



Tealeye Cornejo
Air Safety Investigator (Field)
AS-WPR

Date: July 10, 2024

Subject: WPR24FA238, Witness Statements

Witness statements are summarized for this report. Full statements are available from the Lewis and Clark County Sheriff's Department.

Brian and Lorrie Bernardi –

Mrs. Bernardi reported seeing three airplanes flying over the lake. The first airplane descended toward the water and then flew back into the air. The second airplane descended toward the water and then she saw a large plume of smoke.

Mr. Bernardi reported that he saw two or three airplanes "skimming the water." The second airplane "skimmed" the water but did not take back off.



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Jon and Theresa McBride -

The McBride's were on their boat, about 300 yards from the airplane crash. Mr. McBride stated that they were on their boat when they saw the four airplanes flying over the lake. The first airplane went down to the water and retrieved water from the lake. The second airplane descended toward the water, and he briefly looked away when he heard a loud "boom." Mr. McBride reported the water conditions as choppy, but the waves were not "white capping." He reeled in his fishing line and headed toward the airplane.

After reaching the airplane another individual jumped into the water and attempted to recover the pilot. Followed by the airplane sinking in the water.

Mrs. McBride stated that she saw four airplanes flying over the lake. The airplanes seemed to be collecting water from the lake. The second airplane descended to the water and began to move unsteadily from side to side. Mrs. McBride believed she saw the airplane's right wing to high into the air and then saw the airplane crash into the cliff side. She saw another person jump into the water to try to rescue the pilot.



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Lanie Plovanich reported that while on her back deck she watched five airplanes circling the lake and said it appeared they were scooping the water from the lake. The first airplane scooped water and took back off. The second airplane touched down on the water but did not take back off. She said the airplane was moving unsteadily from side to side and appeared to be "out of control." She believed the left wing hit the water, which caused the airplane to change direction and collided with the cliff side.