

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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GRANT AVIATION FLIGHT 341 ACCIDENT *

NEAR CHIGNIK LAKE, ALASKA *

Accident No.: ANC17FA021

MAY 1, 2017 *

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Interview of: JONATHON EICHLER

Wednesday,
June 21, 2017

APPEARANCES:

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National Transportation Safety Board

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Chairman, Operations Group
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(On behalf of Mr. Eichler)

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I N T E R V I E W

(1:00 p.m.)

MS. PRICE: Good afternoon. I'm Noreen Price, aviation accident investigator with the NTSB and IIC of this investigation. Today is June 22nd. It's 1300 in the afternoon.

The NTSB is an independent federal agency charged with determining the probable cause of transportation accidents and promoting transportation safety. The NTSB is not part of DOT or FAA. It has no regulatory or enforcement powers.

I'd like to introduce all the members of the group, starting with Brice?

MR. BANNING: Brice Banning, senior aviation accident investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board.

MR. BRINKMAN: Ryan Brinkman, aviation safety inspector with the FAA and IIC for the FAA.

MR. ENGBRETSON: Austin Engbretson with Grant Aviation.

MS. PRICE: Thank you.

Today we're going to be recording the interview and sending that out to be transcribed.

The purpose of the investigation is safety, to determine probable cause and prevent reoccurrence. Our role is not to assign fault, blame, or liability. This interview is part of a fact-finding phase, this interview. We're here to ask questions about your role in the company, the company's policies and procedures, and familiarity with the pilots. We cannot, however,

1 offer any guarantee of confidentiality or immunity.

2 Each of the group members will have a chance to ask
3 questions. We'll ask questions one at a time, and everyone has
4 been instructed not to interrupt the person who is asking
5 questions at that time. There'll be an opportunity for each group
6 member to ask follow-up questions for each person after each
7 person has had a turn.

8 Please answer all questions to the best of your recollection.
9 If you don't understand a question, ask to have it repeated or
10 explained. If you realize you misstated or need to modify a
11 previous answer, please do so. If there's something you don't
12 know, just say "I don't know." If there's some reference that
13 you'd like to use, go ahead and use it. And if it's your opinion,
14 just state that it's your opinion. Also, try to avoid answering
15 questions with uh-huh or head nods because this is being recorded
16 and we can't record those things.

17 You're entitled to have one representative of your choosing.
18 Is there someone you would like to have as your representative
19 today?

20 MR. EICHLER: I guess -- is that you?

21 MR. WILHELM: Yes.

22 MR. EICHLER: Then Mr. Mark Wilhelm.

23 MS. PRICE: Okay. Mr. Wilhelm, you may direct him to not
24 answer a question or to request a short break to confer with him.
25 So if you need to talk to him, we'll take a break and you can talk

1 to him, but Mark can't answer any questions for you.

2 MR. EICHLER: I understand.

3 MS. PRICE: Do you have any questions before we get started?

4 MR. EICHLER: No.

5 MS. PRICE: Again, thank you for coming in today, and on
6 behalf of the NTSB, I'd like to offer our condolences. And it's
7 too bad that we have to discuss this today, but we understand how
8 stressful it is for you and the company to go through this, and we
9 appreciate your cooperation.

10 Okay. So to start the interview, if you would state your
11 full name with its spelling?

12 MR. EICHLER: My name is Jonathon Dennis Eichler, J-o-n-a-t-
13 h-o-n, D-e-n-n-i-s, E-i-c-h-l-e-r.

14 MS. PRICE: Thank you.

15 Go ahead, Brice.

16 INTERVIEW OF JONATHON EICHLER

17 BY MR. BANNING:

18 Q. Jon, do you mind telling us a little bit about your
19 background prior to coming to Grant?

20 A. Well, how far back to you want to go?

21 Q. Five years.

22 A. Okay. So I was hired by Grant back in 2012, I believe,
23 worked as a check airman, flight instructor, and then flew the
24 line regularly in Anchorage, and then became the director of
25 operations -- I can't remember how long afterwards, but that's

1 what happened. And so I have been in that position since then.

2 Q. And prior to you coming to work with Grant, what was your
3 background?

4 A. I worked at PenAir. When I left PenAir, I was the chief
5 pilot for their 135 operation. And I believe I worked with them
6 since -- I think it was 2005, but I don't remember exactly.

7 Q. And then do you recall roughly how long you've been the
8 director of ops at Grant?

9 A. I want to say maybe 4 years, maybe.

10 Q. And give me a little bit of an idea of your duties and
11 responsibilities, if you would, as a DO for Grant?

12 A. I oversee, you know, the chief pilot and the way that he or
13 she operates, liaison with the FAA, and obviously operational
14 control and delegation thereof.

15 Q. And who do you report to you within Grant?

16 A. That would be Bruce McGlasson, President.

17 Q. The president?

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. And how would you describe your relationship with the upper-
20 level management there at Grant?

21 A. Good.

22 Q. Good working relationship?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. And who is your POI, the principal operations inspector for
25 Grant?

1 A. Steven Stewart (ph).

2 Q. Steven? And was Steven the POI at the time of the accident
3 also?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. And how would you describe your relationship as the director
6 of operations with Grant? How would you describe your
7 relationship with the FAA?

8 A. Good.

9 Q. Good. Okay. And do you know how long Steven has been
10 assigned to the Grant certificate?

11 A. I don't know.

12 Q. As the DO with Grant, did you ever have the opportunity to
13 visit the base there at King Salmon?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. And do you remember when the last time you were there at King
16 Salmon?

17 A. I don't remember the exact date. It was early May, was the
18 last time I was at King Salmon.

19 Q. Early May of this year?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And how long were you there? How many days were you --

22 A. Just one day.

23 Q. One day? And what was the purpose of the visit?

24 A. It was a memorial service for the deceased pilot.

25 Q. Oh, okay. I'm sorry. And prior to that, prior to the

1 accident, did you have the opportunity to visit King Salmon?

2 A. Yeah. I had visited, I believe, a month or two previous to
3 that.

4 Q. And the purpose of that visit?

5 A. It was just a base inspection.

6 Q. Okay. Good. And after the base inspection, did you have any
7 concerns or action items or anything you took away that you were
8 going to work on?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Would you describe for me how operational control works at
11 Grant?

12 A. Can you be more descriptive of what you're looking for?

13 Q. Really the operation control process, how a flight is
14 initiated.

15 A. Okay. So there obviously has to be a need for a flight.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. All right. So a dispatch agent obviously identifies that and
18 then assigns the flight to an airplane and a pilot. And they go
19 through, figure out weather, airport conditions, risk assessments,
20 fuel load, payload, and concur with the pilot that everything is
21 going to be good for the flight, and dispatch the flight.

22 Q. Who is responsible for operational control within the
23 company?

24 A. I am.

25 Q. And who are you able, based on Grant's procedures and

1 processes -- I presume you're able to delegate that?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Who are you able to delegate it to?

4 A. Well, the pilots, obviously, and dispatch agents.

5 Q. And dispatch agents?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. And how do you train -- how does Grant train dispatch agents
8 so that they are able to perform operational control duties?

9 A. They're put through ground training.

10 Q. How long is the dispatch agent's ground training? Do you
11 know?

12 A. It depends. I don't know exactly off the top of my head how
13 long it's supposed to be, but I'd imagine it lasts 1, 2, maybe 3
14 hours initially.

15 Q. And what does it look like? Do they come somewhere for a
16 classroom setting? Is there OJT? What's that training look like?

17 A. They will do a classroom setting and OJT.

18 Q. Okay, both?

19 A. Um-hum.

20 Q. And who's responsible for that training? Who performs the
21 training?

22 A. Those individuals that actually have had the training
23 previous to this. We've had flight instructors do the training.
24 We've had station managers do the training, which have been
25 trained in the past, other dispatch agents to do the training.

1 Q. And the training, is it -- the dispatcher training, is it
2 outside your FAA-approved training program or is it housed within
3 that training program?

4 A. It's outside.

5 Q. It's outside? And have you ever had the FAA, that you're
6 aware of, sit through or be present for that dispatcher training?

7 A. I don't know.

8 Q. And all dispatch agents go through that training, correct?

9 A. Correct.

10 Q. Do they also -- do you have -- after a dispatch agent has
11 come, they've been hired, they go through that initial training,
12 is there recurrent training for them?

13 A. Yes, we do. We do recurrent training.

14 Q. Once a dispatch agent has gone through this training and they
15 become an operational control delegate -- correct?

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. Do you or does Grant keep a list of those operational control
18 delegates?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And where is that list kept? Where is it housed?

21 A. It's kept in my office.

22 Q. In your office. And who's responsible for ensuring it's up-
23 to-date and --

24 A. Me.

25 Q. Do you ever have the opportunity to, or how do you sample

1 your operational control delegates' work?

2 A. I do a manual audit on their work.

3 Q. What are you actually auditing?

4 A. I look at their flight following logs. I look at the
5 manifests, the flight risk assessments, the weather analysis,
6 airport analysis sheets, and -- let's see, what else? I also look
7 at the flight log for the aircraft.

8 Q. When you are -- you mentioned that you were in King Salmon a
9 couple months prior to the accident?

10 A. Right.

11 Q. When you're doing these base visits, do you also have the
12 opportunity to oversee -- do you watch dispatcher training -- or
13 I'm sorry --

14 A. I sat in dispatch all day in King Salmon.

15 Q. Can you describe or explain to me your risk management
16 program, how that procedure takes place?

17 A. So the dispatch agent will collect data for the airports,
18 considering weather and runway conditions, time of day, and
19 collect that and give the airport a risk assessment itself for
20 where they're going. The pilot will do a similar operation except
21 it's predicated on the flight and the airport. And they both will
22 come together and decide whether that flight is -- has a low
23 enough risk to be able to dispatch the aircraft.

24 Q. Is that done for every flight?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Is there ever a time where it reaches a high enough risk that
2 management is -- becomes part of the dispatch control, if you
3 will? Well, you're consulted or your management is consulted to
4 see if the flight should be released?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. And what level does that take place at?

7 A. I don't know the exact number, but I do believe that they
8 have certain values associated with a -- we go by what is a green,
9 yellow, red parameter. And so if it has a certain amount of
10 yellow checks on the assessment, then it goes to upper management.
11 I do believe it's above four yellows it goes to an upper official.

12 Q. And who is an official that could take that call?

13 A. Depending on the level, it could be a dispatch safety
14 officer, which is generally a local pilot. And if that person is
15 not available, then they would call the chief pilot or myself.
16 And if it gets more elevated, they bypass the dispatch safety
17 officer and just go to the chief pilot or myself or the director
18 of operations.

19 Q. And how are pilots and flight coordinators trained on that
20 risk assessment program?

21 A. They're trained through our operational control training
22 initially and through recurrent.

23 Q. And that's covered --

24 A. It's covered in the ground training.

25 Q. Okay. For both the pilots and then the operational could

1 tell us --

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. -- or your dispatch?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Can you tell me which manual the risk management program is

6 housed in, if you will, if --

7 A. We have an operational control program manual.

8 Q. Do you know if that manual is accepted by the FAA, approved

9 by the FAA? Did the FAA help --

10 A. It's not associated with the FAA.

11 Q. It's part of Medallion?

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. In your time with -- as the DO, were you ever aware or were

14 you ever aware of pilots feeling pressured by check airmen or team

15 leads or things of that nature when it came to taking flights?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Oh, one question I wanted to ask you about the flight

18 coordinator training, do you keep records of that training?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Can you tell me a little bit about your CFIT program, your

21 CFIT training program?

22 A. There is ground training associated with it, and there's also

23 simulator training.

24 Q. And do all your pilots go through this training?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And the CFIT training, is it -- what, is it Medallion or is
2 it --

3 A. That's Medallion.

4 Q. It's Medallion also?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. And who is responsible for the CFIT training program?

7 A. That would be myself.

8 Q. Do you conduct the training yourself, Jon, or --

9 A. Rarely, but I have done it in the past, yes.

10 Q. Do you conduct the simulator training?

11 A. I have done it, yes. Not all, but I have done some.

12 Q. And how is TAWS incorporated, or is it incorporated, into the
13 CFIT?

14 A. I don't recollect it actually being incorporated into the
15 CFIT training.

16 Q. And does Grant have a policy regarding TAWS; specifically,
17 when TAWS would be inhibited, when it's appropriate to inhibit it,
18 when it's not appropriate?

19 A. I do believe that we have that policy. I can't remember the
20 exact wording of it, though.

21 Q. Do you know generally what it says, Jon?

22 A. I'm not going to speculate.

23 Q. Yeah, no problem. Can you tell me a little bit about your
24 safety program? You have a separate safety program?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And is it, once again, part of Medallion?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And who is responsible for that program?

4 A. That would be the director of safety.

5 Q. And who oversees the director of safety?

6 A. I do.

7 Q. Is a pilot group part of the safety committee? Are they part
8 of that program?

9 A. Everybody in this company is invited to participate in safety
10 meetings. And they are all encouraged to report safety issues, if
11 that's what you mean.

12 Q. Is there a permanent member of the pilot group on the safety
13 committee, though, that -- it looked to me like -- I read through
14 the manual. It looked to me like you have monthly safety
15 committee meetings; is that accurate?

16 A. That's correct.

17 Q. Is there a permanent person from the flight group who --

18 A. I don't recollect if anybody in the pilot group has been
19 assigned that or not.

20 Q. You talked about the risk assessment program and how the
21 dispatch agents gather some of the weather information. They
22 get -- one of the ways is through village agents; is that correct?

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. Are the village agents trained at all for --

25 A. No.

1 MR. BANNING: And I think that's the majority of my general
2 questions. So what I'll do is I'll go ahead and turn it over to
3 Noreen for a little bit, and then after Noreen is done, we'll come
4 back and ask some accident-specific questions.

5 MR. EICHLER: Okay.

6 BY MS. PRICE:

7 Q. Okay. Jon, do you have Caravan experience?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. About how many hours?

10 A. I don't remember. I might have a couple thousand, maybe
11 more.

12 Q. Okay. That's fine. Is there a dispatch safety officer at
13 the King Salmon base?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. So in their risk assessment process, if they get a four
16 yellow, what --

17 A. They'd get -- contact the dispatch safety officer from
18 another base or they would call myself or the chief pilot.

19 Q. And how often did you get calls from King Salmon in regard to
20 dispatch?

21 A. I would say maybe once a month, maybe twice, at best.
22 They're a pretty conservative base.

23 Q. In your experience, do pilots and dispatch agents disagree on
24 the dispatch?

25 A. I have not -- there has been a couple situations that I can

1 remember. I don't know exactly when and who --

2 Q. That's okay.

3 A. -- but I have seen that happen before, yes.

4 Q. And in those circumstances, were you called?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. And do you remember on any of those circumstances what
7 occurred after the phone call or what action was taken?

8 A. I can only speculate.

9 Q. And in those circumstances, is it the dispatch agent who
10 wants the flight to go and the pilot not go, or vice versa, or can
11 you describe that situation?

12 A. I don't remember. Like this happens very few and far
13 between, so I would just be making stuff up if I told you, and I
14 don't want to do that.

15 Q. No, that's fine. How does the company perform flight
16 locating?

17 A. With a flight following log that we utilize.

18 Q. And how is that? Do you have ADS-Bs, Spidertracks, phone
19 calls? How do they -- how do you track where a plane is and where
20 it is on its route for that day?

21 A. It would be phone calls.

22 Q. Who keeps the charts up-to-date in the airplane?

23 A. The company does.

24 Q. And who in the company does that function?

25 A. The charts are collected from a distributor and sent to each

1 base for each individual pilot. So the pilots are responsible to
2 keep their charts.

3 Q. How about company publications that are in the aircraft?
4 Same way, or does somebody else distribute those and check them
5 and make sure they're current?

6 A. All the company manuals that are in the aircraft are held by
7 each pilot --

8 Q. I see.

9 A. -- so they would be responsible for maintaining the currency.

10 Q. So does each pilot have their own nav charts and all their
11 own company documents, so when they leave for 2 weeks, they take
12 them with them and the next pilot brings them all or --

13 A. No. They just have their own. They all have their own GOM
14 and they have their own charts.

15 Q. So, again, when the new pilot comes in, 2 weeks --

16 A. He has his own.

17 Q. Okay. All right. I got you.

18 A. They all keep their own.

19 Q. So it's -- so some questions about the safety program. Who
20 is currently acting as the director of safety?

21 A. Currently, it's myself.

22 Q. And how long have you been acting as the director of safety?

23 A. I would say probably about a week, maybe more. I can't
24 remember.

25 Q. So prior to 1 week ago, who was acting as the director of

1 safety?

2 A. Charles Michaels was named as the director of safety.

3 Q. Was he functioning as the director of safety for the previous
4 6 months?

5 A. No.

6 Q. So who was performing his duties as the program manager?

7 A. Well, nobody was performing his duties as the program
8 manager.

9 Q. So who was running the monthly meetings and going through
10 hazard reports and --

11 A. I had started doing those last month.

12 Q. Okay. Do you know what date that Charles Michaels stopped
13 performing safety -- director of safety duties?

14 A. I can't remember. I want to say February, but I'm not sure.

15 Q. Do you remember any specific safety reports regarding
16 operations at King Salmon in the safety reporting process?

17 A. No.

18 Q. So would I be correct if I said no safety reports came from
19 the King Salmon base, or is it that you can't recall if there were
20 any safety reports from the King Salmon base?

21 A. Probably both. I don't remember if they came --

22 Q. It's okay. Do you recall any safety reports within the last
23 year from pilots in Grant Aviation?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Can you explain how the safety assurance function is managed

1 at Grant, particularly the monitoring of safety performance and
2 goals at the bases?

3 A. Well, through the reporting process, data is collected, and
4 then when there is a safety issue, it's supposed to be assigned to
5 an individual that can take over that project till it's finalized,
6 and then that issue is closed.

7 Q. So at the King Salmon base, if a pilot had a safety concern
8 they wanted to write up, where does that -- who does that go to at
9 the base? And how does it get to somebody that can take action on
10 it?

11 A. They can write it up on a safety report or they can go into
12 the WBAT program and submit it there.

13 Q. Which is the primary reporting method? Is it WBAT or --

14 A. Initially, it was WBAT, but since WBAT has changed its
15 format, there hasn't been many safety reports going through WBAT.

16 Q. How would expect a pilot at Grant to report a safety hazard?
17 Would you expect them to submit a WBAT, submit a written hazard
18 report, or call the chief pilot or yourself?

19 A. Probably all four of those options would do.

20 Q. On to CFIT program. Is the simulator training required on an
21 annual basis?

22 A. It's required by our Medallion program on an annual basis.

23 Q. And is that every 12 months?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Is there a grace period?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. How long is the grace period?

3 A. It would be 1 month.

4 Q. Did Medallion recommend any improvements from the previous 2
5 years to your CFIT program?

6 A. Their new audit points had suggested some changes, but they
7 didn't recommend that we improve our program.

8 Q. So the changes were not an improvement? They were just
9 changes?

10 A. Well, it depends on how you look at it, but sure.

11 Q. Did you make any improvements outside of Medallion's audit
12 points that you thought would be beneficial for the CFIT training
13 program?

14 A. I did.

15 Q. Do you mind sharing with us what those improvements were?

16 A. I created simulator scenarios that were more direct towards
17 their bases of operation versus just general scenarios.

18 Q. And do you feel that those are beneficial to your CFIT
19 program, CFIT avoidance?

20 A. Sure.

21 Q. So this is a question in regards to the Caravan and related
22 to CFIT avoidance. Is the TAWS system tested after an engine
23 start as part of the test function of the navigation?

24 A. I do believe so, but I don't remember the process. It's been
25 a while since I've flown a Caravan.

1 Q. Do you know if the TAWS system and the alert levels are
2 something that is provided in initial ground training to pilots?
3 Do you remember?

4 A. I do believe it's part of it.

5 MS. PRICE: That's all the questions that I have. Thank you,
6 Jon.

7 MR. EICHLER: Sure.

8 MS. PRICE: Ryan?

9 BY MR. BRINKMAN:

10 Q. Oh, if you don't mind, I just want to piggyback on the safety
11 meeting. Does maintenance attend those?

12 A. They're invited to them.

13 Q. And is there ever any time -- you had said earlier that the
14 pilots maintain their own publications, the charts and the
15 manuals. Is there any time those are ever audited?

16 A. When base inspections occur, then we go to see if the pilots
17 have -- we pick a pilot and see if he has all the charts that he
18 needs.

19 Q. Okay. Cool. Is there a time frame for when you do base
20 audits? Do you have a schedule of specific pieces --

21 A. There isn't -- no, there are not.

22 Q. -- that you do at a certain time?

23 A. There are no schedules.

24 MR. BRINKMAN: Okay. That's it.

25 MS. PRICE: Austin?

1 BY MR. ENGBRETSON:

2 Q. Yes. I just got a few questions about the drug program, Jon.

3 A. Okay.

4 Q. Does Grant Aviation have a drug and alcohol program?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. And who's in charge of that drug and alcohol program?

7 A. Bruce McGlasson.

8 Q. Are you aware of any time where an employee or even just a
9 member of the general public has reported or expressed concern
10 about suspected drug or alcohol use by any safety-sensitive
11 employees?

12 A. No.

13 MR. ENGBRETSON: Okay. That's all I got.

14 MS. PRICE: Thank you.

15 How you doing? You need a break or --

16 MR. EICHLER: No, I'm fine.

17 MS. PRICE: Water?

18 MR. EICHLER: I'm good.

19 BY MR. BANNING:

20 Q. On the charts, Jon, who -- are all pilots assigned VFR and
21 IFR charts, do you know?

22 A. No. The VFR pilots, in other words, those aircraft that are
23 not certified to go IFR Part 135, do not have IFR charts. Only
24 the IFR-certified pilots.

25 Q. Have IFR charts.

1 A. IFR charts.

2 Q. And once again, it's the same procedure? Their charts are
3 given to them and they're responsible for ensuring that they're
4 up-to-date and bringing them with them --

5 A. Correct.

6 Q. -- on the airplane?

7 A. That is correct.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. It's the pilots' responsibility to make sure that they have
10 the correct charts with them.

11 Q. The company provides them, but the pilot is responsible for
12 bringing them with him when he goes flying?

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. Good. Thank you.

15 Some -- we'll get into a little more accident, a few
16 accident-specific questions.

17 A. Okay.

18 Q. So, once again, we're terribly sorry that we're -- have to be
19 here today, so -- but we do appreciate you spending your time and
20 visiting with us.

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. Your pilots at the King Salmon base, do you have an idea of
23 what a typical duty day looks like for them?

24 A. Well, the duty day would be the same as any other base, so
25 they would get there when they're assigned duty time and be

1 assigned flights. When they're done for the day, they go home.

2 Q. Are they assigned -- are they working an 8 and 24 or are they
3 working a assigned duty day?

4 A. Assigned duty day.

5 Q. And do you know what those hours are for the King Salmon
6 base?

7 A. I don't know exactly what they would be. I'd imagine they're
8 assigned at 7:30 in the morning, and 14 hours later, they'd be
9 done officially.

10 Q. And did you know Gabriele? Were you familiar with Gabriele?

11 A. I didn't know him personally, no.

12 Q. Oh, okay. Are you aware of any disciplinary action with
13 Gabriele, any problems with Gabriele at the base?

14 A. Not that I'm aware of, no.

15 Q. No personnel issues that you're aware of?

16 A. I don't know of any.

17 Q. Did you ever have the opportunity to fly on an airplane or
18 with -- when Gabriele was the pilot?

19 A. No.

20 Q. We heard that -- through another interview that flying to the
21 Chigs and down in that neck of the woods was not something that
22 the pilots were particularly fond of.

23 A. Okay.

24 Q. Were you -- because there were some difficulties, weather
25 issues --

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. -- the weather -- were you aware that there was a dislike for
3 that route, a general dislike for that route by the pilots down
4 there?

5 A. I don't know if there's a dislike on it. We never forced
6 anybody to go down there. But I would imagine that there may have
7 been some anxiety about going into mountainous terrain, sure.

8 Q. Okay, yeah. We had just heard that there was some weather
9 constantly changing, which you would expect down on the Aleutians,
10 but --

11 A. You expect that throughout the entire state.

12 Q. Well, yeah, yeah. So, okay, yeah. What do you think
13 happened? Do you have any ideas about what happened in this
14 accident?

15 A. I don't know. It would be speculating if I just said that,
16 so let's just -- I don't -- yeah, I don't know.

17 Q. Yeah, no problem. Were there any changes that Grant made
18 following the accident, procedures, processes, things of that
19 nature?

20 A. Sure. We made the weather minimums in that particular region
21 more restrictive.

22 Q. Do you know what they were raised to, off the top of your
23 head?

24 A. I don't remember exactly what it is at the moment, but I do
25 believe that going to Perryville, I think you need at least a

1 2,000-foot ceiling and 5 miles visibility.

2 Q. Do you remember or recall what it was prior to the accident,
3 Jon?

4 A. Just regulatory.

5 Q. Any other changes following the accident?

6 A. We are not allowed to dispatch special VFR unless the weather
7 is at least 600-foot ceiling and 2 miles visibility.

8 Q. Is there anyone else that you think we should talk to that
9 might be able to shed some light on the accident that we might be
10 missing?

11 A. I don't know who else you need to talk to.

12 MR. BANNING: I think that's all the accident-specific
13 questions I had, Noreen.

14 MS. PRICE: Okay.

15 BY MS. PRICE:

16 Q. I have a couple. Do you know if this flight was Flight 340
17 or 341, because I have a risk assessment form that says 340 and
18 some dispatch documents that say 341?

19 A. I would assume that it would be -- if the dispatch document
20 says 341, then that's what it is, but I don't know exactly.

21 Q. Okay. All right. What's your recommendation for how I can
22 actually get the real number on there? Was it -- would it be
23 what's logged in the computer?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Do you fly this route at night, the --

1 A. No.

2 Q. The Perryville Village agent, do you know if those folks are
3 trained for their duties?

4 A. They're village agents. I think what they're trained for or
5 just asked to do versus trained is to go pick up the mail and take
6 it back to the post office and bring them freight.

7 Q. Are they asked to provide weather observations?

8 A. Sure.

9 Q. Are they company employees?

10 A. I think they're contract employees, would be a more accurate
11 statement.

12 Q. Do you expect the dispatch agent in King Salmon to update
13 weather along a route that could be multiple stops? So would a
14 dispatch agent check the weather prior to every departure, or is
15 that the pilot's duty to check the weather prior to every
16 departure to get updated weather at the destination?

17 A. It'd be the pilot's -- the pilot would be the one at that
18 point.

19 Q. And do you know if there's phone connectivity in Port Heiden?
20 Does everyone have the ability --

21 A. Everybody should have a cell phone. If not, then they can,
22 you know, go into town and use a phone there.

23 Q. Do the dispatch agents monitor weather throughout the day,
24 though?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And if they see a change in a weather pattern, they would
2 notify the base or notify the village agent, notify the pilot?
3 What would be the primary --

4 A. If they notice that and thought that they should do that,
5 they would call the village agent or try to get a hold of the
6 pilot one way or another to let them know that they shouldn't
7 proceed. How often that's done, I don't know.

8 Q. Why do you use Caravans on that route in the peninsula vice
9 the 207s?

10 A. Say that question again?

11 Q. Why are you using the 208 vice the 207 out of King Salmon for
12 the route --

13 A. The ability to -- well, it has IFR capabilities, for one.
14 Two, it has a greater payload, so you can carry more fuel, because
15 it's quite a distance to get there.

16 Q. So who decides whether it's IFR or a VFR flight out of the
17 King Salmon base?

18 A. That's through weather minimums. You look at the weather,
19 and if it's IFR, then, obviously, it's an IFR flight.

20 Q. Well, you can take an IFR flight with weather above minimums.
21 You can choose to fly on an IFR routing no matter what the weather
22 is doing. File --

23 A. So the pilot would be responsible for determining whether the
24 flight is going to be IFR or not.

25 Q. Do you believe that the Grant Caravan pilots are comfortable

1 taking that airplane into IMC conditions?

2 A. I believe so.

3 MS. PRICE: Okay. That's all the questions I have. Thank
4 you.

5 MR. EICHLER: Okay.

6 MS. PRICE: Ryan?

7 BY MR. BRINKMAN:

8 Q. What are the options in that particular route into Perryville
9 for the pilot to figure out weather before they take off?

10 A. What are the -- what do you -- say that again?

11 Q. What are the options available to the pilot? I know that the
12 options are limited out there. I'm just wondering what --

13 A. I guess I don't really understand the question very well.
14 What are the options available to do exactly what now?

15 Q. To determine weather, for the pilot to determine weather on
16 that particular route?

17 A. Okay. So the pilot determines the weather before departure
18 at the base. Okay.

19 Q. At King Salmon?

20 A. At King Salmon. Obviously, you get to Port Heiden, there's
21 obviously weather there. From that particular point, there is no
22 real good options to figure out weather in Perryville because
23 there's no radio connectivity down that low for the AWOS. They
24 would have to get up high enough to be able to do that.

25 They may be able to figure out weather on their Capstone

1 capability if the aircraft is equipped, but that is usually a
2 line-of-sight issue. I don't know if there's something like that
3 down in Port Heiden now. It's been too long since I've flown down
4 that way. But that's another option. Other than that, they can
5 call back to the base if they're on the ground and ask that
6 question if they desire to.

7 Q. Do you know if there's Internet, if the village agent has
8 Internet as an option or is that available --

9 A. I don't know. I would imagine.

10 Q. I mean, I'm just curious about the possibility of weather
11 cams. I don't know if they have the possibility to check weather
12 cams in Port Heiden or not?

13 A. I don't know if they have that. I imagine they do, but
14 that's like -- I don't know if they purchased weather -- or
15 Internet at their house or not, so I don't know.

16 MR. BRINKMAN: Okay. That's about all I had. Thanks, Jon.

17 MR. EICHLER: Sure.

18 MS. PRICE: Austin?

19 BY MR. ENGEBRETSON:

20 Q. Yeah, just a few questions, Jon. Have you flown out of the
21 King Salmon station in the past?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And was that with PenAir?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. About how many years, roughly, do you think you flew out of

1 there?

2 A. It's kind of hard to say because I flew out of all different
3 types of bases. I don't know if I can actually pinpoint it down
4 to a number of years versus -- it could be a year. It could be a
5 couple. It's -- that's a pretty broad question predicated on what
6 I was doing --

7 Q. All right. What types of aircraft have you flown in the King
8 Salmon area?

9 A. I flew a Piper Navajo, a Cessna Caravan, and a Piper
10 Saratoga.

11 Q. And were any of those aircraft IFR capable?

12 A. The Navajo and the Caravan was.

13 Q. And were you -- I guess, did you have a 297? Were you IFR --
14 were you checked out as an IFR pilot in those aircraft?

15 A. I was.

16 Q. Do you think there's adequate IFR infrastructure available to
17 pilots both en route, at the villages or airports --

18 A. No.

19 Q. -- that are serviced out of King Salmon?

20 A. No.

21 MR. ENGEBRETSON: No. Okay. That's all I have. Thank you.

22 MS. PRICE: Anything else?

23 BY MR. BANNING:

24 Q. Yeah, Jon, just a couple follow-up questions really quick.

25 A. Sure.

1 Q. You mentioned that you don't feel like there is an adequate
2 IFR infrastructure. Will you elaborate on that a little bit? Are
3 you talking approaches, airways? What are you getting at?

4 A. Well, if we're going to go with Perryville, in specific,
5 there's no weather reporting at the surface there, so we have no
6 legal way of executing an instrument approach going into
7 Perryville. And ATC is, from what I remember, is probably only
8 available at about 5,000 feet and higher. So the access to ATC in
9 those types of functions are not available.

10 There's -- I don't believe -- there might be weather
11 reporting at Chignik Lake. I don't remember. Maybe at the
12 lagoon. Neither of those should be IFR-equipped airports, though.
13 But yeah, there's -- regardless of whether it's King Salmon,
14 Perryville, it's a scenario that's pretty much rampant throughout
15 western Alaska, so --

16 Q. With regard to -- go back to the CFIT training program really
17 quick. And it's a question I wanted to asked but haven't asked.
18 If you had a pilot in a 208 going inadvertent IMC, what would be
19 Grant's procedure?

20 A. The Grant's procedure would be to exit IMC as soon as
21 possible, and if that's not possible, then you would start
22 climbing and start talking to ATC to get an IFR clearance.

23 MR. BANNING: I think that's all the questions I had, Noreen.

24 Thank you, Jon.

25 MR. EICHLER: Sure.

1 MS. PRICE: Does anybody else have any follow-up questions?

2 MR. ENGBRETSON: Yeah, I just have one. This is Austin.

3 BY MR. ENGBRETSON:

4 Q. I guess, again, back to flying 208, and particularly in IFR,
5 Jon, do you have any reservations about the icing capability of
6 that aircraft?

7 A. In the aircraft itself, reservations in icing, my tendency is
8 to get out of icing when I'm in that aircraft flying IFR. So if
9 encounter it, I try to quickly exit icing.

10 Q. Right. Would that have any bearing on your decision whether
11 or not to fly IFR or not? So let's say if you're going -- let's
12 say you're going to Port Heiden, for example, and the weather was,
13 you know, 3,000 feet and 10 miles, would you elect to fly IFR at,
14 say, 5,000 feet but get ice, or would you rather fly VFR in, you
15 know, at 2,000 feet with 10 miles-plus visibility?

16 A. I would stay out of the ice. So I'd rather go VFR than IFR
17 in that case.

18 MR. ENGBRETSON: Yeah. Thank you.

19 MR. EICHLER: Sure.

20 MS. PRICE: All right. Great. Well, that concludes all our
21 questions. Thank you very much, Jon.

22 MR. EICHLER: Sure.

23 MS. PRICE: And this concludes the recorded interview.

24 MR. EICHLER: Okay.

25 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: GRANT AVIATION FLIGHT 341 ACCIDENT
 NEAR CHIGNIK LAKE, ALASKA
 MAY 1, 2017
 Interview of Jonathon Eichler

ACCIDENT NUMBER: ANC17FA021

PLACE:

DATE: June 21, 2017

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.

A black rectangular redaction box covering a handwritten signature.

Danielle VanRiper
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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GRANT AVIATION FLIGHT 341 ACCIDENT *

NEAR CHIGNIK LAKE, ALASKA *

Accident No.: ANC17FA021

MAY 1, 2017 *

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Interview of: MATHEW BAUMGARTNER

Via Telephone

Friday,
June 16, 2017

APPEARANCES:

NOREEN PRICE, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

BRICE BANNING, Senior Aviation Accident Investigator
Chairman, Operations Group
National Transportation Safety Board

RYAN BRINKMAN, Safety Inspector/Investigator in Charge
Federal Aviation Administration

AUSTIN ENGBRETSON, Vice President of Flight Operations
Grant Aviation, Inc.

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I N T E R V I E W

MS. PRICE: Hi, welcome. My name is Noreen Price. I'm an aviation accident investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board here in Anchorage. I'm the investigator in charge of accident ANC17FA021.

The NTSB is an independent federal agency charged with determining the probable causes of transportation accidents and promoting transportation safety. The NTSB is not part of the DOT or the FAA. It has no regulatory or enforcement powers.

I'd like to take a minute to introduce all our group members, and we'll go in the same order that we did in previous interviews.

So go ahead, Brice.

MR. BANNING: Brice Banning, senior aviation accident investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board.

MR. BRINKMAN: Ryan Brinkman, aviation safety inspector from the FAA and also IIC for this particular incident.

MR. ENGBRETSON: Austin Engbretson with Grant Aviation.

MR. BAUMGARTNER: Mat Baumgartner, formerly with Grant Aviation as chief pilot.

MS. PRICE: Thank you. And today we'll be using the services of a digital recorder, which will be sent out and transcribed. That transcription will be put in the public docket when the accident is made public.

The purpose of the investigation is safety, to determine probable cause and prevent reoccurrence. Our role is not to

1 assign fault, blame, or liability. This interview is part of a
2 fact-finding phase of this investigation. We're here to ask
3 questions about your role in the company, company policies and
4 procedures, and familiarity with the pilots. We cannot, however,
5 offer any guarantee of confidentiality or immunity.

6 Each of the group members will have a chance to ask
7 questions. We'll ask questions one at a time, and everybody's
8 instructed not to interrupt the person who is asking the question
9 at that time. There'll be an opportunity for each group member to
10 ask follow-up questions after each person has had a turn. Brice
11 Banning is going to be leading the questions off today.

12 Please answer all questions to the best of your recollection.
13 If you don't understand a question, ask to have it repeated or
14 explained. If you realize you misstated or need to modify a
15 previous answer, please do so. And if you don't know something,
16 just say "I don't know." If something is your opinion, make it
17 clear that that's your opinion and not a fact.

18 And if you need to take any breaks during the interview, just
19 say, hey, I need 5 minutes or so, and we'll take a break and then
20 start up again. Try to avoid answering questions with uh-huh or a
21 nod or a gesture because remember it's being recorded.

22 You're entitled to have one representative of your choosing.
23 Is there someone you would like to have with you today?

24 MR. BAUMGARTNER: No, that's okay.

25 MS. PRICE: Okay. Do you have any questions, Mat, before we

1 get started?

2 MR. BAUMGARTNER: No.

3 MS. PRICE: Okay. We will begin the interview now. For the
4 record, if you could state your full name and spell it?

5 MR. BAUMGARTNER: Mathew Kaszab Baumgartner. M-a-t-h-e-w, K-
6 a-s-z-a-b, B-a-u-m-g-a-r-t-n-e-r.

7 MS. PRICE: Great. Thank you. So today Brice is going to
8 start off with the operations questions, and then we'll go around
9 the table with me next, Ryan being third, and then Austin.

10 All right, Brice, take it away.

11 INTERVIEW OF MATHEW BAUMGARTNER

12 BY MR. BANNING:

13 Q. Hi, Mathew. First of all, I just wanted to say thank you for
14 taking the time to visit with us today. And I wanted to start out
15 by just asking you if you could tell us a little bit about
16 yourself, your background in aviation prior to coming to Grant?

17 A. Okay. My first commercial job was with Alaska Central
18 Express, started in December of 1999, whereas I started with the
19 207 and then moved up to copilot 1900, and then, eventually, the
20 right seat of the EMB 120. Basically, then I got into Grant in
21 2002, which was my second commercial job.

22 As of now, I'm ATP rated and reapplying with Guardian Flight
23 to reassume Learjet and Beechjet, now PIC duties, whereas still
24 trying to maintain in the training program part-time starting in
25 the fall with Grant.

1 So all of my commercial experiences are either with Alaska
2 Central Express, Grant Aviation, and Guardian, and I'm at about
3 13,000 total flight hours.

4 Q. And could you elaborate a little bit? You mentioned you're
5 going to stay with Grant in their training department?

6 A. Yeah. My son is in Bethel, and while he goes -- he's going
7 to school there starting this fall. Only when he's in school will
8 I be able to dedicate some time back to Grant for maybe some check
9 airman work -- well, basically whatever is needed, so --

10 Q. I see.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Nice. How long -- when did you assume the duties of the
13 chief pilot for Grant?

14 A. That was this March, like -- I think it was March 21st, 23rd,
15 somewhere in there.

16 Q. 2017?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And how long were you with the company in the chief pilot
19 role?

20 A. Approximately 2½ months.

21 Q. And as the chief pilot, could you share with us a little bit
22 about your duties and responsibilities?

23 A. Duties and responsibilities? Yeah, there's quite a number of
24 things that I was faced with. Being new to the position, it was a
25 great deal of time, initially, was just time was spent acclimating

1 myself to the position. At the same time I was also continuing to
2 conduct training, you know, doing check rides, IOE line checks,
3 even did a couple days of Medevac. So it was a huge undertaking.

4 And towards the end of my employment as the chief pilot, we
5 acquired an office assistant, who I then had to put the time in to
6 train to help out with pilot records and, you know, PRIAs, that
7 type of stuff, and also to evaluate the initial new-hire ground
8 school course.

9 Furthermore, I would do -- you know, review resumes for
10 interviewing new hires, set up ground schools with instructors,
11 and, you know, the new-hire invites, and get all the associated
12 paperwork together for the new hires. Also doing HR paperwork and
13 get the tests ready.

14 After all that was completed, I would also be coordinating
15 the flight training for these new hires, putting together the
16 binders, you know, after ground school. On top of that, I would
17 do some coordinating of recurrent online training for ground and
18 also the recurrent flight training, scheduling that with check
19 airman for check rides and whatnot.

20 I'd also do pilot scheduling, which was very time-consuming.
21 And I'd also choose different pilots to transition from one
22 airplane to another according to their experience level and what
23 the company needs, coordinate that training. Also, I'd also do
24 biweekly payroll audits, monthly payroll audits, monthly block
25 time summaries. Yeah, that was -- block time summary, duty

1 audits, review and approve.

2 I'd do some travel requests; do pilot pay, submit the pay
3 changes accordingly to what's going on and keep track of that; you
4 know, do dispatch notifications of requirements of pilots if that
5 came about, get that current, and disseminated that to the bases
6 and station managers. Basically, maintain pilot records was a
7 huge one, you know, of the training and currency. We did that on
8 hard copy and electronic, so it was pretty time consuming.

9 Moreover, do fielding phone calls that -- long hours of the
10 night or the day from pilots' issues and basic operational
11 questions. Also did a little bit of, you know, selecting company
12 instructors and putting in for different check airman, that they
13 observed rides, coordinate that training and with -- you know,
14 coordinate that with the FAA to get new check airmen within the
15 company.

16 But I also leaned on -- since I was so new to the position,
17 you know, it was very time consuming to just get my head wrapped
18 around all that, I frequently referred to the DO for guidance and
19 help because I was, you know, so new and I didn't know everything.

20 You still there?

21 Q. Sure. Yeah, yup, absolutely. Did you -- do you mind sharing
22 with us, Mathew, why you resigned from the chief pilot position at
23 Grant?

24 A. Oh, sure. It was a family-derived decision, basically. You
25 know, it's my duty to take care of my family first, so that's why

1 I'm here in Ketchikan, relocated, so -- if you need more, I can.

2 Q. No, that's adequate. Thank you. Do you mind sharing with us
3 what your relationship was with the director of ops at Grant and
4 upper-level management there at Grant while you were in the
5 position of chief pilot?

6 A. Yeah. I'll share with them -- share with you my relationship
7 with them. Did a lot of close, you know, coordinating with the
8 DO, Jon Eichler, with, you know, all kinds of operational and
9 training-related matters. We would also do interviews together
10 for the new hires and discuss, you know, well, everything and
11 anything that entailed operation or, you know, bulletins, upcoming
12 training, and revisiting the training program on how -- make it
13 better.

14 So, yeah, it was a very close relationship with Jon. I
15 leaned on him quite heavily, as you would expect, being new to the
16 position. Yeah, I frequently visited the president there, Bruce,
17 for doing the PRIA stuff and insurance forms and, you know,
18 operational questions and whatnot, so --

19 Is there more you need on that?

20 Q. No. It doesn't sound like there was any tension at all
21 between you and the upper-level management there?

22 A. Oh, no, no, not at all.

23 Q. And how about, how was your relationship -- as you were
24 getting accustomed to this position did you have any workings with
25 your POI Flight Standards District Office, and if so, how was that

1 relationship?

2 A. There really wasn't too much contact, you know. I never even
3 did have to do the initial interview that's normally done for the
4 chief pilot position. So I was basically kind of grandfathered in
5 because we already had a check airman working relationship with
6 Steven Stewart, our POI.

7 So, yeah, our relationship was still building, and it was to
8 a minimum, whereas, you know, I was still pretty darn busy trying
9 to get introduced to the position. But we did email back and
10 forth, mostly regarding FAA-observed check airman ride scenarios.

11 Q. Are you aware if the FAA, during your tenure there at Grant,
12 ever visiting the King Salmon base?

13 A. I have not been aware of them doing that.

14 Q. And have you -- did you, while you were chief pilot, Mat, did
15 you have the opportunity to visit the King Salmon base?

16 A. Yes, I had been there a couple different times.

17 Q. And can you share with us approximately when that was that
18 you were visited, what -- that you were able to visit calendar-
19 wise?

20 A. Okay.

21 Q. If you don't recall, that's all right.

22 A. I was there, I think, a couple weeks prior to the accident.
23 I was on the shift change, whereas I went to both Dillingham and
24 King Salmon to basically cover the whole area with needed training
25 and check rides, and whatnot. So I was there, I think, for about

1 a day mostly doing 207 restriction relief flights for 207 pilots.

2 Q. And while you were there, did you have any concerns about the
3 workings of the base? Did you go away with -- as the chief pilot,
4 did you go away with any action items or things you felt you
5 needed to address?

6 A. Most it was ensuring that the schedules were covered, was my
7 huge concern was the pilots giving me the heads up that they were
8 going to move on to different companies, you know? From the whole
9 Bristol Bay region, we had two that were confirmed to leave in the
10 fall, and then another one that was hinting to leave. So my main
11 action items were to cover the schedules and figure out from that
12 point who I could train and put into their spots as they left.

13 Q. So it sounds like, by and large, you were happy with how the
14 base was running and operational control, the management of the
15 base, those types of things?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. And do you mind describing for us how operational control is
18 performed there at Grant, particularly at King Salmon?

19 A. How operational control is performed at King Salmon?

20 Q. Yeah, how flights are released, who's a part of the decision-
21 making process, those types of things?

22 A. Oh, okay. Well, typically, the pilot would check the weather
23 in the morning and NOTAMs and whatnot and ensure the aircraft is
24 airworthy. At the same time, a dispatch person would notify the
25 pilot of the flight, and then basically extracts the total weight

1 that they can take to build a load for the pilot. They get that
2 from the pilot and then relay that to the ramp people.

3 So the ramp people build the load according to the manifest
4 that the dispatch people provide to them, whereas also this
5 dispatch person would call the village agents and the ASOS, if
6 there's one available, for weather and runway conditions, that
7 type of thing.

8 So the pilot would fuel for the flight and supervise and/or
9 help the loading of the plane. And when that's complete, the
10 pilot goes back inside and grabs the manifest, which is -- would
11 be the updated one with the actual weight loaded. And the pilot
12 does the weight balance and the flight risk assessment.

13 The weather is on the manifest to help facilitate this flight
14 risk process. Are you guys familiar with that at all?

15 Q. Yeah, we have received a copy of that and looked at it, so
16 yes, we are.

17 A. Okay. So basically when they're done the flight risk, you
18 know, as well as the -- well, when he does the flight risk, if
19 it's a, you know, it's a go situation, he's been through that
20 process, then, he then conducts the flight, you know. The pilot
21 would load the passengers; if there's not any passengers -- you
22 know, calls when he's taxiing out, he or she is taxiing out, and
23 relates how much fuel is on board.

24 After takeoff, the pilot would report airborne to dispatch,
25 and then they -- you know, after level-off, the pilot would also

1 report the time and route to the first destination. And then the
2 dispatcher/flight follower would notify the village agent of that,
3 the ETA of the flight.

4 Does that answer your question there?

5 Q. Yeah, it does. Thank you. Who in King Salmon particularly
6 would have the ability, if they saw the weather that they were
7 concerned about the weather, who in the -- or who in the base at
8 King Salmon would have the authority to cancel a flight?

9 A. Well, that would be the dispatcher and the pilot.

10 Q. And were you ever aware of a time when the dispatcher wanted
11 to go and the pilot was -- the dispatcher wanted the flight to go
12 and the pilot was concerned about the weather and wanted to
13 cancel?

14 A. Yeah, that happens frequently because we're in Alaska, so
15 yeah, that's pretty common.

16 Q. And who would -- what would be the process if that were to
17 occur? Would management get involved at some point or who would
18 the pilot call, or how -- what does that look like?

19 A. Right. Well, also, through the flight risk because, you
20 know, if you have a bunch of risk factors, which are totaled on
21 the assessment, the pilot then is also entitled to call somebody,
22 you know, from upper management. And typically, if a pilot's
23 worried about something, they're -- you know, they know to call
24 the chief pilot or DO or somebody up higher to express their
25 concerns.

1 Q. And did you ever receive -- in your tenure there as chief
2 pilot, did you ever receive one of those calls, Mat, where the
3 pilot was concerned and wanted to talk to you?

4 A. Yeah. After the normal flight risk assessment process, they
5 would -- you know, they'd call and say, hey, I got, you know, this
6 and that and this and that as risk factors, what do you think?
7 And so we'd go over each one and make a mutual decision as to
8 whether or go or not.

9 Q. Okay. Good. And did you ever -- or how -- maybe the better
10 question is, how did the company supervise the operational control
11 delegates like your dispatch agents? Did you review flight risk
12 assessments forms; did somebody in the company? What -- how does
13 that process look?

14 A. That process would be -- these flight risk assessments are
15 all collected and sent into the main office in Anchorage, where
16 they were given to the director of operations for review. If I
17 wanted to review them, I certainly had access to them. Yeah.

18 Q. Do you know if the DO reviewed them on a regular basis?

19 A. I couldn't tell you for certain. He had -- I know I've seen
20 them in his box, so he at least had to have had them in his hand
21 at one point in time.

22 Q. And who was in charge of supervising the operational control
23 delegates, particularly the dispatch agents in the company?

24 A. That's mainly the DO, but he can also -- you know, has the
25 power to delegate that but still resume the responsibility for it.

1 Q. And you mentioned -- you talked a little bit about the risk
2 management program there, Mathew. Was the risk management program
3 a part of your operational control procedure? Was a flight ever
4 dispatched without completing the risk management program?

5 A. They're basically required for every flight. So, you know,
6 regardless of even if it's a training flight or, you know,
7 maintenance flight, scheduled flight, that was beat into the heads
8 of the pilots to do your flight risk assessment prior to flight on
9 every flight.

10 Q. And do you recall when that risk management program was put
11 in place?

12 A. Not exactly, no. It's been at least a couple years.

13 Q. Okay. No problem. And how were -- or were you a part of the
14 training that pilots and flight coordinators received on that risk
15 management program?

16 A. I would do a lot of the ground schools prior, and I would
17 walk them through the pilot side of grade these flight risks. We
18 had a -- we have a PowerPoint presentation in which we would --
19 we'd show it to them on the screen there. Then also, I would walk
20 them through step-by-step how to go about doing the flight risk
21 assessment. You know, I'd give them the actual handout and give
22 them, you know, some actual weather reports from somewhere, and
23 then have them assess that particular situation. And then, you
24 know, go through the whole process and tally up how many risk
25 factors or yellows they have, and then, you know, go accordingly

1 to the document itself.

2 So I was very involved in teaching people the flight risk
3 assessment and also ensure that they had done that during, you
4 know, IOE when they were first coming on board, basically, ensure
5 that they know the process and that they know they had to do it
6 for every flight.

7 Q. And were the dispatch agents part of that training also?

8 A. I didn't do any of their training, no.

9 Q. Do you know who conducted their training in regards to that
10 program?

11 A. I don't know exactly, no. I thought it was Cory Clark, the
12 director of station.

13 Q. No problem.

14 A. I mean, it's still the DO's responsibility.

15 Q. And in what manual or what program did you -- did the company
16 define this risk management and operational control procedure, or
17 where was it contained?

18 A. Oh, that's a good question. I'm not sure exactly where that
19 one was.

20 Q. Okay. No problem --

21 A. It was (indiscernible). I'm sorry.

22 Q. Nope, no problem whatsoever. And was Grant part of the
23 Medallion program?

24 A. Oh, yes, yes.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Oh, that's where it was. That's where the flight risk was
2 incorporated into the --

3 Q. Were you ever aware of pilots feeling pressured to fly by
4 check airman or team leads or anything of that nature, not
5 necessarily in King Salmon, but any of the bases?

6 A. No. For the most part, the guiding -- you know, the more
7 experienced guiding pilots would help out -- you know, determine
8 whether or not the pilots should or shouldn't take the flight.
9 You know, it was their job to help out with not going if they
10 shouldn't, you know. So we had also placed restrictions on newer
11 pilots, you know, via the check airmen until the guys got more
12 comfortable, you know, typically, 100 hours for a newer person
13 with higher restrictions, which also was incorporated in the
14 flight risk assessment.

15 Q. And what were Grant's minimum requirements for -- or did you
16 have minimum requirements for a pilot in command? When you hired
17 a pilot, what were you looking for?

18 A. They were basically the 500-hour requirements for VFR people,
19 for VFR guys. You know, you also have the night and the night
20 cross-country stuff, but those were just, you know, the FAA
21 minimums.

22 Q. All right. And I think what I'll do now, Mat, is I'm going
23 to go ahead and pass it around the room.

24 A. Okay.

25 Q. And those were just some general questions I had. And so

1 I'll see if anybody has any additional questions they'd like to
2 ask you. And then afterwards, we'll get into a few questions that
3 are specific to the accident if we could, so --

4 A. Okay.

5 MR. BANNING: So Noreen?

6 BY MS. PRICE:

7 Q. Okay. Thank you, Mat, again, for joining us today.

8 I'm going to go back to your position as a chief pilot. Did
9 you -- in your opinion, did you have sufficient resources to
10 perform your duties?

11 A. Yeah, I was getting the job done. It was pretty high
12 workload, and it was getting better with the office assistant.
13 However, staffing could have always been more, which would lead to
14 more free time and better guidance. But we had the minimums, I
15 felt.

16 Q. Prior to becoming the chief pilot, did you -- what bases,
17 Grant bases did you work at?

18 A. Most of it was out of Bethel. I've done a couple shifts out
19 of Emmonak, a couple shifts out of Dillingham, a short bit in King
20 Salmon. I've operated in Anchorage and Kenai. I visited Cold Bay
21 once to do a check ride, and I have never been to Dutch Harbor.

22 Q. Now, a follow-up question about the risk assessment process.
23 On the risk assessments that pilots fill out, there's a number of
24 categories that you have to choose -- green, yellow, or red; is
25 that correct?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. And were all of the blocks on the risk assessment supposed to
3 be checked in one color or another?

4 A. The biggest thing was tallying up the yellows because that's
5 where the guidance came from. If you had a certain number of
6 yellows, then you were guided to act appropriately in order to get
7 dispatched at the bottom of that thing. And like, a certain
8 number of yellows -- I forget what it is -- seven or eight,
9 something like that, would get you into the red category, and
10 anything red, of course, is a no-go.

11 Q. Okay, so --

12 A. And that's --

13 Q. I'm sorry. So would it be typical to then leave anything
14 that was green blank or would you mark green as green because it's
15 being evaluated as green?

16 A. It could be left blank or checked. I've seen it done both
17 ways. But the -- as long as the tally of the yellows or reds were
18 recorded.

19 Q. In your capacity as chief pilot, did you or are you aware
20 of at any of the bases, pilots being changed out if one pilot
21 would not take a flight due to safety concerns? Did you or the
22 DA, the dispatch agent, reassign a route to another pilot who was
23 willing to accept it?

24 A. Typically, the only time that would happen would be is if a
25 newer pilot was on restrictions, if he had some -- you know, any

1 factor that would take him out of the ability to do that flight.
2 In that case, another person who was not under restrictions, maybe
3 has different personal minimums, can take it -- you know, can take
4 the flight that somebody else doesn't take. But typically,
5 dispatch is pretty good about knowing who can and can't go where
6 under what most conditions.

7 Q. And regarding -- you've worked at Grant for a good amount of
8 time. In your experience as a pilot and the chief pilot, do you
9 feel that the airplanes are maintained well?

10 A. Yeah. I've never been in an airplane that I thought was
11 unsafe for Grant. So, yeah, it's adequate in my eyes.

12 Q. Did you have any responsibilities as the chief pilot in the
13 Grant CFIT program?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Can you describe your responsibilities within that program?

16 A. Sure. I would be responsible for making sure all the
17 initials had their indoctrination, run the basic indoc training in
18 ground school. You know, there's FAA-mandated, and then there's
19 also -- excuse me -- then there's also the Medallion-generated
20 CFIT stuff. We would combine those in the initial ground, whereas
21 giving the regular FAA-mandated CFIT training and then also the
22 scenarios for the Medallion CFIT stuff. So basically, we'd teach
23 them also about the flat light, the white-out, deteriorating
24 visibility scenarios, and what to do in each situation. And then
25 they were tested on the CFIT knowledge, and then they were also

1 put in the simulator, the Medallion simulator, and faced with each
2 one of these scenarios, where we'd ensure that they demonstrated
3 the ability to handle each one appropriately as we taught them.

4 And then, you know, it was my responsibility to get all that
5 recorded. And then there's also the annual recurrency for the
6 CFIT stuff, and also online, the annual, basically, online ground
7 stuff, and then also the CFIT sim was also a yearly recurrency.
8 So, yeah, I was very, very responsible for CFIT stuff.

9 Q. And is that yearly currency on a 12-month basis, a calendar
10 basis? How did you measure whether somebody was current in CFIT
11 training?

12 A. The FAA-mandated one is 12-month base. So they'd get their
13 initial indoc and then from that point would have -- you know,
14 find the 12-month, you know, with a grace month on either side,
15 online recurrent. So that was furnished that way. And then,
16 also, the Medallion stuff was 12-month-based for demonstrating in
17 the sim.

18 Q. Was the ground training done by an instructor or was it
19 computer-based?

20 A. The initial grounds are done by the instructors.

21 Q. And they would --

22 A. Yeah, online recurrent, the online recurrent ones are -- I'm
23 sorry -- the recurrent ones are online for the FAA-mandated stuff.

24 Q. So is the use interpretation of the TAWS system in the
25 Caravan described or discussed during CFIT training?

1 A. Not in great detail. You know, basically just instructed to
2 -- you know, do not inhibit it unless it's really, really good VFR
3 or you have some kind of database issue, whereas other times the
4 databases won't recognize the smaller airports and, as you're
5 trying to land at that smaller airport with mountains around, it
6 will give you nuisance warnings. So there wasn't a whole lot of
7 guidance on that --

8 Q. Do all the Grant 208s have the same TAWS system or there are
9 different setups in various planes?

10 A. There are different setups.

11 Q. Do you know what setup was in the accident airplane 803-
12 Tango-Hotel?

13 A. Oh, I don't know the exact names of the --

14 Q. That's okay.

15 A. -- modules of each one, but I think it was the newer style,
16 as far as the newer within our Caravan, so --

17 Q. And for your IFR single-engine training, how often did you
18 conduct that training?

19 A. IFR single-engine, we would do every 6 months.

20 Q. And were you required to conduct each item on the training
21 syllabus or were you permitted to skip items, and if so, is there
22 any guidance on what you could skip during a training flight?

23 A. Oh, everything is, you know, is supposed to be covered. You
24 don't have to necessarily do recurrent training, which could be
25 demonstrated on a recurrent check ride (indiscernible).

1 Q. Yeah. I mean, if I look at a training sheet and I see only
2 one-third of the items were covered on a single-engine training,
3 is that okay, according to Grant policies? I don't know. There
4 may be no guidance, or perhaps there is or -- that's what I'm
5 asking you, if you know.

6 A. Generally, you're supposed to cover everything. There's a
7 few things that you might be able to skip, but they're far and few
8 between, so just assume do it all.

9 Q. In general, are pilots comfortable with flying IFR in the
10 Caravan, in your experience?

11 A. Yes, in general. There's basic -- different times of year,
12 like the icing stuff, that can be worrisome for any pilot, but in
13 general, yeah, pretty comfortable. We've operated those Caravans
14 for quite some time now, got a lot of experience.

15 Q. So in what way is icing worrisome in regards to the Caravan?

16 A. Well, it doesn't have a great ability to stay in the air when
17 it has ice.

18 Q. Is it certified to fly into icing conditions?

19 A. It is, yeah.

20 Q. But you don't feel that it's actually should be flown into
21 icing conditions even though it's certified? Can you explain
22 maybe your opinion on that?

23 A. With the boot system, it's not the greatest icing airplane.
24 You know, if it ices up, it slows down very fast. So we teach the
25 guys to be super proactive and get out of it as soon as you can,

1 fly VFR if you can, do what you can to stay -- you know, change
2 altitudes, stay out of the icing. Even though it is certified to
3 be in icing, it's just not a great icing airplane.

4 Q. Are pilots proficient at flying in an IFR environment in the
5 Caravan?

6 A. For the most part, yes.

7 Q. And from what I know and what I've heard, the routes are VFR
8 routes in the Caravan. Is that true or do you have any dedicated
9 IFR routes for the Caravan flights?

10 A. I mean, yeah, there's mostly VFR, but you can -- you do have
11 the option of going IFR. We do have IFR flight plans in the
12 system between Anchorage and Kenai, which are run with the
13 Caravans. So, yeah, there are some IFR routes.

14 Q. So if the flights are primarily VFR, where would a pilot get
15 their proficiency from?

16 A. Well, they still do IFR even though there's not IFR routes.
17 You know, when the weather does go down, which it frequently does,
18 there are IFR flight plans, and activating them and flying them,
19 you know, they do it across the board, not just Anchorage and
20 Kenai. Anywhere a Caravan is based, if there's an IFR ability
21 with IFR weather, then, you know, it's still an IFR if needed.

22 Q. Do you know if the village agents are employees, the village
23 agents that you use for your dispatch processes and weather runway
24 evaluations, are they Grant employees?

25 A. Yeah, they're paid by the company.

1 Q. Do you know if they have any training on their duties?

2 A. Very minimal, if any. They're getting better, though.

3 Q. Did you have any role in the company's safety program?

4 A. Any role in the safety program?

5 Q. I mean, do you have an official position in the safety
6 program as your -- as the chief pilot listed, as -- do you attend
7 the safety meetings as the chief pilot? Are you a member of a
8 board?

9 A. Oh, basically the chief pilot is responsible for supervising,
10 you know, the activities within the operations department, so,
11 yeah, highly involved in safety.

12 Q. Yeah. Thank you. I'm sorry. I'm not being clear. There's
13 a program that has certain -- for instance, you have a safety
14 program that has monthly meetings according to your documents. So
15 I'm just curious as to whether you in your chief pilot capacity
16 ever participated in those monthly meetings?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And during those monthly meetings or any time outside of
19 that, were any safety reports provided or discussed that had to do
20 with flight safety issues?

21 A. Well, I mean, normally you got the ASAP stuff that would
22 occasionally pop up, you know, or you'd get a message on the
23 flight VPecker as to, you know, maybe an incident or whatnot. So,
24 yes, there was safety-related stuff happening. Also, you know,
25 things that we had talk about for the safety meetings, what to

1 bring up and discussed and, you know, evaluated, sure.

2 Q. What was the top safety concern for you as the chief pilot at
3 Grant?

4 A. Top safety priority for me?

5 Q. Um-hum. Yes.

6 A. My deal was to ensure adequate training was taking place, and
7 that was my -- my thing was trying to get the training program up
8 to the highest standards as I could make it.

9 MS. PRICE: All right. Those are all the questions I have.

10 Ryan?

11 Thank you.

12 BY MR. BRINKMAN:

13 Q. Yeah, hi, Mat, how's it going? This is Ryan Brinkman with
14 the FAA.

15 A. Hey, Ryan.

16 Q. Again, thanks for coming. We all do appreciate it.

17 A. You bet.

18 Q. So, yeah, I was going to basically just touch -- get a little
19 bit more clarity on a lot of the topics that have already been
20 addressed. So we were talking about dispatching aircraft. And
21 earlier it was mentioned that occasionally pilots and dispatchers
22 will disagree, and dispatch will want a pilot to go when a pilot
23 won't want to go. Does that ever happen conversely? Does that
24 ever happen where the pilot wants to go but the dispatcher
25 discontinues the flight that you know of?

1 A. Oh, I don't think that happens to often. You know, most of
2 the pilots just are bound by the weather. I think when things are
3 marginal, it's -- I don't know. I don't remember encountering a
4 scenario where the pilot would want to go and the dispatcher is
5 saying no. Maybe it's because the dispatcher would know something
6 before the pilot and then correct the pilot and say, hey, this is
7 what's going on. So that would be my answer to that.

8 Q. Oh, okay. So no specific instances, or you really can't --
9 I'm not trying to put words in your mouth.

10 A. Can't come up with anything.

11 Q. Okay. All right.

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Regarding TAWS, what is Grant's norm? I understand that
14 sometimes the software can be troublesome due to aircraft in rural
15 areas flying fairly low to begin with. What is Grant's norm, just
16 a standard pilot out there flying around for --

17 A. Right. Well, in VFR, you know, or whatever, most -- you
18 know, just -- you're not inhibiting it unless it's a nuisance, and
19 you can, you know, like I just mentioned before about the nuisance
20 alerts. But yeah, in general, do not inhibit it.

21 Q. Are you aware of people inhibiting it just to get rid of the
22 nuisance?

23 A. Say that again? I --

24 Q. Are you aware of pilots inhibiting it just to get rid of the
25 nuisance because maybe it's alarming passengers or just a nuisance

1 in general?

2 A. Well, they're, you know, they're -- I'm not sure if they're
3 going to tell me if they inhibit it or not, but that's all I can
4 do is just tell them, you know, this is what this is for, you
5 know, don't inhibit it.

6 Q. Okay. From your time, from your time --

7 A. I don't know if they have (indiscernible) --

8 Q. -- in the -- oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

9 A. No, go ahead. No, I lost you. Go ahead.

10 Q. I'm sorry I interrupted you. I guess I'm harkening a little
11 bit more back on your experience in the field because you've been
12 with Grant for some time. As a line pilot, were you aware if that
13 was a standard practice or not?

14 A. No, not standard.

15 Q. So the 208 in icing, I just wanted -- I wanted to clarify, it
16 was said that you feel the aircraft should not be certified icing?
17 I want to make sure that that is what you feel, because I didn't
18 necessarily hear that come out of your mouth.

19 A. No. I didn't say that. I just --

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. It's -- you know, it's certified, so it's capable.

22 Q. That was a simple one. I just wanted to make sure that that
23 was --

24 Flight plans. Are flight plans filed for every Grant flight?
25 And if so, by -- like, to what -- is it a company flight plan,

1 flight service, anything?

2 A. Yeah. For VFR guys, it's through the company. It's required
3 to be activated, you know, and followed through the company,
4 flight following. IFR is done both. Of course, you have to do it
5 through ATC, and then also with the company. So, yeah, it's
6 required for all flights.

7 Q. Village agents. I just want to touch on village agents a
8 little bit more. Weather that's received from them, how is that
9 weather used? Is that weather ever -- is that ever the sole
10 source of weather that that pilot may receive to make the
11 determination of whether to go or not?

12 A. You also have, you know, the area forecast, and so a lot of
13 it's placed upon the pilot himself to assess the weather as he's
14 going along. So it's not necessarily the sole source, but you
15 basically take what you can get.

16 Q. I guess are you aware of any location where that is the one
17 source of weather information that's available?

18 A. Yeah, basically, places where they don't have weather cams or
19 an ASOS, just look across the, you know, across the board and see
20 where that is. Yeah, so you -- yeah, sorry, I didn't mention that
21 we had the weather cams and whatnot, too, so --

22 Q. Sure. So would you say that's a -- what sort of a percentage
23 of the locations that you go to is the village agent the primary
24 source of weather, where there is not ASOS, weather cams, METARs,
25 any -- or various sources?

1 A. Right. I haven't been to all places and whatnot, but you
2 know, it's a very small percentage where it's exclusively the
3 village agent, you know, 10 percent or less I would say.

4 Q. Do you know or have you ever had any complaints or anything
5 from other pilots of erroneous data coming from the village
6 agents' weather reports?

7 A. Yeah, yeah. There's different scenarios, so -- they're not
8 trained observers. So --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. Medallion. I wanted to ask a little bit about Medallion and
12 what -- how the company's procedures are really utilized
13 internally between FAA and Medallion procedures? Are these viewed
14 as one set of procedures, or do you do FAA stuff and then
15 Medallion stuff? Are they --

16 A. They're --

17 Q. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

18 A. Yeah, they're separated.

19 Q. Is there some sort -- is there any effort to integrate them
20 or is this -- is it encouraged by the management to keep them
21 separated?

22 A. I really haven't touched on that very much at all. It's just
23 basically complied with.

24 Q. Do you know if you find a safety concern through Medallion,
25 is that something that you might bring up to the FAA?

1 A. I hadn't thought about that. That's a good -- would be a
2 good question. I'd have to think about that one for a while.

3 Q. During any of your safety meetings that took place through
4 Medallion, can you think of any safety concerns that you guys
5 discovered through your audits through the Medallion process? Are
6 you aware of those then going to the FAA so the FAA is aware of
7 them?

8 A. Well, sometimes you hear a bit of, you know, how the FAA
9 would get a hold of some ASAP type of reports, so -- yeah, there's
10 -- for the most part, when you're dealing with Medallion, that's
11 supposed to be outside the view of the FAA. And yeah, there are
12 suspicions that maybe there is some (indiscernible) information
13 that they shouldn't have, but I don't have any proof or anything.

14 Q. So that is, to the best of your -- I want to know just --
15 again, I don't want to put words in your mouth. To the best of
16 your knowledge, the segregation from the FAA and Medallion is
17 intentional, and that's desired? Is that --

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And just kind of a general question, if you had -- and again,
20 I know that you were 2 months on the job, so wrapping your head
21 around everything is probably the main thing you were concerned
22 with while --

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. -- maintaining all of your duties. But if you -- throughout
25 your interactions, especially as a line pilot, but also as a chief

1 pilot there the last 2 months, if you had one area of concern that
2 you thought needed the most work at the company, as a chief pilot,
3 something that you could fix, what would that area of concern have
4 been?

5 A. Communication in general just to, you know, a good base of
6 disseminating and transferring back -- information back and forth
7 would be a cool thing to have.

8 Q. From management or through all lines of the company?

9 A. Fluidity throughout, yeah.

10 Q. Through all lines of the company?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. So does the communication, does that ever -- if it's kind of
13 an issue, does that ever result in one station doing stuff
14 slightly different than another?

15 A. I can't -- I'd have to think about that one for a second
16 there. You know, I mean, there's some -- there's variances across
17 the base because they're doing different things. That was the
18 whole thing, is you have multiple bases trying to operate
19 themselves -- you know, trying to run their base, and the
20 communication between each for resources was sometimes -- it made
21 it harder, and stuff.

22 Q. Were you aware of any issues with the company? Did there
23 seem to be any financial stress or did it appear as though there
24 was any disturbance with the company?

25 A. No. I thought we were okay financially. It was the first

1 year this last December that we got a bonus, so that was a good
2 sign. For me, most of it was just the pilot retention factor,
3 because it was just part of the way the industry is going, people
4 moving on and constantly in a state of training. It's just
5 normal.

6 Q. Sorry. Did you know of any personnel issues with potential
7 drinking or substance use in any of the remote locations, or
8 really throughout the system?

9 A. No substance abuse issues that I can, you know, think of.

10 Q. No reports of or rumblings throughout the company of that
11 sort of --

12 A. No. I mean, occasionally, you'd have a couple, you know,
13 things happen here and there, you know, pilot houses and rampers,
14 and mechanics and people living in the same quarters, and whatnot,
15 so --

16 Q. Did that ever happen while you were on duty as the chief
17 pilot?

18 A. Did I ever get the reports of any rumblings? Is that what
19 you're asking?

20 Q. Did you ever hear any -- you said occasionally you'll hear
21 stuff, a pilot -- stuff happening in pilot houses and stuff like
22 that. Did you ever hear of that stuff while you were the chief
23 pilot there?

24 A. Yeah. It was just mostly people getting interrupted, you
25 know, the different sleep schedules or whatnot, so nothing that

1 was highly concerning. It was just normal -- people on different
2 schedules and stuff.

3 MR. BRINKMAN: Yeah, that's all I've got. Thanks again. I
4 appreciate it.

5 MR. BAUMGARTNER: Thank you.

6 BY MR. ENGBRETSON:

7 Q. Hey, Mat, it's Austin. I just got a couple questions for you
8 just to follow-up on some of the stuff you already talked about.

9 A. Okay.

10 Q. When a dispatcher proposed a flight and a pilot turned it
11 down for whatever, you know, based on the risk assessment or some
12 other factor that they felt uncomfortable with that maybe wasn't
13 on the risk assessment, would you describe that as an adversarial
14 interaction or just part of the process?

15 A. Not adversarial, just more or less part of the process. It
16 is what it is, and it's what we're faced with.

17 Q. I want to talk about the 208 and the icing a little bit.
18 Does the 208 have additional training requirements regarding
19 flight and icing?

20 A. Yes, a yearly Caravan ice/cold weather course.

21 Q. Do you know if it's always had that training requirement or
22 does that come up at some point in the past?

23 A. I'm pretty sure it was -- it came up sometime after the
24 certification of the 208, yeah.

25 Q. Do you fly or have you flown any other aircraft that are

1 certified for known icing?

2 A. Yes, quite a few different ones.

3 Q. Do any of those aircraft require icing-specific training on
4 an annual basis, similar to what the Caravan requires?

5 A. Not that I'm aware of.

6 Q. Just a quick scenario question, real easy. So if you're
7 going to fly a 208 from Hooper to Bethel and you have the option
8 of going IFR or VFR -- we'll say the weather is 2,000 and 10 miles
9 all the way from Hooper to Bethel, and to fly IFR, you got to fly
10 at 4,000 feet in ice. Would you rather fly IFR at 4,000 feet or
11 VFR at 1500 feet?

12 A. VFR at 1500 feet.

13 Q. And why is that?

14 A. Stay out of the ice.

15 Q. All right. Thank you.

16 A. Yeah.

17 MR. ENGBRETSON: No more questions for me. Thanks.

18 BY MR. BANNING:

19 Q. Hey, Mat, it's Brice again. And what I'd like to do now is
20 ask a few specific questions about the accident. And first off,
21 let me say that -- offer our condolences on the loss of Gabriele.
22 And this interview is getting a little long. If you need a break,
23 just let us know. But we, once again, most certainly appreciate
24 you visiting with (indiscernible) --

25 A. No problem.

1 Q. So are you all right to continue for a little bit longer,
2 then?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. And I actually wanted to follow up with one question
5 that's a little bit general before I get into the accident-
6 specific questions. You stated that you were part of/actively
7 involved in the CFIT program. If a pilot encountered inadvertent
8 IMC in the Caravan, what was the procedure?

9 A. Oh, excuse me. Inadvertent IMC in a Caravan, that would be
10 to basically turn around and get out, you know, execute a level
11 180-degree turns, turning away from the terrain, reestablish VMC,
12 and as an emergency maneuver, you can, you know, climb out or, you
13 know, do whatever is necessary. This is in an emergency situation
14 now and you're basically trying to pick up an IFR clearance at
15 that point.

16 Q. Thank you. Can you describe for me what a -- or is there
17 such a thing as a typical duty day for pilots in the King Salmon
18 base?

19 A. Typical would be to show up at 8 and, yeah, fly until the
20 evening schedules. I don't know when exactly they normally come
21 in, but, you know, sometime in the evening, 5 or 6 or something,
22 would be typical, if anything.

23 Q. And were you familiar -- did you know Gabriele?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. And what was your general -- what was Gabriele's disposition

1 like? What was his -- likeable fellow, it sounds like?

2 A. Yes, very happy, smiley person who liked other people, you
3 know. Really a good work ethic. He was always, he was always
4 willing and able to work extra if you asked him. Was a smiley
5 guy, you know, good person.

6 Q. Did you ever in your duties as a supervisor at the company
7 have a case where there was any discipline -- you needed to
8 provide any disciplinary action against Gabriele?

9 A. No.

10 Q. And were you aware of any health issues Gabriele may have
11 had?

12 A. No.

13 Q. And did you have the opportunity to fly with him?

14 A. Yes, on several occasions. I had been his check airman on
15 the 207 when he initially came to Grant, so I did his 207 check
16 ride and IOE. And then I had also visited him, I don't know how
17 many times in the past after he had done his 208 training. I had
18 done a check ride or two, I'm thinking. I know I've done at least
19 one Caravan check ride for him, too. So, yes, I've flown with
20 him.

21 Q. And what was your general impression of his flying skills?

22 A. They were satisfactory.

23 Q. And how about his instrument skills? Was he a proficient
24 instrument pilot to your --

25 A. He was proficient, yes.

1 Q. And it doesn't sound like he ever gave you any concern for
2 his abilities whatsoever?

3 A. No.

4 Q. We heard from some of the other pilots that the route down
5 through the Chigs or flying to the Chigs was not very popular
6 among the pilot group. Do you -- are you aware of or were you
7 made aware of that feeling among the pilot group?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And can you share with us why, what their concerns were?

10 A. Yeah. Basically, you're taking a single-engine airplane
11 across the Aleutian range twice in unforgiving terrain with vast-
12 changing weather, very limited weather reporting, IFR structure
13 without weather on the other side. So it's very difficult, a
14 difficult run, yeah.

15 Q. And what do you think happened in this accident, Mat?

16 A. You know, that's more speculation. I don't know exactly.
17 Wish I had the answer for you. But from what my understanding
18 was, was he was trying to get out and he was turning around,
19 coming back towards where he was departing from. So, yeah, some,
20 some scenario he was faced with that made him decide to turn
21 around. Yeah, that's about what I got.

22 Q. Yeah, no problem. And were there any changes to company
23 procedures, processes, or anything of that nature after the
24 accident that you're aware of?

25 A. Yeah, yeah. We evaluated each and every run and then raised

1 the minimum dispatch required for each run or different grouping
2 of runs. So, yeah, we raised the minimums for dispatching it.

3 Q. And when you say raise minimums, are you talking about
4 raising weather minimums for particular routes?

5 A. Yes, ceiling and visibility in particular.

6 Q. And is there anyone that you think that we should talk to
7 that we may have missed that might have enlightenment about the
8 accident, anyone in particular?

9 A. I can't think of anybody, no.

10 MR. BANNING: Well, that is really all of my questions, Mat,
11 specific to the accident. So, once again, I'm going to hand it
12 off to Noreen and see if she has any accident-specific questions.
13 Thank you.

14 MR. BAUMGARTNER: You're welcome.

15 BY MS. PRICE:

16 Q. Hi, Mat.

17 A. Hello.

18 Q. I don't have many -- many more questions. But back to the
19 route of the accident flight from Port Heiden to Perryville, do
20 you know if the company had provided any route or altitude
21 selection guidance to pilots in King Salmon for flying that
22 particular route?

23 A. Not that I was aware of.

24 Q. Do you recall what the dispatch minimums were changed to for
25 that particular route after the accident?

1 A. Oh, the exact particular ones, no. I know it was raised up
2 quite a bit. I can't remember off the top of my head. I don't
3 have it in front of me either, but it was raised quite a bit,
4 yeah.

5 Q. Okay. Thank you. I have two questions that are not
6 necessarily specific to the accident, but a little broader. The
7 previous chief pilot to you, do you know how long they served as
8 the chief pilot for?

9 A. It was in two separate time frames, but it was a couple years
10 prior to me, and then also, you know, quite a bit earlier, mid-
11 2000s was also another -- about a similar time frame of being the
12 chief pilot. So it was a couple different, yeah, a couple
13 different times being the chief pilot, 2 to 3 years each.

14 Q. Do you know why the chief pilot position seemed to turn over
15 pretty regularly?

16 A. Not exactly. I can only guess that, you know, it's a pretty
17 high workload, high-stress environment, as I had seen myself.

18 Q. Yes, we can appreciate that.

19 And then what's your opinion of the safety culture at Grant
20 Aviation?

21 A. The safety culture is pretty good, and it's been continually
22 getting better, a lot more conservatism in general across the
23 board is the direction it's, you know, going towards.

24 MS. PRICE: Great. Thank you. Thanks, again, for answering
25 our questions. I'm done. I'm going to pass it to Ryan.

1 MR. BAUMGARTNER: Okay.

2 MR. BRINKMAN: I have no further questions.

3 BY MR. ENGBRETSON:

4 Q. Hey, Mat, it's Austin. Just one additional question. On one
5 of the more recent check rides you did with Gabe, I think you
6 noted additional training required for the VR approach. Do you
7 remember what specifically was the deficiency there?

8 A. Yeah. He had the GPS nav switch in the wrong position after
9 doing a GPS approach. He had commenced doing a VOR approach
10 without switching the nav source back to the nav that's in GPS, so
11 -- he realized it, and then by the time he caught it, it was too
12 late, so we had to redo that.

13 MR. ENGBRETSON: Okay. Thanks. Nothing else for me.

14 MS. PRICE: Brice, do you have anything else?

15 MR. BANNING: Well, Mat, this -- I don't. Mat, I just once
16 again want to say thank you for taking the time to visit with us,
17 and I'll hand it over to Noreen to close the interview out. Thank
18 you.

19 MR. BAUMGARTNER: Thank you.

20 MS. PRICE: All right, Mat. Again, I know it seemed like a
21 whole lot of questions, but your insights into the Grant Aviation
22 operation certainly will help us in this investigation. Again,
23 our condolences. We understand how difficult it is to lose
24 somebody in an airplane in your company, particularly when you
25 have a management position. And we're very sorry we had to talk

1 about these details today. But we desire to determine probable
2 cause and make recommendations so that these things don't happen
3 again.

4 Is there anything else you'd like to share with us today?

5 MR. BAUMGARTNER: No, that's basically it. I just want to
6 thank you guys for doing what you do, and hopefully, something
7 good will come out of this as far as preventing future accidents,
8 so -- thanks for offering the condolences.

9 MS. PRICE: Okay. Great. Well, good luck with your further
10 career, and this concludes our interview today.

11 Thank you, everybody.

12 MR. BAUMGARTNER: Thank you.

13 MR. BANNING: Thank you.

14 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: GRANT AVIATION FLIGHT 341 ACCIDENT
 NEAR CHIGNIK LAKE, ALASKA
 MAY 1, 2017
 Interview of Mathew Baumgartner

ACCIDENT NO.: ANC17FA021

PLACE: Via Telephone

DATE: June 16, 2017

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Danielle VanRiper
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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GRANT AVIATION FLIGHT 341 ACCIDENT *

NEAR CHIGNIK LAKE, ALASKA *

Accident No.: ANC17FA021

MAY 1, 2017 *

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Interview of: SHARA ANDERSON

Monday,
June 5, 2017

APPEARANCES:

NOREEN PRICE, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

BRICE BANNING, Senior Aviation Accident Investigator
Chairman, Operations Group
National Transportation Safety Board

BRIAN BRINKMAN, Safety Inspector/Investigator in Charge
Federal Aviation Administration

AUSTIN ENGBRETSON, Vice President of Flight Operations
Grant Aviation, Inc.

CORY CLARK, Vice President Station Operations
Grant Aviation, Inc.
(On behalf of Ms. Anderson)

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I N T E R V I E W

(3:30 p.m.)

MR. PRICE: Okay. Today is June 5th, 1530. I'm Noreen Price, NTSB investigator in charge of accident ANC17FA021.

The NTSB is an independent federal agency charged with determining the probable cause of transportation accidents and promoting transportation safety. The NTSB is not part of DOT or FAA, has no regulatory or enforcement powers.

I'd like to introduce the group members here one at a time starting with Brice Banning. And please say your position. Go ahead.

MR. BANNING: Brice Banning, senior aviation accident investigator.

MR. BRINKMAN: Ryan Brinkman, FAA safety inspector and FAA IIC.

MR. ENGBRETSON: And Austin Engbretson, Grant Aviation vice president of flight operations.

MR. CLARK: Cory Clark, vice president station operations.

MS. ANDERSON: Shara Anderson, King Salmon base manager.

MS. PRICE: Thank you. Today we'll be using the services of a recording device. We'll be recording all questions and answers. That recording will be sent out and transcribed by a professional agency, and that transcription will be put in the public docket once the investigation is over.

The purpose of the investigation is safety, to determine

1 probable cause and prevent recurrence. Our role is not to assign
2 fault, blame or liability. This interview is part of the fact-
3 finding phase of this investigation. We are here to ask questions
4 about your role in the company, company policies and procedures,
5 and familiarity with the pilots. We cannot, however, offer any
6 guarantee of confidentiality or immunity.

7 Each of the group members will have a chance to ask
8 questions. We will ask questions one at a time, and everyone has
9 been instructed to not interrupt the person who is asking
10 questions at that time. There will be an opportunity for each
11 group member to ask follow-up questions after each person has had
12 a turn.

13 Please answer all questions to the best of your recollection.
14 If you do not understand a question, ask to have it repeated or
15 explained. If you realize you misstated or need to modify a
16 previous answer, please do so. Also try to avoid answering
17 questions with uh-huh or a nod or a gesture so that it can be
18 clearly transcribed.

19 You're entitled to have one representative of your choosing.
20 Is there somebody you would like to have as your representative?

21 That's, this is for you, Shara. Who's going to be your
22 representative again?

23 MS. ANDERSON: I don't have anyone today with me, but I asked
24 Cory to join the phone call.

25 MS. PRICE: Okay. And can you give me Cory's full name,

1 please?

2 MS. ANDERSON: Cory Clark.

3 MS. PRICE: Okay.

4 And, Cory, you cannot answer any questions for Shara.

5 Shara, if you feel like you need to talk to somebody about
6 answering a question, you'll have to take a timeout and then talk
7 to Cory on the side in regard to the issue that you may be having.

8 But if any time there's a question you don't understand, by
9 all means, we'll stop, take our time and talk about it. And if
10 you don't know an answer, by all means, say "I don't know" or "I
11 know where that information is, I just don't have it right now."

12 MS. ANDERSON: Okay.

13 MS. PRICE: Do you have any questions before we get started?

14 MS. ANDERSON: Not at this time, no.

15 MS. PRICE: Okay. So for the record, could you state your
16 full name and spell it, please?

17 MS. ANDERSON: Shara, S-h-a-r-a, Anderson, A-n-d-e-r-s-o-n.

18 MS. PRICE: Okay. Thank you very much.

19 Now we will move on with some of the questions. And, Shara,
20 if you need a break at any time, just say, "Hey, I need a break,"
21 and we'll take a 5- to 10-minute break, and you can come on back.
22 Okay?

23 MS. ANDERSON: Okay. Thank you.

24 INTERVIEW OF SHARA ANDERSON

25 BY MS. PRICE:

1 Q. Okay, so, Shara, what is your title with Grant?

2 A. I am one of the managers out here in King Salmon.

3 Q. So it your title manager, or what's the specific title?

4 A. The specific title is the manager, yes.

5 Q. Okay, the manager. And how many managers are there there?

6 A. There are two of us. We alternate 2 weeks on/2 weeks off.

7 Q. Okay. And how long have you been in this position?

8 A. I have been in the manager position since May of last year.

9 Q. Do you live in King Salmon?

10 A. I technically live in Naknek, which is 15 miles down the
11 road.

12 Q. Okay. Do you hold any other positions at Grant Aviation or
13 is the station manager your only position?

14 A. I also do dispatching.

15 Q. So, Shara, can you give me a general background of where you
16 were before Grant Aviation, what other types of jobs you've had,
17 and where you've gotten your aviation experience?

18 A. I actually was a flight attendant for PenAir when I was about
19 -- let's see, what year was that? It was about 11 years ago now.
20 And then I have also worked as a ticket agent, and I believe that
21 was in '08 or '09. And then in 2014 I worked for a flight school
22 out of Anchorage called Take Flight Alaska.

23 Q. And what did you do at Take Flight?

24 A. I was the HR/Coordination. I took payments for people who
25 were going on -- going to the school. I would coordinate their

1 flights and enter log pages and organize all the, you know,
2 dispatching paperwork and everything for them.

3 Q. Do you have any piloting experience?

4 A. No, I do not.

5 Q. Okay. Can you describe your duties as the King Salmon
6 station manager?

7 A. Yes. So I help supervise everyone here. We have a ticket
8 agent in the ramp. I get everyone's duties organized. I help
9 with the accounting, do deposits, manage all the reports, take
10 care of the discrepancies on the paperwork. And if there's any
11 issues on the ramp or in the office, I help out and direct those
12 where they need to go. Along with, you know, keeping in contact
13 with maintenance, keeping in contact with all the supervisors, the
14 managers out in Anchorage, kind of keeping everyone, you know, in
15 the loop of what's going on.

16 Q. So do you supervise anybody?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Okay. So who --

19 A. I supervise our cargo agent, our ticket agent, and our
20 rampers that we have.

21 Q. So how many people would that be total that you generally
22 supervise?

23 A. Let's see. Six.

24 Q. How many airplanes are at the King Salmon station?

25 A. We have two planes based out of King Salmon right now.

1 Q. And what types are they?

2 A. I have one 208 Caravan and one 207.

3 Q. Okay. Can you describe your duties as a dispatch agent?

4 A. At the dispatch agent, I collect weather, do weight and
5 balance of the airplane, and direct the flights of where they need
6 to go.

7 Q. Okay. Do you -- is there any maintenance performed at the
8 base there?

9 A. I'm sorry, what was that?

10 Q. Is there any aircraft maintenance performed at the King
11 Salmon base?

12 A. Yes, there is. We do have a maintenance here.

13 Q. So do you assign pilots to the route?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Can I -- if there's only -- is there only one pilot per
16 aircraft for that 2 weeks?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. So you have two pilots on duty at all time and two aircraft?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay. And how do you know that an aircraft is airworthy and
21 ready for dispatch? What's the process there for releasing an
22 aircraft for the day?

23 A. So I get the weight and balance ready and I give it to the
24 ramp. The ramp then gets the load ready, the passenger baggage,
25 mail and freight. They load the airplane. They let me know what

1 made it and if we had to bump anything. And once that aircraft is
2 ready -- all loaded and ready to go, I then let the pilot know
3 that he is ready, and then he's allowed to take off.

4 Q. So we'll follow up with some more questions about the weight
5 and balance and the loading of the aircraft. Right now we're
6 sticking -- we're going to try and stick with the general
7 questions on your duties, which you're doing a great job on.

8 So who has responsibility for operational control at the
9 station?

10 A. That would be me, the dispatcher.

11 Q. And in your own words, how would you describe operational
12 control? What does it mean to you?

13 A. It means to do the weight and balance, make sure everything
14 -- the pilot's comfortable with his load and he's comfortable with
15 his route.

16 Q. Have you had any training on your duties as station manager
17 or dispatch agent?

18 A. Yes, I have.

19 Q. Okay. Can you tell me how -- what type of training you've
20 had to be station manager?

21 A. For station manager, at the time when I took over I was
22 supervised under Drew Garland out of Dillingham. And she came
23 over a few times, walked me through some things, got me
24 comfortable with how things operated and how she did things. And
25 if I had any questions I would call her or Cory and they would

1 walk me through it.

2 Q. Okay. So would I be correct to say that was OJT training
3 you've had, not sit-down classroom training but on-the-job
4 training?

5 A. Not as the manager, no.

6 Q. Right. Okay.

7 A. It was the on-the-job training. Yes.

8 Q. Okay. And tell me about your dispatch agent duties. Have
9 you had any training for -- you said you did have training for
10 that, and if you could tell me about how many hours and what type
11 of training you had for your dispatch agent duties?

12 A. I started with Grant in 2016, and I believe I started
13 dispatching in May of that year. I did on-the-job training and
14 classroom training, as well. I did one training with Chris; it
15 was a PowerPoint going over how things work, and I also did some
16 (indiscernible) with Charlie Michaels in Anchorage. And I cannot
17 remember the date on that.

18 Q. That's okay. We can look up -- do you think it's documented?
19 Is that something we can find somewhere?

20 A. I believe it is, in Anchorage.

21 Q. Okay. Do you feel like you had sufficient training for your
22 dispatch agent duties?

23 A. Yes, I do.

24 Q. Do you remember the last time that you had any formalized
25 training for dispatch agent duties?

1 A. The last time was just recently. I don't remember the date.

2 Q. Was it within the last year?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Did your training include operational control?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. How about risk assessment? Did it include how to do your
7 risk assessments?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. How about -- how are you supervised? Meaning does a
10 supervisor visit the base or -- if you could give me an idea of
11 how you know that somebody's supervising you?

12 A. I keep in contact with Cory. Usually if I have an issue
13 going on or if he has something that he needs to go with me, I
14 talk to him, I don't know, probably -- I don't want to say on a
15 daily basis, but we keep in contact through emails; especially
16 with the summertime being busy, we talk almost all the time.

17 Q. Does he ever --

18 A. Through phone.

19 Q. Do you get any feedback? Is there an evaluation system that
20 you get any type of feedback for?

21 A. Not to my knowledge.

22 Q. Okay. Is there any audit process that occurs at the base
23 there? Shara are you with us?

24 A. Yeah. What kind of audit?

25 Q. Specifically we're interested in operational issues, so is

1 anybody -- does anyone from the company come and oversee your
2 processes and paperwork to see if they're in line with what your
3 GOM says?

4 A. Everything that we do from the flight, our assessment, our
5 daily reports, they all -- we have a company dropbox, and I
6 forward -- I scan everything into the dropbox at night so
7 everybody in Anchorage can see that.

8 Q. Okay. How about safety audits? Are there any safety audits
9 at the base there regarding hazards?

10 A. Charlie Michaels is our safety officer in Anchorage, and if
11 there's any issues or any updates, he is good about emailing or
12 calling us about those.

13 Q. Okay. So weather. Describe to me, when you are getting
14 ready to release a flight, what -- where do you get your weather
15 from?

16 A. We get our weather from the FAA website. I don't have that
17 written down right now. I can go get it off the computer if you'd
18 like me to. But I get the -- whatever aviation cameras are up
19 from that, and I also call the village agents that we have.

20 Q. And how often do you update the weather?

21 A. I, me personally, I update the weather about every hour. I
22 check it first thing in the morning, and I go throughout the day,
23 and every time it updates, I do it about every hour. Sometimes a
24 little bit longer, but it's usually every hour.

25 Q. Okay. So prior to a flight, do you discuss the weather with

1 the pilot?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And what if the weather is marginal VFR or something along
4 those lines, do you -- does a pilot talk to you about it; you talk
5 to him? Do you have a discussion? How does that discussion look
6 on the days when the weather is not clear and blue?

7 A. We -- the pilot and I both talk about it, and he decides if
8 he's comfortable with it or not and lets me know. And then we
9 either put it on our weather hold or we cancel it.

10 Q. Okay. That leads me to your risk assessment process. Can
11 you walk us through your risk assessment process, how it works?

12 A. Yes. Can you give me one minute please?

13 Q. Yeah, sure.

14 A. All right. Sorry about that.

15 Q. That's okay. Okay. So we were talking about risk assessment
16 process. If you could walk us through your risk assessment
17 process for dispatching a flight?

18 A. Okay. So to do the flight risk assessment, it depends on if
19 it has restrictions. We -- that's the first thing we look at, the
20 landing, the wind, the crosswind, ceiling and visibility. So if
21 there's any of those issues, then we go through that before every
22 flight.

23 Q. Okay. So you look at all those things, and then what? How
24 do you document that you've looked at them, evaluated them, given
25 them some kind of a grade and made a decision? So bring me

1 through the rest of the risk assessment process.

2 A. Every day each pilot has a flight -- a risk assessment log
3 for each of their flights. And so we number the flight, and each
4 flight we go through each landing, the pilot's physical and
5 emotional state, the restrictions, the wind velocity, and we just
6 mark them as we go. We have green, yellow and red.

7 Q. Okay. So if something came up yellow, what does that mean to
8 you?

9 A. One yellow it -- we have, we could have three yellows, and if
10 it's more than that, then he can't go.

11 Q. Okay. What if it's -- you have one red?

12 A. We don't go.

13 Q. And where do you look to for guidance on whether you can or
14 can't go? What is it that tells you that one red means you can't
15 go, three yellows means you can?

16 A. I don't understand.

17 Q. I mean, pretend I'm a new person, I'm a new dispatch agent
18 and you're teaching me how do a risk assessment, and I need to
19 know how many yellows I'm allowed on my risk assessment to release
20 a flight. Where would I go for that guidance if you weren't
21 standing there telling me? Is there -- do you have an SOP? Is it
22 in the GOM? Do you have -- is it just something you learn word of
23 mouth or -- do you have anything written?

24 A. Oh, yes. We have a Grant Aviation landing area analysis
25 checklist.

1 Q. Okay. And does that checklist say if you have so many you
2 can and so many you can't, in regards to the colors, the yellow
3 and red? Or does --

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Okay. So you have clear guidance. And what do you call that
6 guidance again?

7 A. We call it the Grant Aviation Flight Risk and Landing
8 Analysis Assessment Checklist.

9 Q. Okay. Great. Thank you. So who decides to go or not? Is
10 it you or is it the pilot?

11 A. It's actually both of us initially. The pilot has the final
12 say if he would like to go or not.

13 Q. Okay. So after a flight departs, and you check the weather
14 every hour, what do you do if the weather turns bad after
15 departure? If it --

16 A. I try to get ahold of the pilot on the radio. If I can't get
17 ahold of him on the radio, I find out about where he should be and
18 I call one of the village agents to see if they can get him on the
19 radio. And then if I still can get ahold of him that way, the
20 next village that he's supposed to be landing in, I call that
21 village agent, and if he lands, they let him know to turn around.

22 Q. Okay. Do the pilots carry -- do you contact them on their
23 cell phones? You have company cell phones, correct?

24 A. Some of us do. And, yes, I do try to text them occasionally.
25 I don't do it all the time.

1 Q. So how is the radio communications in that area, you know,
2 south of King Salmon? Do you have -- are you able to reach the
3 aircraft or -- explain that to me.

4 A. I can usually reach the aircraft, I think it's about 30
5 minutes out usually. And then all the village agents, most --
6 they all have radios, so the communication's really good.

7 Q. Okay. So who does the pilot file a company flight plan with?
8 Or do you file? Is it the pilot or is it dispatch agent? Explain
9 to me how the company flight plan gets activated.

10 A. The pilot does that.

11 Q. Okay. And do you know, do they file it with a flight service
12 or do they file it with you, or -- do you get a copy of it?

13 A. I do not get a copy of it, and they file it with the flight
14 service.

15 Q. Okay. So do you perform flight following duties, as well?
16 Perhaps --

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. -- flight locating is better? And how do you go about doing
19 that?

20 A. We have -- on our Google documents there's a sheet that we
21 use.

22 Q. Shara, it sounds like you're cutting out a little bit. Can
23 you hear me?

24 A. Yes, I could hear you.

25 Q. Okay, you're back. Thank you. So you said you have a -- you

1 have Google documents and then what?

2 A. There's a flight following sheet on there that we use. It
3 shows what the flight number is, who the pilot is, what aircraft
4 it is, his risk and landing assessment colors, and his route, the
5 time he taxies out, departs, and his ETA for each village, and how
6 many passengers he has on board, how much fuel he has on board,
7 and how many minutes he has left remaining to fly.

8 Q. Okay. And how do you know that a flight has reached its
9 destination on time?

10 A. All of our village agents usually call us.

11 Q. Okay. So you expect a phone call from every airplane when
12 they -- from a village agent. Is there a village agent at all
13 your airports that you fly into?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. How long as 803-Tango-Hotel been working at the King Salmon
16 base?

17 A. I don't know. I don't remember when it got here.

18 Q. That's okay. Were there any maintenance issues that you know
19 of, you may have heard pilots talking about regarding that
20 particular airplane?

21 A. No.

22 Q. Okay. Can you describe again how you manage freight and
23 passengers, weights and manifesting for your flights?

24 A. So each aircraft has a max weight that we could use, and then
25 I ask the pilot what weight he's comfortable with. He gives me

1 the weight that he would like to take. I then do a -- get all the
2 weights of the passenger bags and the passengers, total that up,
3 and then I take whatever I have left over -- and I usually do mail
4 first and then freight; so I fill it out with mail, and if we have
5 any weight left over I do send freight.

6 Q. And you have scales there?

7 A. Yes, we do.

8 Q. And for passengers' weights, what do you use for passengers'
9 weights?

10 A. We have them jump on the scale.

11 Q. Okay. Is your scale calibrated, do you know?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Do you know who the FAA POI is for Grant?

14 A. No, I do not.

15 Q. Do you ever have FAA folks visit the base there?

16 A. Yes, we do.

17 Q. When was the last time you had an FAA person there?

18 A. Yesterday.

19 Q. And what were they doing?

20 A. They wanted to look at our aircraft that we had on the
21 ground.

22 MS. PRICE: Okay, Shara. Thank you. Those are all the
23 general questions from me. I'm going to pass it to Brice Banning
24 with the NTSB next.

25 MS. ANDERSON: Okay. Thank you, Noreen.

1 BY MR. BANNING:

2 Q. Hi, Shara. This is Brice. Can you hear me okay?

3 A. Yes, I can hear you, Brice.

4 Q. Thank you for visiting with us today. We really appreciate
5 it. I just had two or three follow-up questions.

6 When you talked about your dispatch training, it sounded like
7 there was some initial training. Do you have recurrent training
8 regularly also, for the dispatch work that you do?

9 A. Yes, we do. Every year.

10 Q. Okay. And then when it comes to your risk assessment, have
11 you ever had a need or is there a process if your risk assessment
12 reaches a certain degree of risk that you get your management,
13 senior management involved in the decision-making process?

14 A. Not normally. If I have the three yellows and the pilot
15 doesn't go, I -- we just cancel the flight.

16 Q. Okay. So the flight is just cancelled at three yellows?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Or one red; is that correct?

19 A. Well, they're on a form, but I just don't have them
20 memorized.

21 Q. Yeah, that's all right. Okay. Yeah. No problem. But if it
22 reaches a certain level, whatever that level is, the flight is
23 cancelled at that point?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Okay. And have you ever cancelled a flight when the pilot

1 wanted to go?

2 A. Yes, I have. I was trying to remember if I have or not, and
3 I -- it's been a while, but yes.

4 Q. Okay. And was that decision made through the risk
5 assessment, Shara?

6 A. Yes, it was -- well, it was -- yes, it was. It was due to
7 the weather.

8 Q. Okay. Do you mind sharing that with us just real briefly
9 what happened in that particular instance?

10 A. Well, it was a few months ago. The weather was, it was just
11 really -- it was kind of funny; it was like it would be nice and
12 then it would go down, and then it was nice and then it would go
13 down. So there was like -- there was no consistent with the good
14 weather.

15 Q. Okay. And so you chose to cancel the flight?

16 A. Yes.

17 MR. BANNING: All right. And I think that's all the follow-
18 up questions I had, Noreen.

19 Thank you, Shara.

20 MS. ANDERSON: All right. Thank you, Brice.

21 MS. PRICE: All right. Next is Ryan. Do you have any
22 follow-up questions for Shara?

23 MR. BRINKMAN: I do.

24 BY MR. BRINKMAN:

25 Q. Shara, again, thanks for taking time. I know it's not a

1 pleasant experience, so -- we do appreciate your time.

2 A. Oh, yeah. No problem.

3 Q. Yeah. I did have a couple little follow-up questions and
4 also a little bit on -- we've got, I've got a copy of a flight
5 risk assessment. And it goes through landing area analysis,
6 pilot's physical and emotional state, pilot restrictions, wind
7 velocity, crosswind.

8 MR. BRINKMAN: Am I speaking too loud?

9 MS. PRICE: No. Not loud enough.

10 MR. BRINKMAN: Oh, I'm sorry.

11 BY MR. BRINKMAN:

12 Q. Can you hear me, Shara?

13 MS. PRICE: You're good.

14 MR. BRINKMAN: Okay.

15 BY MR. BRINKMAN:

16 Q. So I was looking and it says -- there's a spot on the very
17 bottom, it looks like for each flight, where the pilot initials
18 and then the dispatch agent initials. Is that -- so for each of
19 these flights, does the pilot have to initial the dispatch agent
20 have to initial for that flight to be initiated?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Okay. So in an event where you didn't agree with the flight,
23 you would -- I'm just trying to understand the form -- you would
24 not, you would just not sign it? Is that how that would work?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. All right. Okay. Let me see. For the dispatch
2 agent, I know Brice had covered the annual training. That was
3 good. Do they ever test you or give you any sort of a quiz during
4 the training?

5 A. Yes. We have a quiz after we go through the PowerPoint and
6 all the questions, yes.

7 Q. Okay. What sort of questions and about how long are those
8 tests? Question -- numerically, how many questions are involved
9 in that test?

10 A. I don't recall at this time.

11 Q. Okay. Do you know the general topics that are covered in the
12 test? Shara, did we lose you?

13 A. I'm sorry. I cut out there for a minute. Can you hear me?

14 Q. Yeah, we can hear you. There you go.

15 Did you hear my -- the last question that I had asked was
16 regarding the test. Can you recall the general topics that are on
17 that test?

18 A. Operational control, weather.

19 Q. Okay. So it's those two topics, then?

20 MS. PRICE: Are you there, Shara? Shara, can you hear us?
21 Because we can't hear you. So you may have to dial back in, if
22 you've fallen off.

23 Okay. Sounds like she may have lost us. So we'll just wait
24 patiently.

25 MS. ANDERSON: Are you --

1 MS. PRICE: Yep. There you are.

2 MS. ANDERSON: Sorry. I'm -- my service is cutting in and
3 out a little bit.

4 MS. PRICE: Yeah, that's okay. We understand. We'll do the
5 best we can. Thank you.

6 BY MR. BRINKMAN:

7 Q. Again, we appreciate your patience.

8 A. So there's operational control, weather, and there's others,
9 as well, I can't recall at this time.

10 Q. Okay. Okay. And is there --

11 MR. BRINKMAN: No, I think I'm -- more questions involved
12 with that later.

13 BY MR. BRINKMAN:

14 Q. Okay. So do you -- when you're giving weather to them, is
15 this -- the pilots that is, when you're giving weather to them, is
16 this the source that they generally use? They're taking weather
17 from you and this is the information that they're using to
18 determine weather for that particular flight? Or do you know if
19 they generally look at the FAA's website themselves?

20 A. Yes, they do look at the website themselves. They also use
21 another one called Windyty. All of our pilots are really good
22 about double-checking the weather on the FAA website. And then
23 the ones that don't have the readings on them, they ask me what
24 the village agents say and I write it down on our weatherboard.

25 Q. Okay. So is it -- when you're collecting the weather, is

1 that primarily for -- in order to fill out the risk assessment?

2 A. It's for safety.

3 Q. Sure. Sure. I'm just, I'm asking if this is the weather
4 report that the pilots are primarily dependent upon. But it
5 sounds like from your last comment that the pilots will also
6 generally go check the weather themselves?

7 A. Yes, they always -- all the pilots that we have check the
8 weather themselves as well.

9 Q. Okay. So when the pilots are, you said, about 30 out from
10 King Salmon, if you happen to notice -- this is a little bit of a
11 scenario, but if you happen to notice weather going down, you had
12 said previously that you just try and relay to the village --
13 well, you'll try and get ahold of the pilot, but then it's the
14 village agents that you'll then defer to. Is that correct? Or --

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Okay. I know that communication can be an issue in a lot of
17 the rural areas, so --

18 What time was the last time that you had collected weather,
19 do you recall, for Perryville and Port Heiden?

20 MS. PRICE: Can I take a -- we're going to go in the specific
21 of the actual flight --

22 MR. BRINKMAN: Okay.

23 MS. PRICE: -- in one minute.

24 MR. BRINKMAN: Perfect.

25 MS. PRICE: And everybody will get a round at asking specific

1 questions pertinent to the day of the accident in a moment. So
2 you can roundabout with that in a minute.

3 MR. BRINKMAN: Okay.

4 MS. PRICE: Do you have any more general questions?

5 MR. BRINKMAN: No, I think that's it, actually, for general.

6 MS. PRICE: Okay. Good. Thank you.

7 Austin, do you have any questions for Shara?

8 MR. ENGBRETSON: I don't have any general questions. No.

9 MS. PRICE: Okay. All right.

10 So, Shara, you doing okay?

11 MS. ANDERSON: Yes. I'm doing fine.

12 MS. PRICE: Okay. Great. Thank you again.

13 BY MS. PRICE:

14 Q. So now we're going to talk about the day of the accident a
15 little more specific. So on that day, do you remember what time
16 Gabriele arrived for his flight that day? And did he walk or
17 drive? Does he live near the base? I'm not sure how billeting is
18 set up there in King Salmon.

19 We lost you, Shara. Are you there? Can you hear me, Shara?

20 A. Are you there?

21 Q. Yep. We're here. We lost you for a little bit. Can you
22 hear us?

23 A. Yes. What was the question? I'm sorry.

24 Q. Okay. On the day of the accident, I'm wondering, did --
25 where do the pilots reside? Are they near the base; do they live

1 far away? Do they have to drive to the base?

2 A. We have company housing here for them.

3 Q. Okay, so it's right there. Do you remember what time he
4 arrived for his flight that day?

5 A. Usually all the pilots come in at 8:00 if we have that flight
6 that morning, and I believe he was here between 8 and 8:30.

7 Q. Okay. Do you remember what Gabriele's disposition was that
8 day? Meaning what kind of mood he was in, anything unusual or
9 usual? Can you hear me?

10 A. I'm sorry. I'm getting a little spotty here. What was the
11 question?

12 Q. Okay. The question is, do you remember what Gabriele's
13 disposition was that morning when he arrived for his flight? How
14 did he seem to you, if you could describe him?

15 A. Gabriele was always chipper in the morning. He would come in
16 with a smile on his face, usually whistling a tune. There was
17 nothing different from that day.

18 Q. Do you know if he had any health issues that he spoke of at
19 all?

20 A. Not to my knowledge, no. He didn't tell me anything.

21 Q. Okay. Was he wearing glasses that morning, do you remember?

22 A. I don't recall.

23 Q. Do you know if he normally wore glasses? Can you picture his
24 normal face with glasses on it, or not?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Did he ever talk about things other than the flight schedule?

2 A. Asked me how my day was going, and I'd ask him about the
3 same. Just normal co-worker chitchat usually.

4 Q. Okay. Did he seem well rested?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. What's a typical day? How many duty hours do the pilots have
7 there at King Salmon on a typical day?

8 A. They have 480 minutes.

9 Q. Thank you.

10 A. And I try to use all those minutes if possible.

11 Q. That's good. Get your money's worth.

12 Okay. Do you remember the day of the accident and this
13 particular flight what the weather forecast observations were for
14 that day and his route?

15 A. I had him going to Port Heiden, Perryville, and then going
16 through the Chigs, I believe.

17 Q. And do you remember what the weather was that morning when
18 you were briefing with him?

19 Shara, can you hear me? Shara, can you hear me? Can you
20 hear me now?

21 A. I'm sorry. Are you there?

22 Q. Yes, we are here. We lost you for a minute.

23 A. Okay. I'm sorry. What was the question?

24 Q. Do you remember what the weather was for his route that
25 morning when you were briefing him? What were you -- when the two

1 of you discussed weather, as you do for your dispatch purposes,
2 can you recall what the weather was that morning for Dillingham,
3 Port Heiden and Perryville?

4 A. Yes, I do. I have that information. I can't remember off
5 the top of my head but I can get it for you if you'd like.

6 Q. Do you remember any significant weather that you and he
7 discussed?

8 A. No. When we -- I remember he was going to Dillingham. And
9 we talked over the weather and how the weather was looking down
10 south, and we both agreed that it was good.

11 Q. So how did you get the weather for Perryville?

12 A. I called Bernice O'Domin, our village agent down there.

13 Q. And do you know, is Bernice a weather observer?

14 A. I don't know.

15 Q. So when you briefed him that morning, and on a typical
16 morning, do you discuss the actual route the pilot flies or just
17 the destination airports that he's scheduled for?

18 A. No, we discuss the route.

19 Q. And do you know how they usually fly from Port Heiden to
20 Perryville, which visual route they take for that route?

21 A. I do not know.

22 Q. So was there anything notable on this particular route? We
23 already discussed the weather. But anything else in regard to the
24 aircraft or the load or the passengers that you remember
25 discussing?

1 A. No, I don't.

2 Q. Did you talk to the pilot in Dillingham when he landed in
3 Dillingham, after he landed?

4 A. The pilot in Dillingham?

5 Q. Didn't he -- his first stop was Dillingham. Do you -- did
6 you talk to him at all on the ground? Did he call you on his
7 phone or ask for a weather check or anything of that nature?

8 A. No. I talked to him when he got back to King Salmon.

9 Q. Okay. How about Port Heiden?

10 A. No, I did not talk to him again when he landed in Port
11 Heiden.

12 Q. Did you talk to the Port Heiden village agent?

13 A. Yes. She called me to let me know that he made it into Port
14 Heiden and that he was headed to Perryville.

15 Q. Okay. Did you note any changes in the weather patterns
16 during his day of flying from location to location that you can
17 remember?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Okay. So when was the last time that you talked to Gabriele?

20 A. Before -- or when he called out on the radio leaving King
21 Salmon.

22 Q. Okay. Can you explain what happened on that day at about
23 1400? How were you notified that 803-Tango-Hotel was missing?

24 A. My supervisor, Cory Clark, called and asked me to try to
25 locate him because the ELT went off.

1 MS. PRICE: Okay. That is all -- those are all the questions
2 I have about that specific flight. I'm going to pass it to Brice
3 for further questions. Thank you.

4 MS. ANDERSON: Thank you, Noreen.

5 MR. BANNING: I don't have any additional questions, Noreen.
6 Thank you, Shara.

7 MS. ANDERSON: You're welcome, Brice.

8 MS. PRICE: Okay, Ryan.

9 MR. BRINKMAN: I'm sorry. Give me just one second here.

10 MS. PRICE: Okay. I can pass it to Austin if --

11 MR. BRINKMAN: Yeah, you can defer to Austin for now. Yep.

12 MS. PRICE: Yeah. Austin, do you have anything to ask Shara?

13 MR. ENGBRETSON: No, you covered it pretty well. I'm good.

14 MS. PRICE: Okay. Shara, just give us a moment to look at
15 some more of our questions. Are you doing okay?

16 MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, I'm doing okay. Can we take a little
17 bit of a break, please?

18 MS. PRICE: We're just about done. A couple more minutes.
19 You think you hang with us?

20 MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, I can hang out for a minute.

21 MS. PRICE: Okay. Thank you.

22 BY MR. BRINKMAN:

23 Q. Okay. Hey, Shara, you there?

24 A. Yes, I am.

25 Q. This is Ryan Brinkman. Hi again.

1 A. Hi, Ryan.

2 Q. So do you recall the last time that you checked weather in
3 Perryville?

4 I guess the reason that I'm asking, because I've got a sheet,
5 a Grant sheet, that looks like -- it looks like one of the forms
6 that you utilize to fill out weather, and then you take that and
7 fill out the flight risk assessment. I'm guessing. Does that --
8 do you, can you recall what sheet I may be talking about or --

9 A. I don't know what sheet you're talking about.

10 Q. There's a --

11 A. As you talking about the (indiscernible) report?

12 Q. There's a sheet that's got a couple columns, and then it
13 labels -- for each airport it labels GG, 1Y; it looks like it's
14 risk assessing each of those airports. And then there's a column
15 for what time the weather was observed, and then another column
16 for the wind, visibility, ceiling. Do you know what I'm talking
17 about now? And at the very bottom it has --

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. -- flight coordinator signature?

20 A. Yes. It's our weather board, I think -- I believe is what
21 you're talking about.

22 Q. Okay. So the weather board is a digital thing, then, I'm --
23 or --

24 MS. PRICE: Can you hear us? Shara, we lost you there?

25 MS. ANDERSON: Yes, I can hear. I'm sorry.

1 MS. PRICE: Okay. All right.

2 MR. BRINKMAN: Okay. There she is.

3 BY MR. BRINKMAN:

4 Q. Okay. So --

5 A. I'm sorry. What --

6 Q. So can -- you can't -- can you recall when the last time you
7 checked for Port Heiden and Perryville, the weather?

8 A. No, I don't remember.

9 MR. BRINKMAN: Okay. All right. Yeah, that's really the
10 only question that I had.

11 MS. PRICE: Okay. All right. Thank you, Ryan.

12 MR. BRINKMAN: Thank you, Shara.

13 MS. PRICE: All right. Shara, is there anything else that
14 you would like to share with us?

15 MS. ANDERSON: No, I'm -- I don't have any questions on my
16 end.

17 MS. PRICE: Is there somebody else that you believe we should
18 be talking to to get information that would help us in this
19 investigation?

20 MS. ANDERSON: No.

21 MS. PRICE: Okay. Well, on behalf of the NTSB and all of us
22 here, I want to sincerely thank you. And I'd like to offer our
23 condolences for the loss of a co-worker. I know this is a very
24 difficult thing. But the information that you give us will help
25 us in this investigation and help us determine probable cause and

1 hopefully the prevention of these type of tragedies. We do
2 understand how hard, I'm sure, it is for you. But we do
3 appreciate your cooperation in the investigation.

4 If there's any other information that you feel like maybe you
5 can provide us, feel free to reach out to Austin, and he will then
6 get me in touch with you; we can talk to you in the future about
7 whatever it is you want to talk to us about.

8 Are you there?

9 MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. Sorry. I'm cutting out again.

10 MS. PRICE: Again, if you have nothing else, thank you very
11 much. We appreciate it.

12 MS. ANDERSON: You're welcome. Have a good day.

13 MS. PRICE: Okay. You, too.

14 Thank you, everybody.

15 Okay, this concludes the interview.

16 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: GRANT AVIATION FLIGHT 341 ACCIDENT
NEAR CHIGNIK LAKE, ALASKA
MAY 1, 2017
Interview of Shara Anderson

ACCIDENT NUMBER: ANC17FA021

PLACE: Via Telephone

DATE: June 5, 2017

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.


Karen Coen Brooks
Transcriber