



MEMORANDUM for RECORD

Ralph E. Hicks
Senior Air Safety Investigator, IIC
Eastern Region Aviation

Date: July 18, 2022
Witness Statement: Al Studer [REDACTED]
NTSB Accident Number: ERA22FA314 – Shelby, MI

The following witness statement was provided by Mr. Studer via telephone.

- He was at the airport (C04) with his son; they operate a crop dusting business at the airport. He is a commercial pilot. He has been in the ag flying business since 1976.
- He was in his hangar when he heard an airplane start up its engine. He thought someone was just moving their airplane since the weather was so bad. A few minutes later, he heard the pilot call for taxi for a departure to the east. He stepped outside to watch the airplane take off.
- The airplane then lined up on runway 9 and departed. About the time the airplane passed 96th Avenue, just past the end of runway 9, it was “in the clouds.” The airplane made a slight turn to the southeast, and the sound of the airplane became fainter as it flew farther away. Then the sound started to become louder and louder, and he heard the engine “screaming.” His heart was in his throat thinking what might happen. Then the airplane appeared to continue to the south (he could not see it for the cloud cover) and he thought that it was OK, that maybe the pilot had climbed above the weather. The engine noise suddenly stopped, and there was dead silence. Then, his son’s pager started going off. He is a first responder and carries a pager. These were notifications of the airplane crash.

- Mr. Studer could not estimate the ceiling height with a number, but he did state that the weather was “very, very, poor.” The ceiling was “very low,” and the visibility was “very bad.”



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Date: July 18, 2022
Witness Statement: Rod Studer [REDACTED]
NTSB Accident Number: ERA22FA314 – Shelby, MI

The following witness statement was provided by Mr. Studer via telephone.

- He was at the airport (C04) with his dad; they operate a crop dusting business at the airport. He is a commercial pilot.
- He heard an aircraft running on the ground and thought that someone was performing a maintenance run-up. He could not believe that anyone would be attempting to fly in the weather conditions at the time.
- He described the conditions as very low ceilings in rain. Probably 60-70 feet ceiling, no higher than 100 feet. There are trees and a tower at the airport where you can easily see the cloud heights if they are low. In his crop dusting operations, he is constantly looking at the treetops and tower to estimate the ceilings.
- The airplane then lined up on runway 9 and departed. The airplane turned slightly to the right, then you could hear it begin a left turn. It flew overhead the field, was obscured in the clouds, and was "quite low." It then proceeded in a southerly direction. Again, he stated that he could not believe that anyone would be up in that weather.
- Then he heard the airplane again, coming back toward the airport. The engine was "winding up," then silence. The engine ran smoothly the entire accident flight

up to the point of impact. At that point he knew the airplane had crashed. He received a page a couple of minutes later that an airplane had crashed.

- He described the weather at the time as “atrocious.”



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Date: July 16, 2022

Witness Statement: Walter W. Wittkamp Jr. [REDACTED]

NTSB Accident Number: ERA22FA314 – Shelby, MI

The following witness statement was provided by Mr. Wittkamp via personal interview at his residence ([REDACTED]).

- He was in his home at the time, watching TV.
- He recalled that it was raining “pretty good, but not a downpour.” He did not hear thunder or see lightning.
- Suddenly, he heard a “big roar outside.” He got up to look, thinking it was a tractor-trailer going by his house. He then heard a “big bang,” looked outside his picture window, and saw smoke or dust. He then realized that an airplane had crashed adjacent to his house in the woods and the big roar was the engine running and it was “revving up.” The entire sequence lasted about 30 seconds.
- He saw that there were no signs of life and called the authorities.