crash. I was at my place of business at [REDACTED] Lafayette, approximately a mile east of the site. My son and I heard the sound of the engine fly overhead, extremely low at full throttle. It sounded like it was running wide open on one engine and like the fuel nozzles were spitting fuel or dripping into the engine instead of being vaporized. From my experience as an aviation mechanic and pilot, the sound was not normal.

(I) Fred Sarver [REDACTED] (APTS) [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

I was outside getting something from my van when I heard an airplane that was in the clouds over head circling then it sounded like he went full throttle and put it into a dive with the engine whining very loud coming towards me, then it popped out of the clouds in a very STEEP left diving turn passing right over the apartments where I live, leveled the wings at the last second, hit the trees and wires at the apartments then right into the post office parking lot across the street, it was really hauling ass but didn't pull up when it went wings level just kept the same angle to the ground, it sounded like at full throttle. The plane sounded like it had plenty of power, I didn't see any smoke coming from it. It sounded normal at first but low (altitude) then the rpms started speeding up and it sounded like it was in a dive, I couldn't see it because of the clouds but it sounded like it was coming right for me, very high RPMs. It was screaming, wheels were not down, to me he was not setting up for a landing, well over 200 knots, he can't see the ground until he popped out of the clouds at 200 feet, he may have had the presents of mind to veer it away from buildings at the last second, (my opinion). I would say it was about 400 feet above at first a little lower than normal air traffic. I would say the ceiling was 200 feet. The weather was overcast definitely IFR, (I was a pilot long ago), no rain, no surface fog, not much wind. No [smoke seen from the airplane in flight].

(J) Heather Landry

Located at the trailer park. I have lived at the address since I was little and have heard many planes pass over to go land at the airport or even hearing the planes take off and fly over. This day was a completely different sound that I have never heard before. It was extremely foggy. I went outside at 9:15 am to walk my dog and noticed the foggy was very thick and the clouds came pretty low to the tree line in the back of the trailer park. While outside when the fog is low you hear the planes pass but never can see them. This day as I was outside I hear the plane gliding through the air like normal and then hear the engine getting louder which was never a sound I heard. About 3 seconds after hearing the planes engine [rev] up the plane popped out the fog clouds and was so close the plane appeared to be bigger than I thought. It popped out the clouds was heading directly to the direction I was standing. The plane was a little above the tree line in the back of the trailer park when in an instant the plane turned a sharp left. Once the plane was out of sight over the apartment complex the sound of something big hitting multiple houses is what I thought happen. Now knowing that the pilot landed and flipping the plane was probably the sound I heard from my house. After the plane went out of sight I immediately called 911 and informed them what I seen left my name and a contact. I would say the engine before coming out of the clouds was as if the plane was trying to come off the ground. Very loud and almost sound as if it was being strain. To as how high if you would come to the trailer park I could show you exactly where this plane surfaced out the clouds at.

(K) Jim Miller 121 Rural Street

My wife and I, on Dec. 28, sometime around 9:45, left the back door of Infiniti Salon and Barber Shop, 121 Rural Street Lafayette, which is four houses SE of Verot School Road intersection. We were about to get in my car, parked facing the back yard fence and heard the roar of the plane. I looked up and momentarily saw, at very close range, in the tree line along the fence, what I think was the underside of the left wing and maybe some of the fuselage. The wing was pointing mostly up and the plane was flying NW. The engine sounded like it was accelerating to gain altitude. That could have been doppler effect. A moment later we heard the crash, got in the car and drove toward home along Feu Follet Road, past the Post Office and saw fires and plane debris scattered along the field, NW of the Post office. There were men in the field, looking toward the burning plane, and a woman was leading an injured man from the crash. There were some clouds, but visibility seemed good. I am pretty sure it was the left wing [that was up]. That's what I thought at the time.

(L) Jonathan Broussard 2428 W Pinhook Rd (Wal Mart)

Hello, I was one of few that witnessed the crash from in front of the Walmart on Pinhook. I can confirm the plane crashed with wings slightly off level but nearly level. It hit very hard. I saw black smoke immediately followed by the biggest fireball I have ever seen.

(M) Joshua David Blanchard

I'd like to offer information in the crash of Piper Cheyenne flight N24CV on December 28th, 2019 in Lafayette, Louisiana. At around the time of the crash Saturday morning we were woken up by what I can best described as the sound of a large bore engine street racing down our street. The sound seemed to start within 2 or 300 ft of our house, North or Northwest, diminishing quickly. Purely as conjecture, I would assume that the sound I heard was a propeller blade impacting an engine cowling, or the fuselage of the craft, or a severe malfunction of the engine. At this time this is the best information I can offer.

(N) Kellie Trahan 301 Verot School Rd

She witnessed the accident and was outside of the Shop Rite Convenient Store at 301 Verot School Rd, Lafayette, LA 70508. She did not provide further details about the accident.

(O) Kevin Jackson [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

I want to say what I saw on Saturday morning in Lafayette Louisiana it was about 9:20 maybe a little later but I was outside with my dog as i always do and i heard a loud sound and i saw like a blue or black plane and it looked like it was struggling to keep its altitude and had smoke coming from the planes it was not bad smoke but I knew it was smoking and it just got lower and lower and it was like banked to the left but it was like whoever was flying the plane was trying to keep it straight but it just kept coming lower it pass right over my house and when I say it look like he was trying to save the people on the ground he was but the plane was going down I when inside to get my wife and like a few sec later I heard it a massive explosion. ...it looked like the smoke was coming from one of the engine it was not a heavy smoke but I could tell it was smoking.

(P) Megan Thomas 455 Feu Follet Rd (USPS) [REDACTED]

I am a postal employee I was at work when this happened. I wrote a statement with the police department on the scene.

(Q) Michelle Rawls [REDACTED] (APTS) [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

I was one on the site to help people from the crash. We witnessed the plane in a turn after takeoff. You could hear the plane trying to restart engines and the sounds of crash dive, the plane was very low and descending into a slight noise dive. The [pilot] was pulling up on the nose to keep it from a dive force with no engines. We witnessed the plane in a side drive flight into the power lines and [through] the trees into the parking lot of the Post Office. By the time we got to the gated brick wall we lost sight [until] I came [through] running into the street to go to the crash. I could not get to the airplane I went to the flipped gray/silver SUV to help. I could hear the screams of people on fire and a lady screaming to help her. The parking lot of very hot to walk on with no shoes. It was already on fire I had to back out. I finally got [through] to 911 to report I was blocking off LEU Field road to keep people from driving that close to the plane in the field and fires. When the first police officer got to the road I started turning vehicle's around to open the roads to let all fire trucks get [through] to the crash [site]. To me from working disasters and in the fields or search and rescues and with my K9 the [pilot] did his very best in trying to put the plane in distress into the field. This crash could have been very bad if it had gone [through] my apartment.

(R) Peter Barrilleaux [REDACTED] (APTS) [REDACTED]

No I did not see the airplane before the crash, I did hear a rapid descent sounding like the aircraft was really low above the apartment complex. Did hear the aircraft roll through the [field] while running towards the Post Office parking lot from the apartment complex. I stopped in the Post Office parking lot I knew the gentleman walking out of the Post Office and stopped to assist him.

(S) Stephen LeBlanc 2428 W Pinhook Rd (Wal Mart) [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

I do not have any audio of the crash but did hear the plane before the crash. I was walking to my truck in the Wal Mart parking lot located on Pinhook just before the plane went down. I first heard the plane in what appeared to be coming from the south, it sounded very close to the ground and the RPM's on the engine were going up and down. There was another gentleman in the parking lot next to me as we looked for the plane in the sky and all of a sudden the RPM's greatly increased and the next thing we knew there was an explosion and a large plume of black smoke rose from behind the Wal Mart. He and I looked at each other and said that plane just crashed. I didn't see the plane but he said he actually saw the plane going down. I asked him if he was calling 911 and he was already on the phone. He may have

been the first call to 911 and could possibly be found through his phone number. I jumped into my truck and went behind the Wal Mart and parked in the parking lot of my CPA's office on Feu Follet (WMDDH).

(T) Zac Cheramie [REDACTED] (APTS) [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Good Afternoon, I have information that may be helpful towards the investigation of this accident, I was one of the first on the scene seconds after the crash happened, also was one of the ones who found and assisted the Lone Survivor to safety. I was one of the only ones to directly speak to him from finding him all the way to putting him in the ambulance. I also live in the apartment complex that the aircraft nearly missed and heard the whole thing. The morning of the accident I was in my apartment fixing to walk out the door when I heard a very very loud sound, unmistakably the sound of props on an aircraft, it sounded as though the props were at full throttle, they were screaming, immediately after hearing that I heard a huge explosion, simultaneously the power went out in my apartment, this all happened very quickly, tenths of a second...I've read reports that some say that the engines were out and I will argue that this was not the case, I knew exactly what it was from my decade of service in the Marine Corps specifically in the Air Wing. From the field of the crash looking at the Apartments it is the building located far right corner closest to the road, the Aircraft literally flew between my building and the other, my apartment is located on the second floor in the middle on the back side closest to the wooden fence. Within seconds of the explosion I ran out of my apartment assessing what was going on while running to the fuselage, It was quickly realized that it was too dangerous to stay right there so I ran forward towards the Cockpit area, once I got within about 10 ft is when myself and another gentlemen saw two bodies of the five on board, quickly determined that they have perished, made our way around to the front of the cockpit when we discovered the survivor, at this point it was a handful of us out there, we pulled him from the wreckage to safety, once we sat him down I asked his name and how many others on board, he told me 5 and then told me who the pilot was, [REDACTED], we kept searching for the others but could not find them assuming and concluding that they were trapped in the burning aircraft. I continued to talk to him while assessing his physical state, made a point to keep him talking to get as much info as I could, at this point the first responders started to show up, then I asked what happened, he told me that immediately upon takeoff that they had problems, and all he knew is that [they] began a really hard climb and was going really fast, then he said that they made a turn....he couldn't specify [whether] it was a left or a right nor if it was a hard banking turn or not....he was clearly going into shock so I assume this is why he couldn't remember those specific things. I assisted in carrying him to the ambulance and asked him the same things over and he was consistent with his answers. I tried to pass this info to which ever authorities would listen but none seemed interested, it was chaos, no one asked me to stick around to make a statement which shocked me.

(U) Billy Kibodeaux [REDACTED]

Yes I was 6 blocks away from the plane crash it sounded like the pilot started giving the engine's on the plane full throttle right before it crashed or it sounded like it was in a nose dive the engines were very loud.

(V) Mr. Randolph (wife Amber) [REDACTED]

My husband spoke to KLFY TV 10 yesterday [and] he told them when the plane passed over our house, & it was smoking. He watched the plane fly over us, it shook the hell out of our house. So yes it was smoking. He said [that] he spoke to y'all already but I could give more info if [you] need.

(W) Billy Reaux [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

I witnessed the Airplane crash. I also have footage.
