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Date: March 1, 2023

Subject: WPR23LA111 Witness Statement

Contact: Maegan Stephenson , National Park Service

Sunday morning, February 19, 2023, myself and Matthew D'Ambrosi were out surveying the Piute-Eldorado Valley roads for invasive weeds. Roughly around 10 AM, a small plane buzzed us overhead a few times before landing behind us on the road we were driving on. The plane landed and continued down the road out of site. We were a little shocked and went to make sure everything was okay. When we got to the plane, the passengers were okay – it didn't seem they had landed on the road due to an emergency. The planes left wing had hit a yucca while taxiing down the dirt road and that had caused a dent to form. The plane was in a perpendicular position to the road when we first arrived (I believe they had already started to try and turn the plane around to be in position for heading back towards the highway). We proceeded to help them turn the plane around in the road, to be facing the highway. The plan was to fly the plane to the airport just across the highway in CalNevAri to re-access the wing better. We agreed to take his wife to meet him at the airport – it was very close by, just across the highway. The three of us (Matthew D'Ambrosi, the pilots wife, and myself) loaded into the truck to drive and find a spot to pull off the road. We bantered a bit on the short drive – during which she mentioned John was a very competent and experienced pilot. He taxied behind the truck for a bit as we drove towards the highway looking for a turnoff to move the truck from the dirt road and make room for the plane to pass. We pulled over and let the plane pass – he pulled over briefly to talk to his wife. Then she shut the door to the plane. You could hear the engine start to rev up and he began to accelerate. He started to get airborne, and at about 10-20 ft airborne, the plane started to veer to the left. Immediately his wife began to run towards the plane. Matt and I ran back to the truck to drive down to him. It all happened very fast, but by the time we reached him, and I got out of the car to run towards him, he was out of the plane with a fire extinguisher in hand. I do not remember seeing the plane crash – I may have been running back to the truck at this point.