



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Office of Aviation Safety
Washington, D.C. 20594

July 1, 2019

Interview Transcripts

ANC18FA063

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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K2 AVIATION CRASH *

DENALI NATIONAL PARK * Accident No.: ANC18FA063

AUGUST 4, 2018 *

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Interview of: JEREMIAH NIL, Flight Following Agent
K2 Aviation

Monday,
October 29, 2018

APPEARANCES:

DAVID SHAUN WILLIAMS, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

BRICE BANNING, Senior Aviation Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

MATT RIGSBY, Air Safety Investigator
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

CHRIS WILSON, Station Chief Pilot
K2 Aviation

MARK WILL
(On behalf of Mr. Nil)

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:50 a.m.)

MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. So the recording is starting at 9:50.

Jeremiah, again, my name is Shaun Williams. I'm with the NTSB. I'm the investigator in charge on the accident. As you know, we're an independent agency. We're here to determine probable cause of the accident, what happened, why it happened, and how we can prevent it from happening again. We're not a part of the DOT or the FAA. We have no regulatory or enforcement powers at all.

We have a few people here with us. So what we'll do is I'll let everyone introduce themselves and tell you why they're here.

MR. BANNING: Brice Banning, NTSB.

MR. RIGSBY: I'm Matt Rigsby out of the FFA's Office of Accident Investigation. I have no power, and we're here purely for the safety end of it.

MR. WILSON: Chris Wilson, station chief pilot for K2 and party rep for the investigation.

MR. WILL: Mark Will. I'm here on behalf of the witness.

MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. So, Jeremiah, do you have any objection to anybody being here? You're good with talking with us today?

MR. NIL: Yeah. No objection.

MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. So we'll be using a tape recorder to record the interviews. The recording will be sent off for transcription. The actual transcript, not the recording, will be

1 made a part of the public docket when the accident is concluded.

2 Like I said, the purpose of the investigation is safety just
3 to determine what happened here. It's not to assign fault, blame
4 or liability, and it's all part of the fact finding phase of the
5 investigation. We cannot, however, offer any guarantee of
6 confidentiality or immunity because, like I said, the transcript
7 will be part of the public docket when we're done.

8 Each of the group members will have a chance to ask
9 questions. We'll ask them one at a time. No one will interrupt,
10 and there'll be a chance -- normally we do two rounds; everyone
11 will kind of go around and just get their questions answered.

12 MR. NIL: Okay.

13 MR. WILLIAMS: Because we're using a recording, please
14 remember to be verbal with your responses, no nodding and shaking
15 your head, and other gestures or anything like that. It's not
16 going to be picked up on the recording.

17 Please answer all questions to the best of your recollection.
18 If you don't understand a question, ask to have it repeated, but
19 at the same time, if you want to change an answer, please do so,
20 okay? Just --

21 MR. NIL: Okay.

22 MR. WILLIAMS: We want it to be as accurate as possible.

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

25 MR. NIL: Yes. Mark.

1 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Mark, you may direct Jeremiah not to
2 answer a question or to request a short break; however, you may
3 not answer a question for him.

4 MR. WILL: Okay.

5 MR. WILLIAMS: Are there any questions before we begin?

6 MR. NIL: No.

7 INTERVIEW OF JEREMIAH NIL

8 BY MR. WILLIAMS:

9 Q. So, for the record, can you please state your name and title?

10 A. My name is Jeremiah Nil, and I'm a flight following agent at
11 K2 Aviation.

12 Q. And how long have you been with the company?

13 A. Started at K2 in 2007, and then I've been with them since
14 2013 seasonally, and then year-round for 4 years.

15 Q. Okay. So tell me a little bit about your background. How
16 did you end up at K2?

17 A. I ended up there just as a seasonal job, working in the
18 summers.

19 Q. Do you have any pilot experience or any other aviation
20 experience?

21 A. No aviation background, no.

22 Q. Okay. So did you start as a flight following agent, or where
23 did you start in the company?

24 A. Initially started just customer service, learning the
25 operation, and then moved into the flight following role.

1 Q. And you did that in 2013?

2 A. I did that also in 2007.

3 Q. In 2007 as well?

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. Okay. All right. So tell me a little bit about your
6 training to be a flight following agent. What did that consist
7 of?

8 A. Yearly training, running through the procedures, operational
9 control, looking at weather conditions.

10 Q. So was there a formal like ground school type of thing or was
11 it just on the job? Like a formal classroom setting or was there
12 on-the-job --

13 A. Formal training.

14 Q. It was? Okay. So do you go through that every year?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Okay. What about on-the-job training? Do you still do that
17 every year or was it when you first started? Like do you get kind
18 of like a recurrent training outside of the classroom?

19 A. Recurrent training outside of the classroom? In addition to
20 the ground school yearly training?

21 Q. Right, yeah. I mean, do you sit in front of the screens with
22 a instructor or trainer and go over things or is it all -- the
23 annual or yearly training, is that all classroom?

24 A. It's mostly classroom, yes.

25 Q. Okay. How long does it normally -- how long is it?

1 A. The ground school, I believe, is 5 days.

2 Q. When was the last time you had completed it?

3 A. It was in April.

4 Q. April of this year?

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. Okay. Are there any records kept, any training forms, or
7 anything that you have to sign?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Who maintains those records? Do you know?

10 A. Station chief pilot.

11 Q. Okay. All right. So kind of walk me through -- well,
12 what's -- before we go through a normal day, why don't you tell me
13 what is your role as a flight following agent?

14 A. So putting together the passenger manifests, seeing what
15 there is as far as scheduled folks wanting to go flying,
16 identifying the weather conditions in the morning, and then it was
17 keeping track of the flow of the day, monitoring the flights,
18 collecting weather information from pilots as they return from
19 trips.

20 Q. Okay. So walk me through a normal day, like the hours, you
21 get breaks, what's your workload like. Just from the time you
22 show up in the morning until the time you get to go home, what
23 does your day kind of consist of?

24 A. Generally, I would arrive. There'd be another flight
25 follower. See how the day is going, look at the weather

1 conditions, look at what -- the pilots on staff, what the weather,
2 what the tours that we're allowed, you know, able to do versus
3 what's scheduled to -- you know, folks scheduled for the day.
4 Folks would arrive every couple hours, so folks would check in,
5 get flights (indiscernible). And then, you know, typically, there
6 would be a break at that point as far as checking folks into the
7 office. And then it's more just monitoring the flights.

8 Q. So how long are you on duty? What's your normal -- how long
9 is your normal shift?

10 A. Eight to 10 hours.

11 Q. Okay. And during that time, about -- any idea, you know, the
12 number of flights you're working?

13 A. On any given shift for myself, I'd say maybe up to 30 at
14 most.

15 Q. Okay. So you mentioned identifying weather conditions and
16 monitor flights, and how are you monitoring -- or where are you
17 getting the weather information? How do you get that?

18 A. I'm looking at the satellite radar, local observations.

19 Q. Okay. Do you use the webcams, the FAA webcams at all?

20 A. Yes, webcams.

21 Q. Okay. How about like area forecasts and that sort of -- more
22 text data, or is it mainly the satellites and webcam-type stuff?

23 A. It's a collection of both.

24 Q. Okay. So in your training, do you go over how to interpret,
25 read the weather? Is there -- how much of that training is

1 dedicated to weather analysis or deciphering the weather?

2 A. There's a whole component on it.

3 Q. Does that normally last a day or 2 days, the weather section
4 of it? Any idea?

5 A. I'd say a better part of a day.

6 Q. So on the day of the accident, were you there when the flight
7 departed?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. So talk to me a little bit about the weather on the
10 day of the accident, what you remember?

11 A. I don't remember everything about the weather that day. It
12 was VFR conditions, fairly high ceiling in the range. There was
13 limited, limited access to some components of the mountains.

14 Q. Do you remember getting reports from other pilots that had
15 been out earlier in the day or --

16 A. Yeah, I collect reports from them as each would return.

17 Q. Okay. So do you discuss the flight with the pilots before
18 each flight? Like do you discuss weather now, and again in 2
19 hours when they go out again?

20 A. Yes, basically, every time.

21 Q. Okay. So before a flight goes out, do you know which route
22 they're going to take or where they're going?

23 A. I'd say yes.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. As far as routing.

1 Q. So you know if they're going to go north or if they're going
2 to go south, however they're going to go based on the conditions?
3 And you guys will discuss that before they go, or is that
4 something that --

5 A. Their exact route while they're flying, not so much.

6 Q. So when you discuss weather with a pilot, kind of what does
7 that conversation look like? Are you giving them just, hey,
8 here's the weather packet? Is it here's what I'm seeing, this is
9 kind of what I -- where I think you should go? Or how does that
10 conversation work? How do you guys --

11 A. It's a collection between myself and the pilot, looking at
12 the weather cams, pilot reports.

13 Q. Do you feel that the pilots respect your input?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. So once they depart, are you able to update them on
16 any changing weather? Do you ever attempt to update them, contact
17 them via radio or anything to tell them, hey, you know, it looks
18 like something is moving in, somebody just came back and said the
19 weather is maybe not so good at Big Kahiltina? Are you able to do
20 that in flight?

21 A. Yeah, I'm able to contact them via radio depending on where
22 they're at in the mountains; they might be out of reach of myself
23 in the office. I'll relay information through other company
24 pilots.

25 Q. How often would you say you do that?

1 A. I wouldn't say it's fairly common. Most of that interaction
2 is going to be with other company pilots that are in the range.

3 Q. Okay. So you kind of talk to each other once they're up
4 there?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Okay. Do you print out the weather for the pilots or --

7 A. They get (indiscernible) and print it in the morning.

8 Q. Okay. What about flight plans? Who files the FAA flight
9 plans for the pilots?

10 A. The pilot.

11 Q. The pilot does? Okay. So do you remember speaking with
12 Craig before the flight? Do you remember anything about that?
13 How did he seem? Was he his same chipper self? Was anything --
14 seemed to be nagging him?

15 A. Nothing, no. He seemed just ready to go on another trip just
16 like any other day, no difference.

17 Q. Okay. Do you remember him making any safety decisions either
18 going or hearing about anything that gave you cause for concern?
19 Like the weather may not be great, but he wanted to go anyway? Do
20 you remember ever having any sort of conflicts or anything with
21 him?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Okay. Ever mention anything about the transition from flying
24 down south to flying up here? Did he like it better up here? Was
25 it more fun? Did he ever say anything or compare the two that you

1 remember?

2 A. I've never heard him compare the two.

3 Q. Okay. So how do you track aircraft from base?

4 A. Monitor the radio as they're calling in their locations and
5 checkpoints through the mountains, and then also have a GSat
6 tracking system.

7 Q. Okay. Is there any sort of formal type of risk assessment?
8 Do you guys do a risk assessment before flights?

9 A. I don't understand what --

10 Q. Basically, do you sit down with the pilot and -- okay, so
11 here's the weather conditions here, so there's going to be an
12 increased risk, safety risk for this. Maybe there is a deferral
13 or something broken on the airplane. Does the -- I guess I'm
14 trying to figure -- is there a form or anything that you guys use
15 before a flight to determine whether it can go or not?

16 A. If there's something that's known that's broken on the
17 airplane, it doesn't go flying.

18 Q. Okay. Have you ever gotten pushback from the pilots on
19 weather when you think maybe it's not good enough to go one
20 direction or something? Have you ever received any pushback from
21 them?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Okay. So it's my understanding that as a flight locating
24 agent, you're delegated operational control. So what is
25 operational control?

1 A. It's initiating, conducting, terminating a flight, having the
2 ability to do so.

3 Q. Okay. So who has ultimate responsibility for operational
4 control?

5 A. In a flight?

6 Q. Sure.

7 A. The pilot.

8 Q. Okay. So did you receive training on -- specifically on
9 operational control?

10 A. That's part of ground school.

11 Q. Part of ground school. Okay. Have you ever been observed by
12 the FAA while you're flight locating? Do they ever come in and
13 sit down and just watch, see how it's going, how things are
14 working?

15 A. Myself, I can't think of a time that I was observed, you
16 know. They do come to the office.

17 Q. What about by management? Do they come and kind of sit down
18 and follow you around for a day or a couple hours to see how it's
19 all going?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. How often does that take place?

22 A. I'd say at some level, you know, daily. It's a pretty tight
23 group, you know, keeping everybody in the loop.

24 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Brice?

25 MR. BANNING: I don't have any questions.

1 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

2 BY MR. RIGSBY:

3 Q. I had one. I was a little bit confused. Before the
4 accident, did the accident pilot contact you for a route change or
5 say he was going a different route or anything before the
6 accident?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Okay. And do you have other duties as a flight follower
9 other than just following the flight or is that your primary job?

10 A. What --

11 Q. Like as you're working as a flight follower, are you required
12 to do other tasks as well while you're tracking a flight?

13 A. You know, while flights are out, you know, it's often that
14 I'll be working on the wing balancer scheduling in that same
15 location.

16 Q. Do you guys weigh -- I tend to recall -- was there a scale?

17 A. We weigh everybody.

18 Q. You weigh in everybody? Okay. And that's what you provide
19 to the pilot, right?

20 A. Correct.

21 Q. Okay. As a flight comes back, have you ever had a passenger
22 come in, and I don't know how -- if you're the one that may greet
23 them back, welcome them back. Has anybody ever come up to you and
24 said, scared to death, you know, or reported an anonymous -- or
25 not an anonymous, but an issue with a pilot or something?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Okay. I know you said you hadn't been visited by an FAA
3 person. Are you aware of other flight followers that may have had
4 a operations inspector or somebody from the FAA come in and just
5 say, hey, how do you do your job type thing?

6 A. You know, I personally talked with the POI in the office. As
7 far as watching --

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. -- the procedure, not so much.

10 Q. Okay. The PIREPs that you get from other pilots, is that a
11 formal process? Do you write those down and, you know, like the
12 location that he got, and then is that information collected and
13 then passed on to the next group of pilots that may be going out?

14 A. You know, the pilot reports a lot are used to update folks on
15 what we could offer as far as the flightseeing. A lot of that
16 information is passed directly to -- within the pilots.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Somebody comes back, and there's another guy going to be
19 going, so he just returned, this is his report, and then they
20 would chat.

21 Q. Okay. Do you know is that the -- on CTAF frequencies or does
22 the company have its own company frequency that they broadcast on?
23 Or when a pilot makes a report, are the other aircraft around
24 them, do they hear that report?

25 A. When they're out flying, they are all on the company

1 frequency.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. So, you know, weather is changing in this area, they are all
4 getting that information.

5 MR. RIGSBY: Okay. I'm done.

6 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

7 Chris, you have any questions?

8 MR. WILSON: No. I did the head shake. Sorry.

9 MR. WILLIAMS: So --

10 MR. BANNING: Shaun, can I ask two follow-up questions really
11 quick?

12 MR. WILLIAMS: Yeah, go ahead.

13 BY MR. BANNING:

14 Q. Matt was mentioning PIREPs. The PIREPs that you collect
15 internally from your pilots, are those inputted into the National
16 Weather Service so other companies can use those or are they held
17 in-house, or do you know?

18 A. The reports that I would receive?

19 Q. Yeah. Are you as a flight coordinator, are you inputting
20 those into a database where they can be used in the National --
21 you know, other companies can see them when they're getting a
22 pilot briefing, or are your pilots putting them in, or --

23 A. That's nothing that I'm doing in the office.

24 Q. Okay. And do you use any -- when you're releasing a flight,
25 if you will, do you use any official checklists that you go down

1 when you're sitting with a pilot and he's getting ready to go,
2 where you, you know, we discuss the weather, we discussed his
3 load? Is there any official checklist you use or --

4 A. No.

5 MR. RIGSBY: Okay. All right. Yeah, those are my only two
6 questions.

7 BY MR. WILLIAMS:

8 Q. So while you're tracking a flight, is there pretty good
9 coverage throughout the entire range or is there places -- because
10 you -- is it GSat, you said?

11 A. Yeah, it's GSat.

12 Q. So do you lose coverage of them in certain places or is it
13 pretty well -- it can follow them?

14 A. I would say it follows them pretty well. It is a satellite
15 tracking system, so there is times where it might not update.

16 Q. So how do you know when there is an issue or a problem with a
17 flight? Does it change colors? Do you know how long it has to
18 stay stationary before it gives an alert? Is there any way that
19 you know that there's a flight with a problem; the plane, it's
20 been involved in an accident or something?

21 A. With that system, there's nothing that's going to pop up
22 saying there's a problem. There is an S.O.S. button on there that
23 has to be manually pressed, and then an alert would show up on the
24 tracking system.

25 Q. Okay. But if it stayed stationary for a while, it doesn't

1 change colors or anything like that?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Okay. All right. Is there -- I can ask that question to a
4 different group.

5 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Matt, do you have anything? Chris?

6 MR. WILSON: No.

7 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. I think that -- is there anything you
8 could add to help us out or anything we're missing? Trying to
9 figure out what happened here. Is there anything that comes to
10 mind that --

11 MR. NIL: No.

12 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Then we will stop recording at 10:15.

13 (Whereupon, at 10:15 a.m., 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: K2 AVIATION CRASH
 DENALI NATIONAL PARK
 AUGUST 4, 2018
 Interview of Jeremiah Nil

ACCIDENT NO.: ANC18FA063

PLACE:

DATE: October 29, 2018

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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K2 AVIATION CRASH *

DENALI NATIONAL PARK * Accident No.: ANC18FA063

AUGUST 4, 2018 *

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Interview of: CHRIS WILSON, Station Chief Pilot
Rust's Flying Service

Monday,
October 29, 2018

APPEARANCES:

DAVID SHAUN WILLIAMS, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

BRICE BANNING, Senior Aviation Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

MATT RIGSBY, Office of Accident Investigations
Federal Aviation Administration

MARK WILHELM
(On behalf of Mr. Wilson)

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I N T E R V I E W

(8:30 a.m.)

MR. WILLIAMS: The recording is started at 8:30. So Chris, we've met before.

MR. WILSON: Uh-huh.

MR. WILLIAMS: Shaun. I'm the investigator in charge on this accident, for the NTSB. As you know, we're recording the interview. So the transcript will be the official copy.

MR. WILSON: Okay.

MR. WILLIAMS: So we're an independent federal agency charged with determining probable cause of aircraft accidents. We are not a part of the DOT or the FAA. We have no regulatory or enforcement powers at all. So the folks here -- to kind of help us out, let everybody go around the room and introduce themselves.

MR. BANNING: Brice Banning, NTSB.

MR. RIGSBY: Matt Rigsby, with the FAA's office of accident investigations.

MR. WILHELM: Mark Wilhelm here, representing the witness.

MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. So do you have any objection to any of us being in here --

MR. WILSON: Not at all.

MR. WILLIAMS: -- or him --

MR. WILSON: No.

MR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

MR. WILHELM: I'm assuming the FAA, you're here in an

1 accident investigation role?

2 MR. RIGSBY: Correct. Yeah, I work for the Office of
3 Accident Investigations. So I don't actually have any -- I don't
4 want to say regulatory, but I -- we're not part of the -- any type
5 of enforcement investigation.

6 MR. WILSON: Okay.

7 MR. RIGSBY: So -- and anything that is derived from what
8 Chris says can't be used in that from me. It won't -- they won't
9 get it from me. They'd have to conduct a separate investigation,
10 should there be something --

11 MR. WILHELM: That's fine. It's just --

12 MR. RIGSBY: So yeah.

13 MR. WILHELM: I always like to get it in on the record.
14 So --

15 MR. RIGSBY: It purely is safety, safety --

16 MR. WILLIAMS: Like I said, they will be using a tape
17 recorder to record the interviews. It will be sent off for
18 transcription. The transcript, not the audio recording, will be
19 made a part of the public docket when the factual report is
20 released.

21 The purpose of the interview is safety. It's just to
22 determine probable cause. It's not to assign fault, blame or
23 liability. We want to find out what happened, why it happened,
24 and how we can prevent it from happening again. We cannot,
25 however, offer any guarantees of confidentiality or immunity.

1 The way we run the interviews, each person will have a chance
2 to ask questions. We kind of go around the room. It's usually
3 about two rounds, just to clean it up and move on from there.
4 Please answer all their questions to the best of your
5 recollection. If you don't understand something, please ask to
6 have it repeated. Same token, if you want to change an answer
7 feel free to do so.

8 MR. WILSON: Okay.

9 MR. WILLIAMS: Because it is a recording, try not to nod or
10 gesture.

11 MR. WILSON: Got you. Yeah.

12 MR. WILLIAMS: Be verbal about it. I'm one of the worst ones
13 for it, so --

14 MR. WILSON: Sure. No, it's -- I get it.

15 MR. WILLIAMS: So you are entitled to have one representative
16 of your choosing. Is there someone you would like to have as your
17 representative?

18 MR. WILSON: Mark.

19 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Mark, you may direct Chris not to
20 answer a question or request a short break; however, you may not
21 ask -- answer any questions for him. Do you have any questions?

22 MR. WILSON: I do not.

23 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. We'll get started.

24 INTERVIEW OF CHRIS WILSON

25 BY MR. WILLIAMS

1 Q. So if you could, Chris, just for the record here, if you
2 could -- your name and position.

3 A. Okay. It's -- the name is Chris Wilson. Station chief pilot
4 for Rust's Flying Service. So based out of Talkeetna, for K2
5 Aviation.

6 Q. So what's kind of the general overview of your background?
7 How did you get to where you are?

8 A. Let's see. I started, I guess, in aviation -- let's see. I
9 got my commercial license '97. So before that learning to fly.
10 First flying search job was in Eugene, Oregon, and then moved up
11 to Alaska. I'm trying to think when that was. But flight
12 instructed out of Merrill, and did some 135 work out of Merrill.
13 And then moved to Talkeetna and that was 15 years ago when I first
14 started working for K2. So --

15 Q. So you live up there in Talkeetna?

16 A. I do.

17 Q. Okay. You stay there year-round, or --

18 A. No, I don't. I, since I -- it's seasonal work, I'll leave
19 for a month to 2 months during the winter.

20 Q. Do any flying during that time?

21 A. Typically not. Sometimes just for fun. I ski instruct is
22 typically what I do.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Down in Colorado. So I do that part-time.

25 Q. Little bit of a break.

1 A. Little bit of a break.

2 Q. Right. What are kind of your normal -- so, you mentioned
3 you're are the station chief pilot.

4 A. Uh-huh.

5 Q. So kind of run me through some of your normal duties and
6 responsibilities.

7 A. So I'm in charge of the -- in charge of training, making sure
8 everybody is current. I work with Todd, the DO, and Dan Baldwin,
9 who is the chief pilot for Rust. So I kind of work under those
10 guys. So -- yeah, so just kind of keep pilots current, help with
11 training and then just kind of delegated operational control. So
12 kind of help with getting flights going and all that. On a daily
13 basis, we start the day with a meeting, kind of a safety meeting,
14 before we sent pilots out to do their preflight and pilot
15 assignments, that sort of thing. So housekeeping stuff, I guess,
16 would be the -- my main job.

17 Q. So when you became the station chief pilot was there any sort
18 of an FAA approval or anything like that, or was it all just
19 internal?

20 A. Well, it was internal. And then as we send who the FAA
21 obviously had to get -- anyone named in our office manual has to
22 go through a process. So that's basically the way it works.

23 Q. Can you explain that process a little bit?

24 A. The process -- I -- the process that the FAA or all --

25 Q. Yeah. You're not named, are you?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. You are? Okay.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. So what is that process?

5 A. Well, I don't know. I -- we -- this would be a question for
6 Dan to answer, because they're the ones that actually -- I don't
7 talk with the FAA as much as Todd and Dan do. So as far as what
8 the process is, and then I don't know what it is.

9 Q. Okay. Was there any sort of an interview or anything with
10 you, from the FAA? Did they talk with you before --

11 A. No, I think -- I don't know. I don't know what Dan sends in.
12 All I -- you know, when I do a check airman I have to send in
13 certain things. So Dan would be able to answer what they sent in,
14 in my situation to -- for that paperwork to be --

15 Q. Okay. But the -- what I'm kind of getting at, did they
16 interview you?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Like, did the FAA call you and say, hey, we're hearing you
19 want to be station chief, we want to ask you some questions?

20 A. No. No.

21 Q. Okay. Okay. So talk to me just a little bit -- I want to
22 get a handle on kind of the general company information here. You
23 know, the history -- we've got K2 and we've got Rust's Flying
24 Service. I know it's doing business as a d/b/a.

25 A. Uh-huh.

1 Q. Tell me a little bit about the company. How did -- how does
2 the company operate?

3 A. Well, I guess just like any company, you know, I -- it
4 started out as a family business. And as it grew, then they had
5 to do the president and the DO and all this stuff. So I guess --
6 would it be best to kind of -- do you want to look at the office
7 manual or -- I mean, other than just --

8 Q. Well, just kind of a general overview. So there's an
9 operation down here in Anchorage that's Rust's, and --

10 A. Right. So Todd, the DO, is at Rust. He's in Anchorage. Dan
11 Baldwin is then below him, with -- as the chief pilot for the
12 company. And then the station being removed in Talkeetna, they
13 assigned me for a station chief pilot. And I think that was kind
14 of a recommendation from the FAA as well. So that's where we had
15 that. So that's kind of the -- I guess the structure, as far as
16 who has operational control and where it's gotten delegated to.

17 And then, let's see, I think also we have some operation
18 managers in -- at Rust, and then K2 as well has a -- well, I'd
19 have to look to see what exactly they're called. Yeah, assistant
20 operations manager, I think, is what Suzanne Rust is. And she's
21 typically based in Talkeetna, at least for the summer months.

22 Q. Okay. Do you know about how many airplanes --

23 A. Let's see, 11 in Talkeetna. And Rust's, they have now --
24 maybe the same, maybe 12. But Dan will know exactly what --

25 Q. How many pilots are we talking?

1 A. We had 22 this season.

2 Q. Oh.

3 A. So out of that -- you know, it's seasonal work and some of

4 the guys that have been there for 20 years are now reduced

5 schedules. So we have a few guys on part-time stuff. So --

6 Q. And what about flight coordinators or --

7 A. Yeah. So flight following agents --

8 Q. Yes.

9 A. -- is what we have.

10 Q. Do you know about how many are up there?

11 A. Let's see, we have -- Jen -- I think we have five right now.

12 Q. So since the accident has there been any significant staffing

13 changes? Any big changes since the accident?

14 A. Nothing big. No, we haven't had any staffing changes. It's

15 typical seasonal stuff, so --

16 Q. So the -- what's the nature of the work? Is it a lot from

17 the cruise ships? Is it walk-in? Tourists or --

18 A. Our clients?

19 Q. Yes.

20 A. Yes. So for K2 specifically we work with Princess and Tauck

21 and some big tour companies. So that's the bulk of it. And then

22 walk-ins are kind of that independent traveler is what we refer to

23 them as. It is -- but the bulk of it is tour companies.

24 Q. So this -- the accident flight, do you know where those

25 passengers came from? Were they off a cruise ship, or were they

1 walk-ins?

2 A. I know -- well, they were with a tour group, a Polish tour
3 group. If they were on a -- I don't know what they were doing
4 before they got on the airplane.

5 Q. Okay. Is there any sort of a bonus for on-time operations or
6 a penalty if pilots are late getting back or anything like --

7 A. No. It's -- yeah, no real bonus system or penalty system at
8 all.

9 Q. How are the pilots paid?

10 A. So we have -- it's -- acts kind of like a salary. They're
11 guaranteed so many hours in a month, or is what they get paid --
12 what we get paid for, whether we fly that or not. And then once
13 we've reached that, any time beyond that is time and a half. So
14 it works pretty well. And it -- yeah. So that's how that we're
15 paid.

16 Q. So if there's weather changes or anything like -- or weather
17 cancellations or maintenance cancellations or anything like that,
18 it won't affect, you know, a pilot's pay at all?

19 A. No.

20 Q. Okay. All right. Has there been any changes in the -- kind
21 of the operation in the last year or two? Any big changes?

22 A. Any big changes in operations. No -- yeah, anything in
23 management hasn't changed, other than seasonal hiring and that
24 sort of thing. No, no, no big management changes. They've added
25 a few different airplanes at Rust's, but -- not that that's a big

1 deal, but they're trying to diversify a little bit. So that would
2 be the biggest change we've had, but well within the normal --

3 Q. Okay. So that affects more -- that just affects Rust's, not
4 what --

5 A. Yeah, they're just doing more wheeled stuff than floatplane
6 stuff. So --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Well, within the realm of what we do, so --

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Have you guys had any changes in
10 training?

11 MR. WILSON: No. I'm trying to think the last update to our
12 training manual was. Other than adding new airplanes, we haven't
13 -- it's been pretty much the same training that we've had.

14 BY MR. WILLIAMS:

15 Q. Okay. So the K2 operations, are they 91 and 135, or are they
16 just 135? How do you guys --

17 A. Well, it's 135. So that's what we do. If we -- it's kind of
18 a big deal to call something a 91 flight. I mean, it's -- that's
19 how we treat every flight, is it's 135. So -- because that's what
20 we are.

21 Q. Okay. Just talk to me a little bit about the relationship
22 with the POI and the FSDO.

23 A. Uh-huh.

24 Q. Do you have any interaction? I know you said a lot of it is
25 contained by Dan and Todd. But do you have any --

1 A. I do. And I do quite a bit. It always depends on our POI.
2 I always talk to them first and say how do you want me -- do you
3 want me to go through Dan and Todd, or is it okay if I go direct.
4 And most are pretty comfortable and would prefer that I go direct,
5 unless it's big stuff. And then that's handled with Todd and Dan.
6 But for, like, check rides, check airmen, that kind of stuff, I go
7 directly. And I've had a great relationship with the FAA over the
8 years.

9 Q. Who is the POI?

10 A. Right now it's Roger Young.

11 Q. Okay. So you mentioned a little bit about operational
12 control.

13 A. Uh-huh.

14 Q. That you were delegated operational control. What is
15 operational control? What do you see that as?

16 A. Well, it's who has control over the airplane. So you know,
17 it kind of starts with Todd and then he delegates it to chief
18 pilots, and then ultimately to pilots. So I guess the -- as
19 station chief pilot, the operational control that I have over the
20 flight is kind of in the initiation phase. So it's is the pilot
21 qualified, is the airplane qualified, within maintenance and
22 everything. And then some on the weather -- it depends if I'm
23 there at that moment or not. But that usually happens down at the
24 pilot, flight following agent. They're talking weather,
25 discussing if the flight can be done.

1 Q. Okay. So do they make that decision then? Or does it get
2 elevated to you, as far as --

3 A. No, I get --

4 Q. -- for that airplane and --

5 A. I get asked questions all the time. So if there's a question
6 on the weather we'll go -- but usually, you know, the pilots are
7 trained in weather, and they're the ones that are going to be in
8 it. So it usually happens, you know, right at -- in the moment,
9 with the flight following agent and the pilot, because those two
10 meet and do their little choreograph, and then the flight will
11 either go or it won't at that point. Once -- obviously, once it's
12 dispatched then it's -- the pilot has operational control.

13 Although we can still call it back, but that's about --

14 Q. So you mentioned they do their little choreograph. Is there
15 a risk assessment? What are they actually doing?

16 A. Well, it -- not a -- we don't have, and we're working on now,
17 a risk assessment in that moment. I mean, it's -- you know, it's
18 really in the moment pilot stuff. What's the weather doing now,
19 what do other pilots say. We have the luxury of -- you know, we
20 have -- we're sending flights all day long. So what did the last
21 pilot say, where did the last pilot go. That kind of thing is
22 typically what happens right there. What's the weather at base
23 camp, at the Mountain House up on the roof, that sort of thing.

24 Q. So are there -- when you're looking at weather -- when
25 they're looking at the weather and they're looking at it with the

1 flight follower, flight locator, is there a specific route -- so
2 they're -- let's say you're going out on a glacier tour. Because
3 I know that there's different tours that K2 offers.

4 A. Uh-huh.

5 Q. You're going out on a glacier tour. Is it the same tour
6 every time?

7 A. It is not the same tour. We go where the weather is best.
8 It's sightseeing, so, you know -- we don't have any fixed tracks
9 where we go. So you know, sometimes it's a little more north,
10 sometimes it's a little more south. And then sometimes it's a
11 completely different area -- I mean, like down in Connick or
12 something, so -- where we -- that's what makes it easy. We're
13 sightseeing, so we, you know, usually go where the weather is
14 good.

15 Q. Does that -- when the pilot departs, if they depart, say
16 we're going to go a little bit more north and then they change --
17 you know, they get up, they see the weather is not as good as they
18 thought it was. Do they have to relay that information back at
19 all, or do they just change course and go where they --

20 A. We like to --

21 Q. -- where the --

22 A. Well, as the whole operational control, I like to know where
23 they're going. And it's beneficial to the company. Because then
24 -- oh, it looks like they're going to head a little more north
25 toward the Elder ridge. Then we can brief the passengers that are

1 in the office that, oh, you're not going to see the Kahiltna base
2 camp, you're not going to see the Mountain House and the
3 amphitheatre. You're going to see this part, you know, are you --
4 do you want to go or not. So yeah, for the operation control part
5 we do -- it's kind of the expectation. If you're going to change
6 routing, let us know. For that reason, and then it helps --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. -- with briefing of our clients.

9 Q. So is there a list -- a current list of operational control
10 delegates?

11 A. There is, which I gave you a copy of it the -- at least that
12 second tier.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And then our office manual has everybody else that's a little
15 more rigid.

16 Q. So where is that second tier normally kept?

17 A. We usually keep it on a shared drive, or -- yeah, I guess
18 that's what we call it, shared drive. We have a server in
19 Talkeetna that it sits on.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. So we can update it and look at it.

22 Q. So who -- or, how does management supervise the operational
23 control delegates? How is that --

24 A. How are they --

25 Q. How do you check the quality of the work? Or if they're

1 doing adequate oversight.

2 A. Got you. So it's quite the process. And it's -- the flight
3 following agent, you have what the FAA has lined out. So we do
4 training. But then it's on-the-job training, in that -- what we
5 like to call tribal knowledge. One of our -- I mean, it's --
6 we've gotten -- we were having this discussion the other day. We
7 have -- out of the folks -- I guess to answer the question with
8 how are they monitored, you know, there's a lot of shadowing until
9 we feel comfortable, I guess. And we don't really have a time
10 frame for that, or there isn't training that falls into that
11 tribal knowledge thing, where it's not really written down. But,
12 yeah, it's a while before people are allowed to just flight follow
13 by themselves. Like mid-summer kind of thing, because there's a
14 lot of aspects to it, other than just that flight following FAA
15 part of the puzzle.

16 So how are they monitored? You know, training annually and
17 then, you know, oversight from myself, more senior flight
18 following agents and our other management team. And it's nice
19 being in a family-run business because the owners are there to
20 help us do this. So they see it as well.

21 Q. So is there constant contact between the airplane and the
22 base? Is there --

23 A. There is not.

24 Q. -- areas where you're going out?

25 A. There are. Yeah, without radio or -- yeah.

1 Q. So then how is information relayed back? Is it through other
2 airplanes? How does --

3 A. Yes. It can be. The way it's in our ops manual if you're in
4 out of radio contact for more than an hour then there needs to be
5 a plan in place. Very rarely does that happen in Talkeetna,
6 because we do use the radio range -- or radio more when we're in
7 the range, that sort of thing. And then sometimes we do go to
8 other sides of the Talkeetna range and the Alaska range as well,
9 where we don't have direct radio contact. We do carry sat phones
10 in every airplane. So there's always that option, although some
11 of the environment we're in that signal isn't reliable as well.
12 So -- and then just all the other relay through other airplanes,
13 through other FAA base ground stations.

14 Q. So who is responsible for training the flight followers?

15 A. The chief pilot, and station chief pilots. So myself.

16 Q. Okay. So is there a record of their training?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Okay. Is it just initial? Do they do recurrent?

19 A. It's initial and then recurrent. So it's every 12 months.

20 Q. Is it with the pilots, or do they do it separately?

21 A. No, it's separate. Training is roughly the same, but we're
22 talking to people that aren't pilots. So it needs to be -- the
23 verbiage needs to be changed so it's understandable. So --

24 Q. What is the -- I don't want to say prerequisite. But what
25 are you looking for when you're hiring flight followers? What

1 kind of experience do they have?

2 A. Suzanne would probably be better to ask this. So -- and to
3 answer it, because she and Garrett or Stephanie, our office
4 managers, they hire them. The little I know or what I know, it's
5 customer service based. And then it seems we hire customer
6 service agents and then move them into that position once we see
7 whether they'll be a good fit. We've tried in the past to hire
8 dispatchers that are trained to be a dispatcher for like 121.
9 We've had, you know, mixed success with that. So there isn't,
10 unfortunately, a cut and dried way to get a good flight following
11 agent. It's one of those where you usually hire and then move
12 them into that position when we see what we need to see, I guess.

13 Q. About how long does that take?

14 A. Um, who knows. Some people rise to the occasion. So we can
15 figure out the first season. Some people it's been -- they've
16 been here a few seasons we're like, hey, do you want to do this.
17 And they have to have an interest too, because it -- it's a very
18 busy. And that operational control thing kind of gets people a
19 little anxious as well, so -- so it can be fairly quick to a
20 little bit -- a few years before.

21 Q. Do they ever ride along with the pilots to kind of see the --
22 like, the other side of the operation?

23 A. They do. And it's part of our training, as a -- in the
24 training as well, that they --

25 Q. Oh, it is?

1 A. -- go on ride-alongs and see what the airplanes do and the
2 process on the other side, as you said.

3 Q. Okay. So about the pilots, what are you minimum requirements
4 for PIC? What are you guys looking for?

5 A. Well, it's -- ultimately, the FAA requires we need 500 hours
6 for 135. When I advertise, it's usually 2,000 hours PIC tail
7 wheel time, because most of our fleet is tail wheel, and then
8 mountain flying experience. And that's kind of what we look for.
9 And 135 and all these other things are great too. But kind of the
10 skeleton of it, we want -- or, what I advertise for is 2,000
11 hours. And it -- some good tail wheel time.

12 Q. Does that -- do you seem to have a problem getting pilots
13 with those requirements? Or do you still get inundated --

14 A. It's getting --

15 Q. -- as it's the Alaska experience?

16 A. No, it's getting harder and harder. Especially that tail
17 wheel component. It's just not what people train and work for.
18 That's the only thing we train in. So yeah, it's getting harder.

19 Q. So how long is the pilot training?

20 A. So for the pistons I believe it's -- our training manual says
21 we give 3 hours minimum training, and then for the turbines five.

22 Q. Is that in aircraft? Or on the ground?

23 A. It's in aircraft.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. And the ground is still what -- however many hours it is. I

1 don't -- I'd have to look at the training manual. But it ends up
2 being about 5 days of ground school.

3 Q. So do you guys have check airmen authority?

4 A. Uh-huh. We do.

5 Q. How many check airmen do you guys have?

6 A. Right now we have two at K2 and then Rust's -- they will be
7 able to tell you how many they have.

8 Q. Do you guys cover each other's --

9 A. We do. Yeah. So Dan will come up -- typically, Dan's
10 usually the only one that will come up and do check rides. Kind
11 of help out and show his face, that sort of thing.

12 Q. Describe the CFIT avoidance training or policy information
13 over K2.

14 A. So it varies a little bit with trainer and check airmen. The
15 idea is is the goal to make a realistic scenario and then run the
16 pilots through that. So typically they'll get it in training, and
17 then the check ride and the check airmen we'll do something of
18 that nature. So in ground school there's a CFIT video that we
19 watch, and then usually a discussion goes on after that that Dan
20 will give his little training on it. So you know, it's kind of
21 the basic stuff -- what to do. We have GPS, just Garmin, so that
22 -- as far as positional awareness is -- helps us out. So we talk
23 about how to use that, how to get to the terrain page, you know,
24 just kind of basic position awareness stuff with that.

25 And then -- yeah, it kind of depends on the pilot or what

1 they feel. Some of it's, you know, you flew in the clouds, here's
2 the hood, turn, what would you do that kind of thing. And we
3 typically do it in the environment, or we like to. So -- just to
4 show them -- I guess to keep it as realistic as possible. But
5 there's a multitude of things that pilots do, or trainers and
6 myself, so it just kind of depends on the situation. But --

7 Q. So do you guys have a CFIT escape maneuver or anything
8 that's --

9 A. Not standard. Just because it's never standard. We have,
10 you know, the -- oh, you flew in the clouds, the 180 is kind of
11 the basic. And then we go from that. Because that doesn't always
12 work, although it's kind of what's talked about in training, from
13 private pilots up to even commercial pilots. But, you know,
14 that's not always the best thing to do. So it's pretty -- it's
15 thought-provoking, I guess, is what I've gotten, even that my
16 trainers they'll do stuff and I'll be like wow, that's -- you
17 know, I didn't think of that. Or it's not just the oh, you flew
18 in the clouds, let's do a 180 and go somewhere else. So --
19 although that's what -- we do teach that. We teach more than
20 that, I guess.

21 Q. Do you guys utilize any sims? Simulators or anything?

22 A. We do not, no.

23 Q. So what's a typical duty day for the pilots?

24 A. So our duty day is 8 in the morning until 10 at night. So
25 typical 14-hour duty day.

1 Q. So walk me through -- the pilot shows up at 8 in the morning.

2 A. So 8 in the morning we have a morning meeting. So there any
3 pilot assignments, anything that's going on during the day that is
4 of any interest. Glacier operations is usually what spends -- we
5 spend a lot of time on, what are the conditions on the glacier.
6 Where are the bumps, where are the cracks, where are the hazards,
7 that sort of thing. And then anything else that comes up. So
8 it's a good opportunity if there's any concerns or anything,
9 safety-wise. Usually there's a maintenance component -- airplanes
10 that are in maintenance, squawks that have happened, and
11 corrective action, so everybody is aware of what -- where the
12 airplane is at, maybe things to look out for, you know. Suction
13 break on the right side of this airplane, and just make sure it's
14 not getting squishy again or whatever, so -- so that's maybe 10,
15 15 minutes. And then maybe after that, the pilot starts the
16 preflight and then the first flight is around 8:30, 9:00,
17 somewhere in there. And then it's basically every 2 hours after
18 that until 7:00.

19 Q. How much ground time is there usually for the pilots between
20 flights?

21 A. Depending on the flight they had before -- so, our shortest
22 flight is an hour and our longest one will get you back about 2
23 hours later, if you do the go around the mountain and land on the
24 glacier. So anywhere from an hour to 15 minutes or so, whatever
25 it takes to get fueled and grab the next group of clients.

1 Q. So you guys run them in banks, then.

2 A. Yeah. That's the way it ends up, about every 2 hours we have
3 another another group.

4 Q. So were you familiar with the accident pilot?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Any issues? Any concerns?

7 A. No, none. Surprised, you know, I think was the biggest thing
8 coming out of this, you know, post -- but yeah, leading up to it
9 no, no concerns at all.

10 Q. Overall impressions of him as a pilot?

11 A. Great. Very professional. Cares about airplanes. Loves it,
12 that -- you know, you get the guys that like airplanes and love
13 the flying, and then you get the guys that are passionate about
14 it, about airplanes and what we do. He was one of those. He was
15 -- I have never had a pilot ever wash his own airplane every
16 morning. They fly better clean, he would say. It's the shiniest
17 spinner away, you know. So yeah, he loved it. So yeah.

18 Q. So you mentioned the morning meeting.

19 A. Uh-huh.

20 Q. Was there one the day of the accident?

21 A. I was not on duty that day, but I -- yes, there was. It's
22 something we do every morning.

23 Q. So then, who normally runs those?

24 A. So I'll either do it or Garrett or whoever, really, the
25 flight following agent or the manager is. So it would be myself,

1 Garrett or Stephanie, or some others.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And Jeremiah as well will bounce in there every once in a

4 while but --

5 Q. Okay. I think we have him --

6 A. He's going to be here.

7 Q. -- next.

8 A. And that's --

9 Q. We'll find out if he did it, or if he knows who ran it that

10 day.

11 A. Yeah. No, he came in in the afternoon. So it was --

12 probably Garrett was there that morning.

13 Q. Okay. So describe the company's approach to managing safety.

14 A. Well, it's our number one concern, I guess. Safety is a big

15 part of it, obviously. But, the -- the stakes are pretty high, so

16 we take it seriously. And it's the focus. And Todd and Suzanne

17 is -- have built an environment that -- I mean, it's -- you can

18 tell it's important to them and important to the industry and what

19 we do. So --

20 Q. Is there an accountable manager? Is there a safety manager?

21 A. We do not have a safety manager.

22 Q. So who kind of oversees it?

23 A. Who oversees --

24 Q. Just --

25 A. -- the safety?

1 Q. -- the safety --

2 A. Everyone does. And then it's -- you know, starting with Todd
3 and then disseminated down through those named in our ops manual
4 to everybody that's not. I mean, that's -- is just kind of what
5 goes on.

6 Q. Is there a way for employees to bring up a safety-related
7 issue without, you know, fear of retribution --

8 A. There is.

9 Q. -- or anything like that?

10 A. Yeah, and it's in our employee handbook. It is. So what we
11 have employees -- we have the box and the sheet. So if you have a
12 hazard or see a hazard you fill it out and put it in the box. And
13 it's anonymous, as far as that goes. What I've witnessed over the
14 years is I have yet to find anything in that box. Being a small
15 business and me being approachable, Suzanne, Todd, usually they
16 just grab us and say, hey, this is what I'm seeing, this is what I
17 saw. And -- which I think is pretty amazing. Because stuff
18 happens -- or, it gets fixed fairly quickly. And people feel
19 comfortable. And if it's about me, they'll go to Todd or Suzanne
20 and feel comfortable, because there's those things that, you know,
21 Chris is doing this, that sort of thing. So that's kind of the
22 way it works. So we have the official system that's kind of been
23 our safety management system that we're trying to get going, and
24 have been with the box and the sheet. But the day-to-day
25 operations, they usually just come to one of us.

1 Q. So are you just starting an SMS?

2 A. We are. We've had -- yeah, that's -- you know, as companies
3 grow that's -- we're -- what we're doing.

4 Q. What point in the process are you guys at?

5 A. Well, we had one written up that we didn't use because it
6 wasn't really -- it didn't fit. And then -- post-accident, you
7 know, we're always thinking what can we do better. And we've had
8 some audits -- Conoco Phillips audited us at the beginning of the
9 summer, and then Tauck, one of our big tour companies, had an
10 audit post-accident. So it's all kind of these big companies --
11 this is what we have. This is -- you guys should too, you're no
12 longer as small as you used to be. So -- yeah, we're getting
13 there.

14 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. We'll go around here. Brice?

15 BY MR. BANNING:

16 Q. Just a couple of questions --

17 A. Uh-huh.

18 Q. -- here. You talked about weather and up on the mountain,
19 changing conditions, different routes. Is there any weather data
20 that's available on the mountain, or is it all primarily PIREPs?

21 A. It's PIREPs. You know, with forecasts you kind of get an
22 idea of what's going to happen when it hits the mountain. And
23 that's just experience and time. You don't ever really know. So
24 PIREPs are good. The FAA has done a great job with webcams.

25 Q. That's what I was going to ask.

1 A. So we have one on the Kahiltna and one at Mountain House.

2 And the reliability is getting better and better. So --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And those are priceless. A picture is worth a thousand
5 words.

6 Q. Right. And Mountain House is the Ruth Glacier?

7 A. The Ruth Glacier, yeah.

8 Q. Okay. And then my other question is -- we talked about
9 flight coordinator training a little bit.

10 A. Uh-huh.

11 Q. Is that training program written down anywhere?

12 A. It is. So it's part of our training manual.

13 Q. Okay. So it's an FAA approved training --

14 A. It's FAA approved.

15 Q. -- program?

16 A. So yeah.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And then, you know, the on the job training is --

19 Q. Sure.

20 A. -- is not, but it's just kind of when we're comfortable and
21 they're comfortable, that's when we finally --

22 Q. Sure.

23 A. -- allow them to do their job.

24 MR. BANNING: All right. I think those are the only two
25 questions I had.

1 BY MR. RIGSBY:

2 Q. Chris, you talked about when you get -- when you guys -- when
3 you hire new pilots.

4 A. Uh-huh.

5 Q. Is there any type of mentorship or -- you know, if you've got
6 a new pilot that you've hired in, and has never been to Alaska or
7 never flown in Alaska, how -- I mean, do you treat him different
8 than somebody that maybe has more mountain experience is --

9 A. Well, everybody is unique. So --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- as we're going through training I'm talking with the
12 trainers and we kind of have that planned together. Is the
13 mentoring process -- there is --

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. -- and so, kind of a typical -- pilot will go through
16 training, do their check ride, their route check. And then once
17 they're online, usually we'll have a training pilot or myself will
18 ride right seat for the first three flights, five flights,
19 whatever --

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. -- as the pilot is getting more comfortable --

22 Q. Sure.

23 A. -- and we're comfortable. So there's -- that is documented,
24 as far as what we do, and then post that --

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. -- it's -- we're always monitoring and doing our --
2 Q. And that's documented in his training program?
3 A. It's -- not in the training program, but just on -- that --
4 it's not in our training manual. It's just what we do. But
5 documented in that it would be on -- my name or another trainer
6 would be on the manifest.
7 Q. Okay.
8 A. And we do -- well, we're not as consistent as writing it in
9 the training -- in their training that rode along with and did
10 this tour. But --
11 Q. Okay. On your flight followers training --
12 A. Uh-huh.
13 Q. -- do they have other duties other than just flight follower?
14 A. They do. So they're customer service -- and this is
15 something we have recognized, where we're -- I mean, that's much
16 better now, where they are flight following agents and that's what
17 they do.
18 Q. Okay.
19 A. We try not to have it so they answer phones or check people
20 in, that sort of thing, but being --
21 Q. Okay.
22 A. They're sitting right there. They will turn around and check
23 people in --
24 Q. Okay.
25 A. -- and that sort of thing. But we're getting to the point

1 where their duty is to flight follow, not to do this other stuff.

2 In the busy season. Off season, then we do everything.

3 Q. As I recall when I was up there. Are -- do you satellite
4 track your aircraft?

5 A. We do.

6 Q. Okay. And that's what their -- that was the screen, like you
7 had the --

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. -- the cover there --

10 A. So we have the two --

11 Q. The screen with the --

12 A. -- dispatch screens which have the manifests and the daily
13 schedule. And then up here we have the flight tracker --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. -- on a dedicated screen for that.

16 Q. Okay. And they're -- so, they're watching that track.

17 A. Uh-huh.

18 Q. If it's -- you know, is there -- they notice something on
19 there, who do they -- like, that aircraft is stopped and that
20 position is not --

21 A. Right.

22 Q. -- no longer reporting, do they -- what's that process?

23 A. So the process then if they see something -- we have an
24 emergency plan. So they'll go to that and start running down the
25 list on who to call next. And with the satellite phones, we've

1 found that they do hang up.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And there's a dot right here when there should be more dots,
4 if it continued on. So with the equipment then, yeah, there's
5 usually a phone call to me or somebody else and we kind of go
6 through the process.

7 Q. Sure.

8 A. They try to get them on the radio, that sort of thing. So
9 there is a process for those little things.

10 Q. You mentioned prior to your CFIT training that you used the
11 Garmin. Does that have a TAWS? It have --

12 A. It does not.

13 Q. No TAWS?

14 A. No.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. It's just the handheld 296, or whatever. But --

17 Q. Okay. Do all your aircraft just have the handheld?

18 A. They do, except for the others. They have TAWS --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. -- required by the FAA, a regulation. And then two were IFR,
21 so they have the TAWS built into the glass panel.

22 Q. Okay. K2 weather minimums, are they --

23 A. The FAA weather minimums.

24 Q. -- what -- the FAA, okay. Has your POI PMI VAI visited
25 Talkeetna?

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. We'll see our POI at least once a year, as a minimum.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Like I said, I talk with the FAA quite a bit on --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. As you know, POIs are busy.

8 Q. Oh, yeah.

9 A. Especially in the state of Alaska.

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. So you know, it works great. We -- I do see the FAA more

12 than once a year, or at least our guy on the FAA comes up quite a

13 bit. So they do have a presence in Talkeetna. But --

14 Q. Do they ever just show up and do a random check?

15 A. Uh-huh.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. On occasion.

18 Q. Assistant chief pilot, do you have one?

19 A. We do not. So station chief pilot -- well, how is it

20 written. No, I don't take Dan's responsibility when he's gone.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. So no. No assistant chief.

23 Q. Are you one of the check airmen of --

24 A. I am.

25 Q. Okay. On those 14 hour duty days, do you guys have -- work

1 in a pilot lunch time or break time for them? How does that work?

2 A. How does it work? I mean, normal 135 no --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- no breaks.

5 Q. Right.

6 A. Breaks kind of happen, that kind of thing. But they may not,
7 so --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. The flight following agent -- if you ask Jeremiah, he may
10 have a little different answer. Because they do try to schedule a
11 plane break --

12 Q. Right.

13 A. -- to keep things on time.

14 Q. Sure.

15 A. And if there's maintenance issues or anything like that, they
16 won't get backed up.

17 Q. Do you -- do the pilots -- I assume you have maintenance
18 there at Talkeetna, too.

19 A. We do.

20 Q. You have a maintenance base. Do they do any post-maintenance
21 check flights or that type of thing, does -- or are there
22 designated people for those type of flights? I mean, it -- I'm
23 thinking is that an additional duty to flying a tour or you may
24 come back and an aircraft needs a post-maintenance check flight,
25 you just grab somebody and go. Or is there a training process for

1 that?

2 A. It depends. Two of our mechanics are pilots as well.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. So that works out great.

5 Q. Okay. Okay.

6 A. Yeah. You can write it up, give it to them and they'll go do
7 whatever they need. If they're busy doing other things, then they
8 may grab a pilot --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- to go with it. Or, if Ryan or Dallas -- they're the two
11 that are --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. -- if they're not on duty then, yeah --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. -- usually the mechanic will just grab somebody and go fly.

16 Q. Those outside audits you mentioned --

17 A. Uh-huh.

18 Q. -- do you recall, were there any findings in those?

19 A. There were.

20 MR. RIGSBY: I think that's it.

21 BY MR. WILLIAMS:

22 Q. So looking at the ops specs --

23 A. Uh-huh.

24 Q. -- it is A010, which this -- I've got them right here. I'm
25 going to spin this around to you, because --

1 A. I've got a copy too. Which one are we looking at? 1-2?

2 Q. 1-0. A010. I think it was --

3 A. Do I have the right one? I think so.

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. A010.

6 Q. Yeah, what's the date on yours? The revision, up at the top.

7 A. Thirteen.

8 Q. Okay. I've got 16.

9 A. Okay.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I should have grabbed a different one.
11 Sorry.

12 BY MR. WILLIAMS:

13 Q. So it says that holder conducting part 135 operations,
14 authorized to use --

15 A. Uh-huh.

16 Q. -- weather reporting facilities by National Weather Service
17 or source approved by the U.S. National Weather Service.

18 A. Uh-huh.

19 Q. What do you guys use for your weather? I know you mentioned
20 webcams.

21 A. Yeah. Uh-huh.

22 Q. What approved weather --

23 A. So we do get the DUATS or the equivalent of it now, so --
24 weather-wise. We'll print that.

25 Q. Okay. I think the geo map -- you mentioned approved weather

1 observer.

2 A. Uh-huh.

3 Q. How do you guys -- what is an approved weather observer?

4 MR. WILSON: That's a great question. Is that something you
5 guys deem -- FAA deems? Observed weatherperson, or -- I don't
6 know.

7 MR. RIGSBY: No. We don't.

8 MR. WILSON: Yeah. I don't know what their qualifications
9 mean.

10 BY MR. WILLIAMS:

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. I'm sure there's a training they're doing for that. So do --
13 can you find where it says the observed --

14 Q. Yeah. Let me see if I can find that.

15 A. I'm curious too if it has anything.

16 Q. There's not a lot in here on it. I don't know. It was in
17 one of these, and that's why I was just kind of --

18 A. Okay.

19 Q. -- curious. I didn't tab it. So that's why I just wanted to
20 find out if you knew what it -- what exactly it was.

21 A. I do not know.

22 Q. Okay. So what's the difference between the ops manager and
23 the station ops manager?

24 A. I think location. So it's kind of like chief pilot and
25 station chief pilot.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Here it is.

3 Q. So in the GOM --

4 A. Uh-huh.

5 Q. -- A-11 it says obtain pertinent official airport data and
6 weather information for each flight assignment from the published
7 materials and appropriate local flight service station or local
8 approved weather observer.

9 A. Yeah. I don't -- unless it goes further into describing what
10 that is, I don't know what that would be. I don't know.

11 Q. It doesn't. Did the accident flight have an FAA flight plan?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. It did? So this one may be a little bit more difficult to
14 explain without charts or whatever, and we can draw if we need to.
15 So ceiling height -- so, the -- where this aircraft was was at
16 10,900 feet.

17 A. Uh-huh.

18 Q. It was above -- or, a portion of it -- more than 1,200 AGL.
19 More than 10,000 MSL.

20 A. Uh-huh.

21 Q. So what are the weather minimums in that area, then?
22 Basically, you know, in a Class E airspace --

23 A. Uh-huh.

24 Q. -- you've got to stay -- let's see, below 10 -- Class E above
25 10, minimum 5-mile visibility, cloud clearance of 1,000 feet above

1 -- below, 1,000 above, a mile horizontal. So basically, would
2 this have been a legal flight where he was, based on these
3 minimums and the conditions at the time?

4 A. I'd have to -- we don't know the conditions at the time. We
5 can't -- that would be speculation, I think.

6 Q. So this was taken right in the area at about the accident
7 time.

8 A. What was this picture from?

9 Q. That was from another aircraft of another company.

10 A. What time was this taken?

11 Q. Right about the accident time. Within minutes.

12 A. What time was this taken? I mean, do you know the exact
13 time?

14 Q. I have it written down somewhere, but --

15 A. Well, we can find that --

16 Q. -- that's not --

17 A. -- and then I'll tell you if that's --

18 Q. Okay. If you're flying along where the accident was and this
19 is what you see --

20 A. I don't -- I don't even know --

21 Q. Is that somewhere you would even want to be? So I'm not
22 familiar with the conditions up there, how they change coming
23 through the mountains and --

24 A. Well, at the time of the accident --

25 Q. -- when you get --

1 A. -- there -- I mean, there were airplanes all over the place.
2 Q. Right.
3 A. Some at this altitude. Obviously, this plane was there. So
4 is this looking up the Kahiltna?
5 Q. Yeah. I believe so.
6 A. Yeah, I don't know. This -- I can't really tell what we were
7 even looking at here.
8 Q. Okay.
9 A. So I got -- what do you want me to answer? Is that --
10 Q. How do you guys -- with the -- so, in one point you may be
11 less than 1,200. So you may be in Class G airspace.
12 A. Uh-huh.
13 Q. And in 2 minutes, you're no longer --
14 A. Oh, in --
15 Q. -- you're in Class E.
16 A. Uh-huh.
17 Q. So how do you guys determine what minimums you use? Are
18 there -- is it rapidly changing that fast, okay now I've got to be
19 5 miles visibility, now I have to be one mile.
20 A. Well, I mean, it's mountain flying. So you kind of want good
21 weather where you're at. But yeah, I guess if you look at the
22 regs, yeah, it changes moment to moment. Because it -- like, even
23 as you approach a pass you can be 12,000 AGL, or 12,000 -- yeah, I
24 guess you wouldn't be that but you could easily be over 10,000 AGL
25 and a mile later be 1,000 feet AGL. So yeah, all those change

1 quickly.

2 Q. Okay. So is that all taught in ground school, as far as
3 telling pilots --

4 A. Yeah, it's --

5 Q. -- how to evaluate it?

6 A. Yeah. Yeah, it's the rudiments of being a pilot. I mean, we
7 learn -- this right here, these weather minimums, I mean, that's
8 private pilot stuff.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. So yeah, they definitely have that when they get to us.

11 Q. Okay. All right. And how were you notified of the accident?

12 A. Telephone by Garrett contacted me. And I don't know the
13 exact time, but --

14 Q. But you --

15 A. Or he left a message, and then I called the office.

16 Q. With you being one of the two check airmen, do you recall,
17 did you do the last check ride?

18 A. I did.

19 Q. Did anything stand out?

20 A. Did anything stand out -- other than, I mean, he was a fun
21 guy to fly with. Yeah. He had a great way with airplanes. But
22 nothing like I would be like, oh, this is a concern. It's always
23 like wow.

24 Q. Or good. I mean, it doesn't -- good or bad, that's --

25 A. Some of these pilots, you know, they just -- where they're at

1 in their life, and they -- you know, they fly better than some of
2 the young guys. You're like wow, that's -- you know, I mean, it's
3 that kind of stuff. He was fun to fly with. He just had a
4 passion for it, so it made me smile every time I got in the
5 airplane with the guy.

6 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. That's all I have. Brice?

7 MR. WILSON: But nothing outstanding, no.

8 MR. WILLIAMS: Matt, do you have anything else?

9 BY MR. RIGSBY:

10 Q. How many -- I mean, do you -- you may not know a percentage,
11 but --

12 A. Uh-huh.

13 Q. -- how many people do you wash out that come up? I mean, a
14 couple of seasons?

15 A. Let's see. It seems like we have one every year.

16 Q. One?

17 A. At least, I would -- yeah, if I would -- just about every
18 season I've been in training there's at least one or two that
19 don't make it. And then some will get the check ride and then
20 we'll let go before we're done with that --

21 Q. Right.

22 A. -- mentoring or --

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. -- where we're still riding along with them.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. When this isn't working.

2 Q. Right.

3 A. Yeah. I'd say one a year, if not more.

4 Q. Do they -- when your pilots come up here, do they -- the

5 seasonal guys especially --

6 A. Uh-huh.

7 Q. -- do they have to get their own place, you know, lodging?

8 Are they typically local?

9 A. Well, --

10 Q. I mean, does a guy start at 8, but does he have to -- if he's

11 got an apartment in Anchorage --

12 A. Yeah. No, we discourage anybody living --

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. -- very far away. And we have -- so, Suzanne, or -- Suzanne

15 and Todd usually will rent a house. And so as new pilots come in,

16 they'll have that option while they're getting a place. We work

17 really hard to help pilots find housing --

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. -- before they get up here. Because it's -- that's an

20 important piece, so --

21 Q. Do you -- and a pilot comes in, just looks like crap.

22 A. Uh-huh.

23 Q. Sick, whatever.

24 A. I've sent pilots home.

25 Q. You've sent pilots home. Okay. And you've never had issues

1 with management saying, hey, we got to get that guy --

2 A. No.

3 Q. -- back in -- okay.

4 A. No. And that's what's great. No, I don't -- I have a lot of
5 confidence grounding an airplane because it doesn't have a pilot,
6 because they're sick or -- who knows.

7 Q. Okay. Do you -- did -- is there a formal risk assessment
8 process that each pilot falls --

9 A. No.

10 Q. Okay. I know you said you had the anonymous reporting from
11 the employees.

12 A. Uh-huh.

13 Q. Is there any type of reporting that you ever get back from
14 passengers?

15 A. We do. And anymore with social media --

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. -- and people are more than happy to share their experience.

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. Unfortunately, it's public sometimes. But that's their
20 process. Being with tour companies they can go to their tour
21 director and say, hey, this was something I saw or --

22 Q. Right.

23 A. -- you know, on the negative side.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Yeah, it --

1 Q. Do you ever get those back? I mean --

2 A. We do.

3 Q. -- like from -- okay.

4 A. Yeah. And our tour companies, they're -- I mean, they take
5 it seriously, as we do.

6 Q. Sure.

7 A. And, you know, it's the culture that we like to fix things
8 and --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- we don't want to lose it. So as soon as we hear about it
11 we --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. -- make a fix.

14 Q. I guess how does that process work? If they come back and
15 say man, we -- this guy scared the shit out of us.

16 A. Right.

17 Q. How do we -- is there a follow-up --

18 A. There is. There -- it goes back and forth. Some things that
19 happen, you know, that I can recall outside -- let's see, well,
20 any accident or something that happens in the industry --

21 Q. Uh-huh.

22 A. -- that goes to the tour company, they'll -- there was a
23 beaver that -- and I forget the company, that the head separated
24 and -- one of the cylinders. So they were like, well, what do you
25 guys do. And we tell them what we do.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. And then that day Dallas went out and looked at every
3 cylinder on all of our beavers, where that AD is and where they
4 like to crack.

5 Q. Sure.

6 A. Just to say this is -- we do it. And we just did it.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. So that's -- and then we tell the tour company. And, you
9 know, that's kind of an example of the process --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- that they'll contact us and we go until they're satisfied.

12 Q. Sure.

13 A. So -- but not a formal process, but that's kind of what we go
14 through.

15 MR. RIGSBY: Okay. I think those are all.

16 BY MR. BANNING:

17 Q. I have one question --

18 A. Okay.

19 Q. -- that came to mind. Do the pilots narrate the flights for
20 the tourists?

21 A. They do.

22 Q. Okay. And it's not a recording? They're actually --

23 A. It's not. No, we've tried the recording but we narrate and
24 pilot and tour guide.

25 MR. BANNING: Okay.

1 BY MR. WILLIAMS:

2 Q. Yeah. Do the passengers talk to the pilot? They --

3 A. They can. So we have a voice-activated intercom.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Is what is in Talkeetna. At Rust's, they have the push to
6 talk. So --

7 Q. Can the pilot turn them off?

8 A. We can.

9 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. I think that's all we've got.

10 MR. WILSON: Okay.

11 MR. WILLIAMS: So is there anything missing, anything you can
12 help us with?

13 MR. WILSON: No.

14 MR. WILLIAMS: Any thoughts?

15 MR. WILSON: Let's see -- no, not that I can think of. You
16 guys are pretty thorough. So --

17 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. All right. So we'll stop the recording
18 at 9:31.

19 (Whereupon, at 9:31 a.m. the interview was concluded.)
20
21
22
23
24
25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: K2 AVIATION CRASH
 DENALI NATIONAL PARK
 AUGUST 4, 2018
 Interview of Chris Wilson

ACCIDENT NO.: ANC18FA063

PLACE:

DATE: October 29, 2018

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.



Jane Gilliam
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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K2 AVIATION CRASH *

DENALI NATIONAL PARK * Accident No.: ANC18FA063

AUGUST 4, 2018 *

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Interview of: DAN BALDWIN, Chief Pilot
Rust's Flying Service

Monday,
October 29, 2018

APPEARANCES:

DAVID SHAUN WILLIAMS, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

BRICE BANNING, Senior Aviation Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

MATT RIGSBY, Office of Accident Investigations
Federal Aviation Administration

CHRIS WILSON, Station Chief Pilot
K2 Aviation

BOB RICHMOND
(On behalf of Mr. Baldwin)

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I N T E R V I E W

(1:09 p.m.)

MR. WILLIAMS: Starting the recording at 1:09 p.m. So, Dan, again, my name is Shaun Williams. I'm the investigator in charge on the accident here. As you know, the NTSB -- independent federal agency. We're in charge of determining probable cause of the accidents -- what happened, why it happened, what we can --

MR. BALDWIN: Yeah.

MR. WILLIAMS: -- to prevent it from happening again. We're not a part of the DOT or the FAA. We have no regulatory or enforcement powers or anything like that. Got a few people here taking part. And I will just let everybody kind of introduce themselves.

MR. BANNING: Brice Banning, NTSB.

MR. RIGSBY: I'm Matt Rigsby, out of the FAA's Office of Accident Investigations.

MR. WILSON: And Chris Wilson. You know me from Talkeetna.

MR. BALDWIN: You look familiar.

MR. WILSON: And I'm party representative.

MR. BALDWIN: Who is this guy? We're not going to play that game.

MR. RICHMOND: I'm Bob Richmond, and I'm here to assist Dan.

MR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

MR. BALDWIN: Yes.

MR. WILLIAMS: So you okay talking with all of us here in the

1 room today?

2 MR. BALDWIN: Yes. I am.

3 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Today we'll be using a tape recorder to
4 record the interviews. The recording will be sent off for
5 transcription. The transcript, not the recording, will be part of
6 the public docket when the accident is completed.

7 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

8 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. The recording will not come out. Like
9 I said, the purpose of the investigation is for safety. We're not
10 here to assign fault, blame or liability. Just part of the fact-
11 finding phase of the investigation. Same token, we can't offer
12 any guarantee of confidentiality or immunity because, like I said,
13 the transcript will be made public.

14 Each of the group members will have a chance to ask
15 questions. We'll ask one at a time and just kind of go around the
16 room. Usually about two rounds.

17 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

18 MR. WILLIAMS: So it's not too painful. Please answer all
19 questions to the best of your recollection. If you don't remember
20 something, just say so. At the same time, if you misstate it or
21 you want to change an answer, please do so also.

22 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

23 MR. WILLIAMS: One thing to keep in mind is since it is a
24 recording, just verbalize the answers instead of nodding. I think
25 we all got caught up -- caught once here this morning, and I -- we

1 it's just -- you get used to it.

2 You are entitled to have one representative of your choosing.
3 Is there someone you would like to represent you?

4 MR. BALDWIN: Bob.

5 MR. WILLIAMS: Bob, as always, you may not answer a question;
6 however, you can request a short break to talk with Dan.

7 Do you have any questions before we get going?

8 MR. BALDWIN: No.

9 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

10 INTERVIEW OF DAN BALDWIN

11 BY MR. WILLIAMS:

12 Q. So, for the record, can you please state your name and title.

13 A. Dan Baldwin. I'm chief pilot for Rust's Flying Service.

14 Q. Okay. So, Dan, can you give me a little bit of an overview
15 of your background and how you got to where you are?

16 A. Background, I've been flying in Alaska in small planes for 35
17 years. Started in southeast Alaska and then came up to Anchorage
18 and flew with Ketchum's for 11 years, and then went to Rust's when
19 they closed down.

20 Q. So how long have you been at Rust's?

21 A. Let's see, quite a while now. I'd have to pull both my shoes
22 off to count that high.

23 Q. So it's been a while.

24 A. Yeah, it's been a while.

25 Q. Okay. So being part of Rust's, then, are you also a chief

1 pilot that covers K2 as well?

2 A. Yeah. Uh-huh.

3 Q. Okay. So what are your normal duties and responsibilities as
4 being chief pilot?

5 A. To oversee the training of the pilots and basically is -- the
6 big thing, in a nutshell, is the training of all the pilots.

7 Q. Do you have any other employment, or is it --

8 A. No.

9 Q. Okay. So you're year-round, then?

10 A. Actually, I'm on in the summer and in the winter months I'm
11 just on when I'm needed. So --

12 Q. Do you stay up here in Alaska during the winter?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. Okay. So how long have you been chief pilot at Rust's?

15 A. I don't have the exact number in my head. But it's been a
16 while. It's been, let's see -- this is '18. 16 years, then.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Sixteen.

19 Q. All right. So do you remember back, I guess, 16 years ago
20 when you became chief, do you remember the bidding process for
21 that? Was -- did you interview with the FAA for them to put you
22 on the op specs as chief pilot for --

23 A. Well, I've been at Rust's for 16 years. Been the chief
24 pilot, it was -- I didn't become chief pilot for, when was it, 3
25 years after that. Yes, when I became chief pilot, they had to

1 write up a letter and send it off to a POI. And then became chief
2 pilot.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. So yeah.

5 Q. Do you remember, did the POI ever talk to you about it
6 before? Like do an interview with you, or anything along those
7 lines.

8 A. The POI? Yeah.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Yeah, we talked about all the different things, and stuff.
11 Giving check rides, and everything else.

12 Q. Okay. So about how many planes does Rust's have?

13 A. We've got 12 at Anchorage, is what my count is. Yeah, 12 at
14 Anchorage.

15 Q. What about in Talkeetna?

16 A. We've got -- I can't think. Let's see, nine, I think. Or
17 10. Ten.

18 Q. What about the size of the pilot group? Do you guys have a
19 large pilot group?

20 A. The pilot group is usually around -- every year it's been
21 around 40.

22 Q. Is that for combined --

23 A. That's -- yeah, combined.

24 Q. -- both bases?

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Some years it's a little less, and some years it's one or two
3 more. But it's usually the total size of the group.

4 Q. Have there been any significant changes or anything since the
5 accident?

6 A. Significant changes --

7 Q. Either staffing changes or policy changes or anything like
8 that.

9 A. Been waiting to find out what's happened from this, to, you
10 know, see which direction we need to go. So --

11 Q. Tell me a little bit about the nature of the work. Do you
12 guys do more cruise ship contracts, walk-ins?

13 A. We get a mix of everything, really. They get a lot of
14 business off of cruise ships and then tour groups and walk-ins,
15 and people booking themselves over the phone or through the
16 internet. So we get a pretty wide range of -- pretty big variety
17 of people.

18 Q. So what do you know about the accident flight? Do you know
19 if that was like a cruise ship type contract, or do you know if --

20 A. I'm not that familiar with the specific flight. I wasn't up
21 there, so --

22 Q. Okay. So is there any -- for the pilots, is there any sort
23 of bonus or penalty or anything for on-time -- you know, for
24 getting back on time? Do they get paid any differently?

25 A. No. There's no bonus to keep them on time, if that's what

1 you're --

2 Q. How are the pilots compensated?

3 A. We have a safety bonus for not bending anything or -- so it's
4 just the opposite of that. It's to promote safety and not
5 carelessness, you know.

6 Q. And how are the pilots paid? Is that hourly or --

7 A. Through payroll. They get paid by the hour, the flight hour.

8 Q. Okay. So if there's a flight cancellation for weather, do
9 they -- they don't get paid for that time, or --

10 A. Well, there's also a minimum guarantee, so that's -- that
11 they get paid. So if there's -- if it's a slow, you know, period
12 they may still get a minimum amount of paid hours for that period.
13 So -- but, so they don't have to worry about not making money.
14 They're still going to make money.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. But the specifics of it, you need to talk to bookkeeping on
17 that.

18 Q. All right. So are most of your flights 135, part 91? What's
19 the majority of the operation?

20 A. 135.

21 Q. 135? How is the relationship with the POI and the FSDO?

22 A. Good.

23 Q. About how much interaction do you have with the POI?

24 A. Not a whole lot, but if we have any issues or -- you know, I
25 don't hesitate to give them a call.

1 Q. Okay. Who is the POI?

2 A. I've got his contact information. You want to know who our
3 POI is?

4 Q. Yes, please.

5 A. You want his home number?

6 Q. Just his name, please.

7 A. Roger Young. He looks like that. You know Roger Young?

8 MR. BANNING: I haven't met Roger, I don't think.

9 MR. BALDWIN: Yeah, he's got a lot of experience.

10 BY MR. WILLIAMS:

11 Q. So what is operational control?

12 A. It's controlling the flights and making sure that they
13 operate safely. There's -- you have the -- where the flight is
14 put on the books and you have the pilot and you have management.
15 And any one of those can cancel the flight for any reason.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And both the pilot and the dispatching of the flight all have
18 to -- both agree that it's going. They can't -- if they -- any --
19 it has to be positive on both sides. You can't, you know, send
20 the pilot out if he doesn't want to go. And the pilot can't go if
21 they don't want them to go. So it's a safety thing.

22 Q. So who has the responsibility for operational control?

23 A. The people designated in the ops manual.

24 Q. So who is designated? Is it everybody at the company? I
25 don't mean names, but like what type of positions are designated

1 operational control?

2 A. The -- they're technically called flight followers. But they
3 basically act as dispatch. So, and then the pilots can have
4 operational control in that they can cancel a flight for any
5 reason or postpone it or whatever. So --

6 Q. Okay. So the flight followers, how many of those are there?

7 A. Again, that would be in the ops manual. I didn't bring a
8 copy with me.

9 Q. Okay. So with there being an operation in Anchorage for
10 Rust's, and then the K2 side or the DBA up in Talkeetna, are there
11 two sets of everything? Or how does the delegation or the
12 separation work?

13 A. Two sets of --

14 Q. Like are there two sets of flight followers --

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. -- and -- okay.

17 A. Yeah. There's flight following in Anchorage and there's
18 flight following in Talkeetna.

19 Q. Okay. How often do you get up to Talkeetna?

20 A. On average, probably once a month. Maybe -- sometimes more,
21 sometimes less.

22 Q. Okay. So how does company management -- who supervises the
23 folks with operational control?

24 A. The head of the company would be the director of operations.
25 So they're responsible for the operation of the company.

1 Q. So Chris being the station chief pilot, who does he report
2 to? Does he report to you or does he report to Todd?

3 A. Yeah, he can report to me or he can report to Todd.

4 Q. Okay. So when he has operational control, who supervises --
5 like checks to make sure that he's doing a good job with
6 operational control? Is that you or is that Todd?

7 A. Both.

8 Q. It's both. Okay. And is there any record of it anywhere?
9 Do you guys keep like observation sheets or anything to show that,
10 you know, somebody sampled his work or somebody looked at how he
11 was doing? Is there any record of any of those?

12 A. Not really.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. No.

15 Q. So kind of in a nutshell can you describe the role of the
16 flight followers? Like what is their main function?

17 A. Keep track of the aircraft and make sure that the -- that
18 they're not overdue, basically. When they, you know, when they
19 leave, they can -- they figure out when they're going to be back
20 and stuff like that, and keep track of who is on which plane and
21 all that.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. What time the flights are going and where they're going.

24 Q. So you mentioned it was kind of a joint decision for an
25 aircraft to go.

1 A. Yeah, there's -- yeah. You have to have the agreement of the
2 flight follower, the pilot for the flight to go. If one doesn't
3 want to go -- you know, the pilot doesn't want to go for whatever
4 reason, then he can cancel the flight. Or the flight follower can
5 cancel it, for whatever reason. So --

6 Q. So is there any sort of like a risk assessment or anything
7 that they do? Or is it just a --

8 A. Yeah, you're constantly checking the weather and checking the
9 -- the pilot is checking the aircraft, doing a preflight, and if
10 there's any problems with the aircraft then it doesn't go. Or if
11 -- the flight followers are, you know, checking the clients. If
12 there is a problem with them for whatever reason and they don't
13 want them to go on the plane, then they'll pull it, you know. So
14 there -- it's a --

15 Q. Okay. Is there any formal type of risk assessment they sit
16 down and fill out, or a checklist --

17 A. No.

18 Q. -- before they go or anything like that?

19 A. No, there's not a risk assessment form. I've looked at them
20 and I haven't found one that works for -- with us. It's kind of a
21 unique --

22 Q. So the regulation for operational control says that people
23 exercising operational control, (A) must be qualified through
24 training, experience and expertise --

25 A. Uh-huh.

1 Q. -- in order to have that. So how are the folks with
2 operational control -- how is that met? How is that requirement
3 met?

4 A. Through our training program.

5 Q. Okay. So is --

6 A. There is a record in that, with the flight followers,
7 training workers and --

8 Q. So they just do initial or do they do recurrent?

9 A. Initial and recurrent.

10 Q. Initial and recurrent? Who is responsible for training them?

11 A. I am ultimately, so -- there are instructors and -- below me.

12 Q. So you do have company instructors in addition to check
13 airmen?

14 A. Uh-huh.

15 Q. Okay. Do you know about how many company instructors you
16 have?

17 A. Well, there's different instructors for different -- for the
18 flight followers there's just two, I guess. Or I'd have to look
19 in my records. I don't have a -- I don't know the exact answer,
20 so --

21 Q. Do you know how long their training is?

22 A. A what?

23 Q. How long their training is.

24 A. I'd have to look in the manual there.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. But it's -- for initial, it's -- it can be quite a while.

2 So --

3 Q. Do you know, do they ever ride along, kind of see the other
4 side of the operation?

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Okay. Do you know is that a requirement, just -- or is that
7 something they do just --

8 A. That's part of --

9 Q. -- during initial or --

10 A. That's part of the program, the ride-alongs. It's part of
11 the program.

12 Q. Okay. So do you do pilot hiring?

13 A. I interview the pilots and give them evaluation rides
14 basically. Go fly with them and see how they handle the aircraft
15 and stuff like that. But the actual hiring them would be Todd.
16 He's the one that has the ultimate decision.

17 Q. What are the minimum requirements for a PIC?

18 A. It's up to Todd. He makes that call. It depends a lot on
19 where they're from and, you know, experience and all.

20 Q. Okay. So you mentioned that you're responsible for training.
21 You have instructors under you and some of them are flight
22 following.

23 A. Uh-huh.

24 Q. So pilot training, how many flight instructors do you have?
25 Or company instructors.

1 A. Again, I'd have to look at my records to count them up. I
2 don't have an exact number in my head.

3 Q. Okay. Do you know how many check airmen is with the company?

4 A. Four, I think.

5 Q. So do you cover -- are you one of those check airmen?

6 A. Yeah, I'm a check airman.

7 Q. Okay. So do you also do check rides up in Talkeetna, or just
8 in Anchorage?

9 A. I do in both places.

10 Q. Okay. So I want to talk a little bit about CFIT avoidance.
11 Do you guys have a CFIT avoidance?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Do you guys have a specific procedure for each aircraft, like
14 an escape maneuver or anything like that?

15 A. Yeah, we have a CFIT escape maneuvers. Yes.

16 Q. So can you tell me about the one in the Beaver?

17 A. It's a -- the maneuver is to do a 180-degree turn to get out
18 of the bad weather. If you find yourself in bad weather. So --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And you turn to the left or right, depending on where the
21 terrain is at.

22 Q. Okay. Any climbs, descents, flap manipulation or anything
23 like that?

24 A. If you're in the clouds, then you have to -- you want to
25 climb and turn, do the 180-degree turn while you're climbing. But

1 if you're not in the clouds and you're just running into lower
2 visibility and worse weather, then you just want to -- you don't
3 want to climb into the clouds. You want to turn around and get
4 out of there.

5 Q. Do you guys use any simulators?

6 A. There's one up in Talkeetna there. But besides that, we
7 don't -- we don't have one down in Anchorage for the pilots down
8 there. It's all in the plane, so --

9 Q. So how do you set this up? How do you try to get the -- in
10 the aircraft to evaluate the pilot doing a CFIT escape? How do
11 you -- kind of walk me through what scenario you use. Do you guys
12 have standard scenarios?

13 A. Yeah, we -- it's -- let them know that the weather is getting
14 worse and then we see what his reaction is, and then it's getting
15 worse and see what his reaction is. And then -- at then at one
16 point you put the foggles on him -- hand him the foggles, and then
17 he needs to demonstrate that he can get out of the area that he's
18 in, get returned to better weather. So --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And then after that, you also go do instrument work while
21 they're under the foggles. So --

22 Q. What's a typical duty day for the pilots? Like what -- from
23 when they show up until when they leave, kind of what's their day
24 like?

25 A. In Anchorage, it's from 7 in the morning until 9 at night.

1 That's their duty day. And it's -- and they usually -- in the
2 summertime, June, July and August, it starts at 7. The first
3 flight is normally 7:30, so they have time to get there and check
4 the weather and everything. And then the last flight in the
5 evening is usually they're back by 7. And then sometimes there's,
6 you know, there's -- because of the day, it will get shifted a
7 little bit. But they're always back before -- and on the ground
8 and on their way home by 9. So it's a 14-hour, typical 14-hour
9 duty day. And then in Talkeetna, it's shifted 1 hour. So it's 8
10 to 10 instead of 7 to 9.

11 Q. So about how many flights are they doing in a day? How many
12 trips? Is there --

13 A. On average, it's -- it runs around 4 hours a day. On
14 average.

15 Q. Four hours of flying a day?

16 A. Yeah. Four hours of flying a day.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Sometimes it's more and sometimes it's less. But --

19 Q. So who is -- who manages the pilot's scheduling?

20 A. Chris does in Talkeetna, and in Anchorage I do.

21 Q. Okay. So were you familiar with Craig?

22 A. Yeah, a little bit. I met him at ground school there, at
23 Talkeetna.

24 Q. Anything stand out? Issues, or anything that he did great?
25 Anything --

1 A. Nothing -- nothing. No warning signs, if that's what you're
2 looking for.

3 Q. Just in general.

4 A. Yeah, he was --

5 Q. Like I say, it could be good things. It could be just --

6 A. Yeah, he was a real nice guy.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. I didn't get a chance to fly with him, but he came across as
9 real professional and not a cowboy by any means.

10 Q. So talk to me a little bit about the company's approach to
11 managing safety.

12 A. It's the number one thing, is safety. It's -- at both Rust's
13 and K2. So --

14 Q. So what does that mean? Like how is it the number one thing?
15 Like what is -- how do the pilots know that?

16 A. Because I harp on it a lot about it.

17 Q. Is there a safety manager or a director of safety?

18 A. Yeah. We have a safety management system, and there's a box
19 they can fill out a report if there's -- and do it -- they don't
20 put their name on it, if they want. Or most of the time, they
21 just come to me, you know, or Chris, if they have an issue and
22 it's not being resolved for whatever reason, and take care of it.

23 Q. Okay. So who is responsible for checking that box and --

24 A. I'd be the one responsible in Anchorage for checking it. And
25 then Chris checks it up in Talkeetna. So -- but like I said,

1 they're -- it's really open in the communication between the
2 pilots and myself. That's -- there's no -- any safety things are
3 brought up immediately and taken care of, I guess is the way to
4 say it.

5 Q. Did you guys have any -- how do you communicate safety
6 information with the employees? Is there like company
7 newsletters? Is there some bulletin board? Is there --

8 A. We have memos that we put out occasionally, and then we also
9 have a dry erase board that we write stuff on. Anybody can write
10 on it. So if there's a log in the river that just showed up, we
11 can draw a picture on the dry erase board and show where the log
12 is at, you know, so the other pilot that comes in a half hour
13 later can see it and knows.

14 Q. So is there one of these boards in Talkeetna as well as
15 Anchorage?

16 A. Yeah, they've got a dry erase board up there.

17 Q. How are the flight routes decided for a particular tour
18 flight? So if you're going to do a glacier tour, how is your
19 route over which glaciers or passes, how is that determined?

20 A. It's -- we have standard routes for, you know, the tours that
21 we do and the -- there's areas we go to and there's -- we talk
22 about it in ground school and show which way they go and stuff
23 like that, and sort of what you're talking about there.

24 Q. So do the pilots ever change that route?

25 A. It is variable. You can, you know, vary it with the weather,

1 you know, with the wind or whatever. We don't want to say you
2 have to fly down this line because the wind might be blowing the
3 wrong way and then they want to be able to move over here and not
4 have to worry about staying on a, you know, a line.

5 Q. Okay. And let's say base camp is just IMC. And --

6 A. We don't go.

7 Q. I guess what I'm getting at is can the pilot change and say,
8 okay, we're not going to be able to go over the base camp today;
9 instead we're going to take you over to this glacier over here, or
10 this area and show you this instead? Can the pilot make that
11 change airborne? Is that something --

12 A. Well, it depends how much of a change you're talking about.
13 I'm not sure what you're referring to. It's a --

14 Q. So are you able to go where the weather is nice, to provide,
15 you know, the best tour for the passengers?

16 A. But they can't go to Fairbanks or, you know, it's --

17 Q. Right.

18 A. There is -- you know, if there's some clouds on the Kahiltna
19 side then they could go over to the Ruth side instead. Or vice
20 versa. But they can't just wander off to some other place, you
21 know.

22 Q. Yeah. And that's kind of what I'm getting at.

23 A. Because there is a limit on that and --

24 Q. The Ruth versus the Kahiltna side.

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Not necessarily go to Barrow for the sightseeing experience.

2 A. Right. Yeah. And in that case, they would let the dispatch
3 know that the weather is -- you know, and it wouldn't be just
4 them. It would be the pilot in front of them, you know, the
5 weather is getting lousy, we need to switch to this side or to
6 that side or whatever. So --

7 Q. Okay. And --

8 A. The same thing happens in Anchorage too.

9 Q. So is all that communicated back to either Talkeetna base or
10 Anchorage --

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. -- base?

13 A. Usually both. Because we run tours out of Anchorage up to
14 there too. So --

15 MR. WILLIAMS: I think I'm going to stop there. I'll let
16 Brice --

17 MR. BANNING: I don't think I have any questions right now.
18 Thank you.

19 MR. BALDWIN: Okay.

20 BY MR. RIGSBY:

21 Q. Dan, you mentioned that you have a pretty good relationship
22 with the POI.

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. About how many times a year do you see him?

25 A. Not enough.

1 Q. I'm sorry? Not enough?

2 A. Yeah, I always enjoy when he comes around because he -- I get
3 a -- I learn a lot from that side of what's going on in the
4 industry, because it -- I have my little bubble that I live in,
5 and seeing outside of that -- especially with you guys, you know,
6 what's going on out there, and the accidents and stuff, I'm always
7 trying to -- and I treat him like a resource, you know.

8 Q. Do you -- how long has it been since you've had a POI change?

9 A. Actually --

10 Q. Do they change --

11 A. We've actually gone through a few of them in the last -- but
12 that's -- I don't think that's my fault. I think it's the FAA's
13 been shuffling things around trying to make everything and
14 everything. But all of our POIs have been really good, so --

15 Q. Okay. Is he based here in Anchorage, your POI? Or Wasilla?

16 A. I'm not sure where he's --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. I don't know. I couldn't -- I'm not sure.

19 Q. Okay. How about a FAAS team rep? Have they visited you guys
20 at all?

21 A. I haven't --

22 Q. Put on a seminar with Rust's?

23 A. Yeah, they were coming around pretty often. And I haven't
24 seen them in a while. But I think they've been coming up to
25 Talkeetna more. There's --

1 Q. Is it --

2 A. I think they're out of there. Yeah. But I haven't been to
3 any of their things lately in Anchorage, so --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. They do good work too.

6 Q. They do. They visit the Talkeetna base as well as Anchorage?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Okay. Back up into operational control, can -- you mentioned
9 that they can watch the aircraft. And now, can you from Anchorage
10 -- can you see the aircraft operating in Talkeetna?

11 A. Uh-huh.

12 Q. Do you have a copy of that? Okay.

13 A. Yeah. Right here.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. PIREPs, if they are changing a route and they call in or if
17 they call in and report weather, you know, that they're seeing a
18 cloud buildup on one side or the other, are those -- is there any
19 formal requirement to report those back to flight following? And
20 then once the flight follower gets it, do they record them
21 anywhere? Like write them down or put them in a computer system?

22 A. I don't think there's a log of it, if that's what you're
23 looking for.

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. I haven't -- because it changes so, you know, so often.

1 Q. CFIT avoidance training -- and you may have said it, I just
2 didn't hear it. Is there a simulation portion of that?

3 A. The CFIT?

4 Q. Like a simulator portion of the CFIT avoidance training. Or
5 is it all done --

6 A. It's all done in the plane. Yeah.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. There is -- we try to use the Medallion simulator, but it
9 didn't work out too well. It was --

10 Q. There's not a Medallion --

11 A. It's more realistic to go out and do it in the plane itself.

12 Q. Yeah. I think that's it. Do you know if the accident pilot,
13 the day of the accident, did he call back to any -- and say he was
14 doing a route change or anything like that, or any --

15 A. I'm not aware of that.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. I'm not aware of it. I wasn't there.

18 MR. RIGSBY: Okay. That's it.

19 MR. WILLIAMS: Chris?

20 MR. WILSON: No. No questions.

21 BY MR. WILLIAMS:

22 Q. So how involved are you in the day-to-day operations up at --
23 with Talkeetna, with K2?

24 A. Not that involved. Not really, not a lot. If there's an
25 issue or some unusual -- something going on or whatever and, you

1 know, they need me for whatever reason, then I'll help out, but --

2 Q. How did you find out about the accident?

3 A. I think Willis notified me. I was at home at the time, so --

4 Q. Okay. So since the accident have you guys put any sort of
5 like risk mitigation or anything -- have there been any changes,
6 visibility changes, ceiling changes, anything like that?

7 A. Nothing specifically. There -- we've -- we're trying to
8 figure out which direction we need to go. And, you know, and that
9 comes from -- after this happens and you figure out what actually
10 happened, then it will give us a direction to go and then -- we
11 don't want to make a huge change and then the change can cause a
12 problem, you know. So kind of --

13 Q. So is there a company visibility and standard ceiling
14 visibility requirements?

15 A. Yeah. It's the FARs. It's the minimums. But on top of
16 that, it's -- depends on where you're at, you know. You can't go
17 with the FAR minimums when you're in the -- up inside the range
18 and stuff like that, you know. So --

19 Q. You can't?

20 A. No, you --

21 Q. So what do you go with?

22 A. Well, it depends on where you're at. Like Merrill Pass --

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. -- Merrill Pass, the pass isn't that high. I mean, it's high
25 compared to most passes, but the low route through the pass is a

1 blind turn. So you can't go through there at the minimum altitude
2 you need to clear the pass. You have to go above that high saddle
3 up there so you can see over the other side and turn around if you
4 can't see down the other side. Things like that, you know. It
5 depends on the terrain and everything else.

6 Q. So how is that information relayed to the pilots? Is that
7 through ground school?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. Is it in the airplane? Is it --

10 A. We talk about it in ground school. And -- but it's basically
11 seeing enough to turn around before you get into a situation where
12 you can't turn around.

13 Q. So following the completion of ground school and the check
14 ride --

15 A. And, if I can say, on top of that --

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. -- with the tours, it's not just that. It's a whole other
18 level of safety above that, which is being able to see enough to
19 take pictures for the clients, because it's a tour, you know. You
20 can't haul clients around in lousy weather and expect them to
21 enjoy anything. So it's --

22 Q. Once a pilot completes their check ride are they paired up
23 with a senior pilot for like 5 hours, 10 hours, so they'll get the
24 feel of it? How do they transition from new, from the Lower 48, I
25 just did my check ride, to now I'm out doing tours?

1 A. Well, they do the ride-alongs. It will happen usually before
2 -- not always, but usually before the training, and they -- where
3 they ride along with another pilot and stuff like that, and learn
4 the routes and learn the reporting points and stuff like that.
5 But, you know --

6 Q. Is there a point when the new pilot is PIC and you've got
7 more a senior guy sitting beside him as kind of a safety pilot
8 type of thing?

9 A. Not -- after he's passed his check ride, then that's the last
10 step is passing the check ride. So all of that happens before
11 that he passes his check ride. Unless there's like a new area
12 that he's going to and the pilot went he needs to be checked out
13 in that area, for whatever reason. Then they'll have somebody
14 ride along with him, like -- but --

15 Q. Okay. So is the check ride then just the standard 293 check
16 ride, or do you guys also go up and say --

17 A. Well, we have --

18 Q. -- okay, take me on this tour?

19 A. We have a company-specific form that has, you know -- deals
20 with stuff that we do. So --

21 Q. Do you ever evaluate them giving tours?

22 A. Occasionally, yeah. Sometimes.

23 Q. Do you do that, or there's another check airman who does
24 that?

25 A. The -- it could be the -- me or another check airman, or it

1 could be just somebody riding along from the office and seeing how
2 he handles the people and stuff like that. Sometimes they'll just
3 ride along -- that's where you have a flight follower that's
4 riding along, and doing one of their recurrent ones. So riding
5 along with pilots to see how they're doing, something like that.
6 And they can get feedback, different directions.

7 Q. Has there been any sort of audits or anything like that
8 following the accident?

9 A. We just went through an audit with one of the companies.
10 Just finished it here last week.

11 Q. Okay. Were there any findings?

12 A. There was a few things that we need to update basically.

13 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. All right. Brice?

14 MR. BANNING: I don't think I have any questions. Thank you.

15 MR. WILLIAMS: Matt?

16 BY MR. RIGSBY:

17 Q. Is -- in the op specs, are you VFR only?

18 A. We do have IFR.

19 Q. You do have IFR.

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. But there's --

23 Q. And at Talkeetna?

24 A. Yeah, it's at Talkeetna.

25 Q. Okay. On your hiring, do you require instrument ticket for a

1 guy to come on board?

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. Even for the VFR, for --

4 A. Right.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Yeah. But we don't encourage them at all to be flying around

7 IFR.

8 Q. Sure.

9 A. That's really --

10 Q. Do they -- if a guy is going to just do tours, would he do

11 any type of instrument qualification?

12 A. Not typically, unless it's a -- the niche things.

13 Q. Sure.

14 A. But they do train and, you know, that -- make sure he can fly

15 under the hood and all that.

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. And know the plane, the -- but we don't encourage that.

18 Q. But it is in your op specs? You do have a segment where --

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. -- you can do some 135 IFR?

21 A. Yeah. Yeah.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. But --

24 MR. RIGSBY: That's it.

25 MR. WILLIAMS: Chris, do you have anything else?

1 MR. WILSON: No questions.

2 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. I just want to make sure I got what I
3 needed here. Okay. So just one last thing. Is there anything
4 you can think of to kind of help us out a little bit?

5 MR. BALDWIN: There's the list right there.

6 MR. WILLIAMS: Yeah. Is there anything you can think of that
7 can kind of help us out a little bit and provide any additional
8 insight? You've been flying up here and part of the operation a
9 lot longer than we have, and --

10 MR. BALDWIN: It sounds like it's a, it's -- I don't know. I
11 don't want to jump to any conclusions because I have -- you know,
12 I feel like I'm down at the bottom and I'm gleaning what I can.
13 But I -- so everything I've heard is just, you know, second and
14 third-hand. But I'm -- I am very interested in finding out and
15 hearing what you guys figure out what happened and stuff. But
16 it's -- it has the -- it sounds like a CFIT-type thing, maybe.
17 But I don't know.

18 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. All right. Well, thank you very much.
19 And we'll --

20 MR. BALDWIN: How long before you guys think or figure out
21 the --

22 MR. WILLIAMS: I'll get this turned off here. We can stop
23 the recording at 1:55.

24 (Whereupon, at 1:55 p.m. the interview was concluded.)
25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

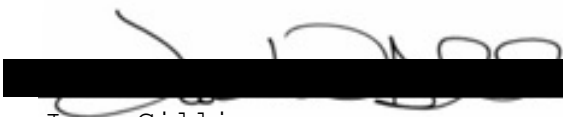
IN THE MATTER OF: K2 AVIATION CRASH
 DENALI NATIONAL PARK
 AUGUST 4, 2018
 Interview of Dan Baldwin

ACCIDENT NO.: ANC18FA063

PLACE:

DATE: October 29, 2018

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.


[REDACTED]
Jane Gilliam
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

*

K2 AVIATION CRASH *

DENALI NATIONAL PARK * Accident No.: ANC18FA063

AUGUST 4, 2018 *

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Interview of: TODD RUST, Director of Operations
Rust's Flying Service/K2 Aviation

Monday,
October 29, 2018

APPEARANCES:

DAVID SHAUN WILLIAMS, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

BRICE BANNING, Senior Aviation Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

MATT RIGSBY, Office of Accident Investigations
Federal Aviation Administration

CHRIS WILSON, Station Chief Pilot
K2 Aviation

BOB RICHMOND
(On behalf of Mr. Rust)

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By Mr. Williams		34

I N T E R V I E W

(2:14 p.m.)

MR. WILLIAMS: The recording started at 2:14.

So, Todd, thanks for coming in and talking to us. Again, Shaun Williams, investigator in charge, NTSB, on the accident. I just want to talk with you and kind of get your take on some things and get a little bit of background information to kind of help us put everything together here.

MR. RUST: Sure.

MR. WILLIAMS: Let you know that NTSB, federal agency to determine the probable cause facts of transportation accidents for promoting safety. Not a part of the DOT or the FAA. We have no regulatory or enforcement powers. It's all the white hat, safety-related.

Got a few people here. You kind of met Brice and Matt, but we'll let them introduce themselves.

MR. BANNING: Brice Banning, NTSB.

MR. RUST: Hi.

MR. BANNING: Hi.

MR. RIGSBY: I'm Matt Rigsby out of the FAA's Office of Accident Investigation.

MR. WILSON: Chris Wilson, party representative.

MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. You okay talking with everybody here?

MR. RUST: Yes.

MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. So we use a tape recorder to record the

1 interviews. The recording will be sent for transcription. The
2 transcript, not the audio recording, will be a part of the public
3 docket when the accident is completed and all of that's released.

4 Like I said, the purpose of the investigation is safety. We
5 want to find out what happened, why it happened, how we can
6 prevent it from happening again. We're not here to assign fault,
7 blame or liability. We cannot, however, offer any guarantee of
8 confidentiality or immunity. Like I said, the transcript will be
9 public information.

10 So each person will have a chance to ask some questions.
11 We'll ask questions one at a time, go around the room. It's
12 usually about two rounds, and everybody is done. Please answer
13 all questions to the best of your recollection. If you don't
14 understand a question, ask to have it repeated. At the same time,
15 if you misspoke and want to correct an answer, please do so.

16 MR. RUST: Um-hum.

17 MR. WILLIAMS: We want accurate as possible. With that in
18 mind, since it is audio, be sure you verbalize your answers, not
19 just nod like I've been caught doing a few times today.

20 So you are --

21 MR. RUST: I understand.

22 MR. WILLIAMS: You are entitled to have one representative of
23 your choosing. Is there something you'd like to have as your
24 representative?

25 MR. RUST: Mr. Bob Richmond.

1 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Bob, you may direct Todd not to answer
2 a question or request a short break; however, you cannot answer
3 questions for him.

4 Do you guys have any questions?

5 INTERVIEW OF TODD RUST

6 BY MR. WILLIAMS:

7 Q. Todd, if you could, state your name and title, please?

8 A. Todd Rust, Director of Operations of Rust's Flying Service,
9 K2 Aviation.

10 Q. Can you give me a general overview of your aviation
11 background?

12 A. My aviation background started in -- actually, a long time
13 ago, 1972, I started -- had first logbook entry. I'd previously
14 worked at Rust Flying Service fueling aircraft prior to that. And
15 I started logging flight training in 1972. I had a private pilot
16 certificate in 1974. I was in high school. Commercial
17 certificate just out of high school in 1975 and began flying
18 commercially that year, and have been flying commercially ever
19 since.

20 Been involved in the business of commercial aviation and Rust
21 Flying Service in particular almost continuously since that time.
22 There was a gap. I was going to school during the winters and
23 would fly during the summer. For 6 years, I did that, and I was
24 actually absent from Alaska for three -- two seasons, I think it
25 was. But by 1983, I was back here full-time with the company, and

1 that's where I've been ever since.

2 Q. Okay. And how long have you been a DO?

3 A. That number might escape me, but I believe it's been since
4 around 1999 or so, 2000 possibly.

5 Q. Okay. So about 18, 19 years?

6 A. Um-hum. I previously had someone else who was serving in
7 that capacity who worked for me.

8 Q. Okay. So are you also the president of the company, then?

9 A. That's correct.

10 Q. Okay. So what are your -- in the director of ops position,
11 kind of what are your normal duties and responsibilities?

12 A. Well, I oversee the whole operation. I mean, the final
13 authority for the operation is mine. And so I spend a lot of time
14 basically overseeing the operation, making sure things are running
15 smoothly, safely, and efficiently. And then I have certain people
16 who then report to me, who are doing tasks on down the chain of
17 command. And that's how I spend most of my time.

18 Q. Okay. So kind of day-to-day involvement between -- like,
19 separating your time -- or how do you -- between K2 and Rust and
20 Anchorage, how is your day-to-day involvement with the K2
21 operation?

22 A. I split my time about, I'd say, roughly two-thirds Rust's and
23 Anchorage and one-third K2 Talkeetna.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. So that would be just a rough estimate how my time is split.

1 And so is that what you're getting at?

2 Q. Yeah, that's fine.

3 A. Okay. All right.

4 Q. I don't need to know from 8 to 10:30 you're doing this.

5 Just --

6 A. Right.

7 Q. Roughly.

8 A. Lunch break, you know --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. All right.

11 Q. So thinking back 18, 19 years ago, you became director of

12 operations.

13 A. Right.

14 Q. How did that process work with the FAA? Do you remember kind

15 of how that approval process worked?

16 A. I don't remember exactly. I'm presuming that I just

17 submitted my name and a letter and then I was approved just based

18 on my qualifications, time with the -- I'm guessing a little bit

19 now; it was so long ago -- but time with the company, my general

20 experience, level of experience, and I think that was primarily

21 what they were looking at, and I think it was a letter saying

22 you've been approved as director of operations.

23 Q. Okay. You don't remember -- and like I said, I know it's

24 been a long time --

25 A. It has been.

1 Q. Do you remember any sort of an interview or anything like
2 that with them in particular --

3 A. No. I do not recall an interview with FAA.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. No.

6 Q. So can you give me a little bit -- I want to get some
7 background on the company in general.

8 A. Um-hum.

9 Q. Kind of what's the history of Rust and how you guys got to K2
10 up in Talkeetna? Just --

11 A. You want me to go, like, way back?

12 Q. Just in general. You don't have to go, like, this year by
13 this year. Just kind of --

14 A. Well, the company is 55 years old. It was founded by my
15 father in 1963. It was a single-pilot operation initially. Grew
16 to a multi-pilot, multi-aircraft operation in the '70s. There was
17 growth through the '70s and '80s due to tourism, concurrent
18 tourism growth in the state. We're fueled a lot by the tourism
19 industry.

20 We had an opportunity in 1996 to purchase K2 Aviation from
21 the previous owner, which we did in that year. And so that's
22 been, what, 22 years ago. And that was a big expansion. It
23 almost doubled the size of the company at that time. And that
24 happened in 1996.

25 And then there's -- with the further growth in that industry

1 up in the Denali area, it's gotten quite a bit bigger in terms of
2 revenue and operations since 1996. We started with seven small,
3 single-engine airplanes and now got 11 quite a bit larger aircraft
4 up there. And the volume has increased quite a bit since that --
5 those early days.

6 Q. Okay. So you just answered my next question. You got about
7 11 airplanes up there?

8 A. Eleven up there and 12 in Anchorage.

9 Q. Okay. Do you know about how many pilots you guys have?

10 A. Over 30, 30-some pilots, over 30.

11 Q. Total or is that just --

12 A. Total.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Between Anchorage and Talkeetna. And it's highly seasonal,
15 so there's a lot of pilots around in the summer and not very many
16 in the winter.

17 Q. Do you know about how many you all carry in the winter?

18 A. There are about five, five or so, five or six floating around
19 in the wintertime, and they're not typically on duty. There's not
20 a regular duty schedule for the pilots in the winter. They kind
21 of come in as needed, as required.

22 Q. Okay. What about flight followers? Do you know about how
23 many of those you have?

24 A. We talking K2 or Rust's and K2 combined?

25 Q. Combined.

1 A. Combined, probably around eight total.

2 Q. Okay. And do you oversee all of them as DO or --

3 A. Well, ultimately, I do, but no, I don't -- I'm not the direct
4 supervisor.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. So since the accident, has there been any significant
8 staffing changes or anything like that, or has it just kind of
9 continued?

10 A. Since the accident in question?

11 Q. Yeah, since this accident.

12 A. There's been downsizing due to seasonal change, yes.

13 Q. Seasonal --

14 A. That's it.

15 Q. Seasonal stuff?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. And the type of work that Rust and K2 does, is it -- do you
20 see, is it pretty evenly spread over, like, cruise ships, walk-
21 ins, tour groups? Is there something that has a higher
22 percentage?

23 A. Independent travelers are the majority -- why don't we
24 address K2. K2 and Rust, the demographics are a bit different.

25 Q. Okay. So let's talk --

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Yeah, let's talk K2.

3 A. All right.

4 Q. It's tough because Rust's is technically the op spec holder
5 with a DBA and --

6 A. Exactly, when we have a base of operations in Talkeetna.

7 Q. Well, let's try in Talkeetna.

8 A. Okay. So it's -- the majority of our business there is
9 independent travelers, and then the minority business is tour
10 companies. But it's split about 55/45. And then there's a little
11 subset of climbers. We provide transportation for climbers in and
12 out of the range for their expeditions.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And that's just a tiny -- it's like 5 percent of what we do.

15 Q. Okay. So how are the -- how are your pilots compensated?
16 Are they hourly? Are they salary?

17 A. They're paid a base salary for what we call a guaranteed
18 number of hours. A typical number might be 100 or 110 hours a
19 month, flying hours. And they're guaranteed to be paid for 100 or
20 110 hours a month at whatever their flying rate is. If they
21 exceed that time, then they're paid by the flying hour, whatever
22 that -- their individual rate is.

23 Q. Okay. So if there's a weather cancellation or maintenance or
24 the pilot is sick, or something like that, does that take away
25 from their min guarantee or --

1 A. If they are absent from work for any reason, it does decrease
2 their guarantee.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. So if they miss a day, then it decreases their guarantee
5 because we haven't been able to utilize them, and so it'll -- it
6 knocks it down maybe by 3½, 4 hours, something like that.

7 Q. Okay. But weather cancellations, maintenance cancellations
8 don't affect that?

9 A. No.

10 Q. They're guaranteed?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. It's only if they're absent due to personal reasons.

14 Q. Okay. If for some reason they're late getting back from a
15 flight for something, does that -- is there any penalty towards
16 them?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. No.

20 Q. So the majority of the work, would you say 135, 91, like --

21 A. 135.

22 Q. 135? Okay. What's the relationship between, I guess Rust
23 and the POI? How would categorize that relationship?

24 A. Roger Young? Is that who we're talking about?

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. Okay. What's the relationship?

2 Q. Yes.

3 A. I would characterize it as a positive one, a good one.

4 Q. Yeah. How much interaction do you have with him?

5 A. It's a little hard to throw any averages out there, but I'd
6 say we have conversations. There's some verbal conversations. We
7 might have a verbal conversation every couple months with him. We
8 might have an email every month. We might have a visit once or
9 twice a year.

10 Q. Okay. So it's regular?

11 A. It's regular.

12 Q. Yeah. Okay. So talk to me a little bit about operational
13 control.

14 A. Okay.

15 Q. First of all, what do you understand operational control as?

16 A. Well, I understand operational control as it -- the most
17 important aspect of it is the determination of whether the
18 aircraft should be dispatched on a flight and under what
19 circumstance, what circumstances that it is accomplished, who's
20 involved, who makes those decisions, what are those decisions
21 based on. And so that's my understanding of operational control.
22 And it's all fueled by the big safety consideration out there.
23 Everything -- safety is behind everything that we're doing, and
24 operational control has got a big safety banner there, and that's
25 how we approach it.

1 Q. So who has responsibility for operational control?

2 A. We have a triad, I guess I would describe it, of the -- in
3 any particular base of operations, the chief pilot, the pilot-in-
4 command and the flight follower, and any one of those people can
5 put a kabash on a flight for anything that makes them
6 uncomfortable with it. So we have -- it's not up to any one
7 particular person; it's usually collaboration between two or more
8 people. And once flights dispatch, then the pilot has ultimate
9 operational control once he's out there making those decisions.
10 We're a single-pilot operation, and that's the dynamic of it. And
11 so we rely on our pilots to make good decisions.

12 Q. So where do you fall into that?

13 A. Where do I fall into it?

14 Q. Yeah. Because you said it was more of a triad of the chief
15 pilot, the PIC and the flight follower. But where do you see
16 yourself in all of that?

17 A. I oversee that.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Make sure that's functioning properly.

20 Q. So how do you do that?

21 A. Conversations, primarily, with people on how things -- if I
22 have questions, I'll go to the appropriate person and ask why are
23 you doing this, why did it happen this way, what are the
24 conditions, that type of thing.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. And so there's -- there would be conversations. Typically
2 what it is, either pick up the phone or see somebody in person.
3 And just I want to make sure that there's no breakdown in that
4 dynamic, that chain of command, make sure the right decisions are
5 being made all the time.

6 Q. Okay. So is there -- kind of changing -- so how do you or
7 how does management supervise the delegates with operation
8 control? Like, how is the work being sampled to make sure, like,
9 the flight follower is doing a great job with the pilots and the
10 chief pilot or base chief pilot is working well in this whole
11 dance to get the airplanes dispatched?

12 A. Um-hum.

13 Q. Is it just through the conversations that --

14 A. Conversations and the oversight in the company management.
15 Like, there's some positions, there's some positions that aren't
16 FAA positions, people overseeing what's going on, as well. So,
17 for instance, in Talkeetna, Stephanie Smothers and my wife,
18 Suzanne, both would have an interest in making sure that things
19 are being done correctly and seeing how that's all being done.
20 But it's really the -- we depend on that -- the checks and
21 balances of those two or three people being involved that
22 determine whether things continue to be safe or not.

23 Q. Okay. So what is the role of the flight follower?

24 A. The role of our flight follower is to keep track of flights.
25 We're on an FAA flight plan in addition to our own company-

1 maintained flight plan. So a flight follower keeps track of
2 flights coming and going, and then they're part of that decision
3 of whether to dispatch a flight or not. And so they're really on
4 the front line of information coming in from the pilots, weather
5 information. They got a whole information network there in front
6 of them in terms of different assets as far as weather information
7 on the computer satellite, satellite weather, weather cams, pilot
8 reports coming in pretty continuously during the day. So they're
9 really on the front line of that. It's an important position, and
10 it's -- I lost track of the original question. What was the --

11 Q. Just kind of what was the role of the flight coordinators --

12 A. Well --

13 Q. Or flight followers?

14 A. Flight followers, yeah. So, yeah, I think that's, that's
15 their primary role is to keep track of flights, make sure they
16 dispatch safely, and then if anything -- if there's an event or
17 whatever, they're on the forefront of that, as well.

18 Q. Okay. So you mentioned that they're dispatched safely?

19 A. Um-hum.

20 Q. Can you elaborate on that? What do you mean by that?

21 A. I mean that the weather, the aircraft, the pilot, the
22 weather, all that is -- meets our standards and that things are
23 good to go, and we can be confident that that flight is going to
24 be conducted safely.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. So they're achieving that confidence, I think.

2 Q. Okay. So the regulation, Part 118, so the person exercising
3 operation control must be qualified through training, experience,
4 and expertise?

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. So how is this met?

7 A. We train the flight followers. So they go through a training
8 program, and they go through then returning -- what is it --
9 recurrent training each year, as well, which we document. I think
10 Chris plays a pretty big -- Chris Wilson plays a pretty big role
11 in that at K2.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. And so it's training and then there's on-the-job training and
14 experience as well. We can only do so much paperwork, and then
15 they need to, then they need to get into that position and perform
16 it. And so that's the point at which we have to probably provide
17 more oversight when they're new in the position. So that's what
18 we do.

19 Q. So who's responsible for training them?

20 A. Chris Wilson.

21 Q. Chris is?

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. K2.

25 Q. Do you know how long training is for them?

1 A. I can't really be quoted on that. I think it's several,
2 several days, but I'm not sure exactly how long it is.

3 Q. Okay. Do you know are there any qualifications, hiring
4 qualifications for flight followers? Are you looking for pilot
5 certificates? Are you looking for a dispatcher license --

6 A. No, no. I think for flight followers, we found the
7 disposition is probably the -- personality and disposition is
8 probably the largest single factor. So, no, we don't -- we're
9 not looking for pilots or anyone in particular. It's more of a
10 good fit. And we know a good fit when we see it. And so it has a
11 lot to do with disposition.

12 Q. Okay. So you take somebody off the street, and you're
13 putting them through the training program and through OJT. Have
14 you found at the end that it's adequate for training on weather,
15 that that program is adequate? Have you seen that you've had to
16 increase it, like, beef up weather training, or anything like
17 that?

18 A. You know, I would have to defer to Chris on that.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. On that as far as specifics of if we've seen it adequate,
21 because I'm -- I wasn't necessarily on site observing everything
22 that was going on, so I would, I would -- if I would have had --
23 or a question about that, I'd ask Chris.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. All right. So let's talk about the pilots.

2 A. Um-hum.

3 Q. What are the minimum requirements for hiring pilots? What
4 are you looking for?

5 A. Well, the absolute minimums are FAA commercial pilot
6 minimums, but I myself have kind of an informal back-of-my-head
7 thing I'm looking for, which is a couple thousand hours total time
8 and 500 hours Alaska time, and -- but we're not always able to
9 necessarily meet that. And we're really looking for people who
10 are a good fit for the job and are competent. But to answer your
11 question, FAA minimums are -- we don't have any ones -- any
12 minimums outside of that.

13 Q. But you personally, being the DO, you're looking for --

14 A. I have a wish list, so I look for certain things and certain
15 relevant experience. It's important -- relevant experience is
16 pretty important to the K2 operation, so we look for that. But I
17 don't have any, like, absolutes like you don't have 2,000 hours,
18 so we're not even going to consider you. That's not how we're
19 approaching it.

20 Q. There's a lot of different variables there?

21 A. There are a lot of different variables. And the relevance of
22 experience is pretty important.

23 Q. So who's responsible for hiring the pilots?

24 A. Well, I'm part of that process. Suzanne is part of that
25 process. Chris Wilson is part of that process. Dan Baldwin is

1 part of that process. Those are, I think, the four people that
2 play a role in that.

3 Q. So it's more of a group effort for hiring?

4 A. Yes, yes.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. There's no one person who has ultimate control of that, no.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. We kind of form a consensus between the three or four of us.

9 Q. Who's responsible for training the pilots?

10 A. Dan Baldwin and Chris Wilson.

11 Q. Okay. Do you know how many check airmen you have?

12 A. Three now, I think.

13 Q. How about company instructors?

14 A. Probably four, I believe.

15 Q. So I meant to ask you earlier and kind of go into this. Do
16 you still fly the line?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Okay. Can you kind of describe the CFIT avoidance training,
19 the CFIT avoidance program or policies that you guys have like
20 escape maneuvers or anything like that?

21 A. Um-hum. Well, we do have -- we have a training module for
22 CFIT, and just to really boil it down to the very basics, it
23 involves fly the airplane, keep control of the airplane. Usually
24 involves reversing course although that's not always necessarily
25 the best thing, but generally, reversing course to extricate

1 yourself out of whatever situation you just got yourself into.

2 We're big on GPS training pages, go to the training page so
3 we got an idea of our obstruction, ground clearance. So that's
4 one of the things we hammer into people: Go to your training
5 page. It's usually a reversal of course. So that's the essence
6 of it. Then there's the finer points of that, but that's the main
7 part of the training.

8 Q. Do you utilize any simulator training at all?

9 A. No.

10 Q. You ever explored that?

11 A. We actually have a simulator at K2, but it was more for IFR
12 procedures and not for, not for CFIT, so, no, we haven't really --
13 haven't looked into that, no.

14 Q. So can you kind of run me through what's a typical day for
15 the pilots?

16 A. Typical day for pilots at K2 is to arrive at the facility
17 typically around 7:30 or 8 in the morning, and then there's almost
18 always a morning meeting. We don't start our flights until around
19 8:30 or 9:00, so there's almost always a morning meeting, which --
20 to discuss just pertinent aspects of the coming day whether it be
21 weather-related, aircraft, equipment, staffing, whatever, whatever
22 issues might come up. It's kind of an open -- can be an open
23 discussion. But usually it always -- it usually always includes
24 weather and landing conditions and aircraft anomalies, or
25 whatever.

1 So that's done. And then pilots will then get their flight
2 assignments. Some of them start flying at 8:30, some at 9.
3 Sometimes there's a big weather delay, and you're not doing
4 anything until noon or after. It just depends.

5 We're a VFR operation, so we don't go anywhere unless the
6 weather is just, by most pilots' consideration, excellent, because
7 there's no reason to go -- we do -- 99 percent of what we do is
8 sightseeing, so there's no reason nor any advantage to going out
9 in poor weather. You can't see anything, and it's not good --
10 it's just not good service for the customer.

11 So we're fortunate to be in an environment where we don't --
12 we're not flying in poor or marginal weather. We're only going
13 when it's good, because that's the essence of our business is to
14 go show people the sights, and you got to have pretty decent
15 weather. And for us, that means thousands and thousands of feet
16 of cloud height and good visibilities. And so we're just
17 fortunate to be able to operate in that kind of environment.

18 So the pilots, there are some days where a day for a pilot is
19 literally sit and do nothing because the weather is not conducive
20 to sightseeing flights. And there are a good number of days where
21 that happens. You sit and you do absolutely nothing. You may not
22 take a flight the whole day. The whole operation is basically
23 shut down for the day. And then other days where you got good
24 weather and you can be busy all day, and you can fly five flights,
25 boom, boom, boom, right in a row.

1 And so just to describe a pilot's typical day, it can be
2 really busy or it can be really not busy and boring, or it'll be
3 somewhere in between. But they can usually plan on having pretty
4 regularly scheduled departures. So it's not like they don't know
5 when things are coming up. We have times that we typically
6 depart, odd hours, typically, 9, 11, 1, 3, 5, like that. So they
7 can expect to fly -- if we've got customers, they expect to fly at
8 those different times.

9 And so it's, I think, a pretty good environment for them
10 given that there's no pressure to fly in bad weather and no need
11 to. And the customers are there to have -- for the most part on
12 vacation, and they're there to have a good time, and we're hosting
13 them. So I'd say most of the pilots who work there, they -- I'm
14 going to correct and say all the pilots who work there do so
15 because it's a fun job and they enjoy what they do. And
16 otherwise, they just would not be there. It's just that kind of a
17 place to work. So people are there because it's a great job.

18 Q. So you mentioned that there's almost always a morning
19 meeting?

20 A. Um-hum.

21 Q. Do you know if there was one on the day of the accident?

22 A. I do not know that.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. There might be somebody who does know that. I presume there
25 is someone who knows that, but I was actually -- I wasn't present,

1 so I have no idea.

2 Q. Okay. Do you ever call in for them?

3 A. What's that?

4 Q. Do you ever call in for morning meetings?

5 A. Do I? No.

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. No.

8 Q. Okay. So were you familiar with Craig?

9 A. Was I familiar with Craig?

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. Well, inasmuch as he's my employee and I'd see him around,
12 and I went to his house a couple times for social reasons.

13 Q. Any issues or anything ever come to mind good/bad? I mean,
14 give me an overall impression of him.

15 A. Well, our impression of Craig was positive from the day we
16 first talked to him and when we did interviews, a couple
17 interviews over the phone. I think I participated in at least
18 one. So we had a good phone conversation on the phone. He's very
19 friendly, talkative, intelligent, and upbeat. We did -- we
20 checked references on him, and those were all very positive, very
21 positive.

22 We decided to hire him based on his qualifications, his
23 experience, his references, and interviews, and an evaluation ride
24 that was done. I don't recall who flew with him. Chris, I don't
25 know if you remember, but there was, I think, the evaluation ride

1 on Craig.

2 And he went through training. Dan Baldwin did the ground
3 training. Chris Wilson does the onsite training at K2 and then
4 the flight training, additional ground training, had a lot of
5 experience with Craig, flying with him. I did not fly with him,
6 but everything I heard about him was positive.

7 He was popular with his coworkers. He was very helpful. He
8 actually -- due to his body shop experience was able to fix, fix
9 some fiberglass damage we had one of the aircraft. And he pitched
10 in, did that. So, yeah, I was happy with Craig. Absolutely.

11 Q. So describe the company's approach to managing safety?

12 A. Our approach, it starts from the -- it really starts from the
13 top down. We have a philosophy that safety comes first above all
14 else, and so it starts with myself, and it starts with Suzanne,
15 and it trickles down, because we think that -- there's no way that
16 we're going to have a safe organization if we're not at the very
17 top committed to that. So it really starts at the top and works
18 its way down. And it's just really ingrained in everything that
19 we do, how we approach things.

20 We're a very conservative company, frustratingly so, I'd have
21 to say, because there's so many times that we choose not to fly or
22 not to do a particular operation even though our competitors or
23 others are doing that, and we just choose -- do the safety
24 considerations and just taking a conservative approach to not do
25 whatever operation might be there.

1 In fact, on the day of the accident, we had a moratorium on
2 landings. We were the only operator that was not landing that
3 day, I believe, just due to the prevailing weather conditions, and
4 we decided we just weren't going to engage in landings, didn't
5 think it was enough margin to -- but that was our decision. It
6 wasn't others'. Others were continuing to land.

7 So that's the frustrating part of it, because it -- a
8 competitive -- it becomes a competitive pressure, because when
9 other companies will do things that we will not do, we lose
10 business as a result of that, or we're -- well, that's -- I guess
11 that's really what it comes down to, because it's a competitive
12 thing.

13 So -- and I like to see that philosophy in everyone on down
14 the chain of command, all the way down to the -- well, hell, all
15 the way down to the pilots, all the way down to the dispatchers --
16 not dispatchers, but flight followers. Everybody all the way down
17 to the rampers. Everybody needs to be and should be and I trust
18 is engaged in that safety mission that we just feel is so
19 important.

20 Q. Is there an accountable manager? Is there, like, a director
21 of safety or safety manager or --

22 A. No. We don't have a safety manager. The closest thing to a
23 safety manager would be Chris Wilson in Talkeetna and then Dan
24 Baldwin in Anchorage.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. But we don't have a formal safety manager.

2 Q. Are there -- do you guys have safety meetings, like, not
3 necessarily -- I won't go so far as to say, like, a safety stand-
4 down or anything, but do you have, like, safety meetings once a
5 month?

6 A. Well, I would characterize those morning meetings as safety
7 meetings because that's what we're talking about, keeping things
8 safe out there by talking about all the issues at hand.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. So, like, a safety committee meeting? No. We don't have a
11 safety committee.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. So, no.

14 Q. All right. Does the company perform -- I think you kind of
15 talked about this already -- just risk assessments on a per-flight
16 basis or anything? It's more -- or is it more of the
17 conversation?

18 A. Written down risk assessment --

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. Like a matrix or --

21 Q. Right.

22 A. No, it's conversation. It's based on the people who are
23 involved and their experience and their insight.

24 Q. Okay. All right. I'm going to let Brice go.

25 BY MR. BANNING:

1 Q. I just have a couple questions for you.

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. Back to the flight release or dispatch, if you will.

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. When a flight follower is releasing a flight, do they have a
6 checklist that they follow? They talk about weather or they talk
7 about -- is there a checklist that they go through with the pilot
8 or anything of that nature?

9 A. No, not to my knowledge.

10 MR. RUST: I mean, is there something that's come up that
11 Chris Wilson that's -- recently that don't know about?

12 MR. WILSON: No.

13 MR. RUST: Okay.

14 MR. WILSON: No.

15 MR. RUST: No.

16 BY MR. BANNING:

17 Q. And then if a flight follower had a question, and maybe there
18 was something that concerned them, do they -- are they encouraged
19 or is there a direct line of communication to a higher-level
20 management with insight, and does that happen?

21 A. Yes. And that would be -- the typical scenario would be the
22 dispatcher has -- needs some guidance.

23 Q. Right.

24 A. And would go to -- Chris Wilson would be the first go-to.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. I think those are the only two questions I have.

5 A. Okay.

6 Q. Thank you.

7 A. All right.

8 MR. WILLIAMS: Matt?

9 BY MR. RIGSBY:

10 Q. Todd, are there any -- you mentioned the GPS terrain pages?

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. Is that in all the aircraft?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay. And is it part of the Garmin? I guess what is -- is

15 it in the TAWS database --

16 A. It's the Garmin portable, Garmin portable. We also have

17 TAWS-B in the aircraft in which they -- that's required, which is

18 just the turbines --

19 Q. Okay. The turbines?

20 A. -- with six or more seats, yeah.

21 Q. And is there a policy as far as when to use it, when not to

22 use TAWS?

23 A. When to use it and when not to?

24 Q. Yeah. Or I mean --

25 A. Well, we use it all the time. Unfortunately, due to the way

1 the system is designed, it has to be inhibited --

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. -- sometimes because it becomes a nuisance.

4 Q. Nuisance.

5 A. When you're flying in the mountains and it doesn't recognize

6 anything you're doing. So --

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. So, yeah, there's that, and it's --

11 Q. Sure, sure.

12 A. You know, like, it's just, it's just a --

13 Q. It's a known issue.

14 A. There's just an issue.

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. Yeah, just -- exactly.

17 Q. The electronic flight bags, have you guys explored any of

18 that or are you familiar with electronic flight --

19 A. I know what you're talking about. We've thought about it.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. On how to implement something like that. There's some

22 advantages and disadvantages to it, but -- so your question is

23 have we thought about it. Yes.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Yeah, certainly.

1 Q. Is there a policy -- like, say a pilot would have his own and
2 maybe have XM Weather. Is there anything that prevents him from
3 doing that?

4 A. No. We actually have some pilots who -- using ForeFlight
5 or --

6 Q. ForeFlight? Okay.

7 A. -- something like that just on their own because they --

8 Q. Sure.

9 A. It just enhances their -- the number of tools they have.

10 Q. Sure.

11 A. But we don't discourage that. I would say I actually would
12 encourage it. If somebody said is it okay, I'd say sure.

13 Q. Right.

14 A. Go for it.

15 Q. Okay. On the flight followers, how are they paid? Are they
16 hourly?

17 A. They're just hourly.

18 Q. Hourly? Okay.

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. And they are not 121 dispatchers, right?

21 A. No.

22 Q. No? Okay.

23 A. No, they are not official FAA --

24 Q. Licensed dispatchers?

25 A. -- covered type employees, yeah.

1 Q. Okay. Are there any other DBAs that you're -- other than
2 K2 --

3 A. Uh-uh, no.

4 Q. Safety reporting system, I think you mentioned something
5 about that. There is a safety reporting system? Or if somebody
6 had -- if an employee has an issue with something safety-wise and
7 say they don't feel comfortable going to Chris or --

8 A. Like anonymously or something?

9 Q. Yeah.

10 A. There is.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. I'd say it's not very often used or very well-used, because
13 the anonymity is -- for the most part, people just come to us and
14 say, hey, we have -- we're pretty open. I mean, it's totally
15 open-door, and we don't shut people down, you know, on stuff like
16 that, because it's encouraged, you know? If you have something to
17 say, bring it to us so we can look at it.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. So --

20 Q. That's all I got.

21 MR. WILLIAMS: Chris?

22 MR. WILSON: I have no questions.

23 MR. RUST: You get to question me?

24 MR. WILSON: Oh, yeah, if I --

25 MR. RUST: I didn't know that.

1 (Laughing.)

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But wisely, he's decided not to do it.
3 He's been doing a good job --

4 MR. RUST: I don't mind. If you got anything, whatever.

5 MR. WILSON: No, I don't.

6 MR. RUST: Yeah.

7 MR. WILSON: This guy might squirm, though, and I don't want
8 to see --

9 MR. WILLIAMS: Do you have anything else? Okay.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You saw what happened last time. I
11 mean, I choked.

12 BY MR. WILLIAMS:

13 Q. So, Todd, I don't have any other questions --

14 A. Um-hum.

15 Q. -- you know, straightforward, but if there's anything we're
16 missing, if there's any insight, you've been doing this for a lot
17 longer than we have as far as flying up there. And if there's
18 something we're missing, by all means, please let us know. Help
19 point us in the right direction.

20 A. Okay.

21 Q. You know, that's why we're here. That's why we're doing
22 this, just to try and get to the bottom of it.

23 A. Yeah, I'm just at a total loss really. I mean, I can just
24 candidly say I don't understand how a good pilot with good
25 equipment ended up in a situation like that, (indiscernible) a

1 loss.

2 Q. That does bring up one question. Just can you track the
3 phone -- or track the phones -- can you track the planes from your
4 phone? Like, when you're down here, can you see what's going on
5 up at K2?

6 A. Actually, I can, yeah, I can go to the -- in the office.
7 Rust's has got everything happening.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. You can see everything going everywhere, yeah.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Yeah. But I've never tried it on my phone, no.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Yeah.

14 MR. WILLIAMS: All right. Well, I think that does it. I'll
15 stop the recording at 3:00.

16 (Whereupon, at 3:00 p.m., 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: K2 AVIATION CRASH
 DENALI NATIONAL PARK
 AUGUST 4, 2018
 Interview of Todd Rust

ACCIDENT NO.: ANC18FA063

PLACE:

DATE: October 29, 2018

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