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Air Safety Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: June 12, 2024

Subject: WPR24LA181 / Record of Conversation

Contact: Loren Courtney, Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department Pilot /
Witness

In a telephone conversation with Mr. Courtney, he stated that he was a pilot in a helicopter and was in the process of landing when he saw the Cessna [accident airplane] operating in the traffic pattern. He did not hear the pilot making position reports. Mr. Courtney made a radio call on the common traffic advisory frequency (CTAF) that there was a Cessna in the traffic pattern that was not talking to anyone. He observed that after the second traffic pattern and during the crosswind turn on the third pattern, the pilot of the Cessna could then be heard making traffic calls.

Mr. Courtney reported that on the first landing, he saw that the airplane bounced a few times and then went-around. On the next landing the airplane shot long then went-around again. On the third landing, the airplane landed hard, bounced multiple times, [porpoise landed], and struck the tail and possibly the propeller. Mr. Courtney stated that the airplane then climbed into the air in a way that he described as stuttered. The airplane then turned left. While about 150 to 200 ft above ground level (agl), banked left and then descended, and impacted the ground in a left-wing low, nose low attitude that appeared to be a stall.

According to Mr. Courtney, he and the other pilot in the helicopter could hear the airplane engine from the point that the pilot powered it up until it struck the ground. He stated that, "it sounded as if it was at full RPM all the way to the ground."