

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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GRANT AVIATION CESSNA 208 CRASH

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AFTER TAKEOFF FROM HOOPER BAY

*

IN ANCHORAGE, ALASKA,

*

ON FEBRUARY 4, 2020

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Interview of: JACOB O'SHEA, Pilot
Grant Aviation

Via telephone

Thursday,
February 13, 2020

APPEARANCES:

BRICE BANNING, Senior Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

ERIC SWENSON
National Transportation Safety Board

CHARLES GILLESPIE, Aviation Safety Inspector
Federal Aviation Administration

DAN KNESEK, Vice President of Operations
Grant Aviation

MARK WILHELM, Counsel
(On behalf of Mr. O'Shea)

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I N T E R V I E W

(10:03 a.m.)

MR. BANNING: And we are currently on the record at 10:03 Alaska Standard Time. My name is Brice Banning. I am a Senior Accident Investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board. Today we are investigating accident number ANC20LA020.

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

MR. O'SHEA: Okay.

MR. BANNING: I would like at this point to go around the room and to have -- or around the phone, rather, and have everybody introduce themselves.

Charlie?

MR. GILLESPIE: My name is Charles Gillespie, and I am an Aviation Safety Inspector with the Federal Aviation Administration.

MR. BANNING: Dan?

MR. KNESEK: This is Dan Knesek. I'm the Vice President of Operations of Grant Aviation.

MR. BANNING: Eric?

MR. SWENSON: Eric Swenson, Aviation Accident Investigator, NTSB.

MR. BANNING: Mark?

1 MR. WILHELM: I'm Mark, Counsel for the witness.

2 MR. BANNING: And Jake?

3 MR. O'SHEA: Jacob O'Shea, and I'm the pilot at Grant
4 Aviation.

5 MR. WILHELM: And before we go forward, Mr. Gillespie, I
6 understand you are here in a safety role and not an enforcement
7 role, and whatever is said here or whatever the recording here and
8 the conversations here will not be used for enforcement purposes;
9 is that right?

10 MR. GILLESPIE: That is correct, Mark. I'm here strictly
11 just investigating the accident.

12 MR. WILHELM: Thank you.

13 MR. BANNING: Do you have any objections to the people
14 present for the interview, Jake?

15 MR. O'SHEA: I do not.

16 MR. BANNING: Okay. Thank you. Today we will be using the
17 services of a digital recorder. The transcript, not the audio
18 recording, will be made -- will likely be made part of the public
19 docket. Do you have any objection to a recording, Jake?

20 MR. O'SHEA: I do not.

21 MR. BANNING: Eric?

22 MR. SWENSON: No, I do not.

23 MR. BANNING: And Dan?

24 MR. KNESEK: No, I don't.

25 MR. BANNING: Charlie?

1 MR. GILLESPIE: I do not.

2 MR. BANNING: And Mark?

3 MR. WILHELM: I do not.

4 MR. BANNING: Thank you. The purpose of the investigation is
5 safety, to determine probable cause and prevent reoccurrence. Our
6 role is not to assign fault, blame or liability. The interview is
7 part of the fact-finding phase of the investigation. We cannot,
8 however, offer any guarantee of confidentiality or immunity.

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

15 Jake, please answer all the questions to the best of your
16 recollection. If you don't understand a question, ask to have it
17 repeated or explained, and if you need to correct something that
18 you said, it's no problem. Please do so.

19 MR. O'SHEA: Okay.

20 MR. BANNING: And you are entitled to have one representative
21 of your choosing. Jake, is there someone you would like to have
22 as your representative?

23 MR. O'SHEA: Mark Wilhelm.

24 MR. BANNING: Thank you.

25 And, Mark, we'd just ask you to not answer any questions on

1 Jake's behalf. But if you need a short break to confer with him,
2 just let us know, and that won't be a problem.

3 MR. WILHELM: Thank you, Brice.

4 MR. BANNING: And does anybody have any questions before we
5 get started?

6 (No audible response.)

7 MR. BANNING: All right.

8 INTERVIEW OF JACOB O'SHEA

9 BY MR. BANNING:

10 Q. With that, Jake, if you would, just tell us your story, maybe
11 from the start of the day that the accident occurred.

12 A. Happily. So this occurred on February 4, 2020, and it was a
13 very snowy, overcast, low visibility, flat light, flash whiteout
14 condition kind of day. This was the first flight of the day for
15 me. We were late leaving for our morning runs due to weather
16 conditions and loading aircraft, getting them ready for the
17 morning flight.

18 The route for this flight was Scammon Bay, Hooper Bay and
19 then Chevak, and then back to Bethel, and I left out of Bethel.
20 Took off in the later morning, so we were about, I believe 2½ or 3
21 hours late for the morning flight, and our first stop was Scammon
22 Bay.

23 Prior to taking off, I got runway condition reports from all
24 Villages from my dispatcher who confirmed that the runways were
25 ready for us to fly out to, and I got weather reports from myself

1 and from the dispatch. We are always supposed to obtain weather
2 at all three destinations.

3 Once I obtained weather, I did a risk analysis to determine
4 whether or not the safe was -- or the flight was safe to take
5 after the flight -- after the weather, excuse me -- and then got a
6 forecast of the current conditions of the flight along the cruise
7 to see what kind of icing conditions I would have.

8 After that I deemed the flight was safe to go, and I filed
9 flight plans to Scammon Bay, Hooper Bay, Chevak and then back to
10 Bethel, all IFR. When I got them filed, I talked to the
11 dispatcher on the phone for filing the flight plans and got any
12 kind of NOTAMS or icing conditions reported, which he didn't have
13 any PIREPs or icing, just what he had for his surface analysis to
14 say that there were icing conditions along the route.

15 And then got all necessary information ready to head out, and
16 I took off from Bethel to Scammon Bay with nine passengers on
17 board, and we did weight and balance properly for it to make sure
18 we were underneath our icing weight for the caravan. Flew to
19 Scammon Bay without incident. Whiteout conditions was IMC the
20 entire time, low visibility. It was snowing, but it was impact
21 snow, so I wasn't collecting any ice during the flight.

22 Flew direct to Chikski (ph.), I believe is how you say it,
23 for the RNAV runway 1-0 into Scammon Bay, into the descent. And
24 as I was flying over the ocean, I was concerned I'd be collecting
25 more ice because prior to this flight, two days earlier, I had

1 done the same thing in similar conditions and had collected ice
2 when I got over the water. But today was not that.

3 Got over the water, did the procedure, turned back inbound to
4 go into runway 1-0 for the RNAV into Scammon Bay, and prior to
5 doing the approach, I got clearance from Anchorage Center and
6 obtained the current weather in Scammon Bay, and it was high
7 enough to -- the weather was good enough in Scammon Bay to attempt
8 the approach.

9 Broke out at, I believe 1,600 feet or so in Scammon Bay to
10 make ground contact and then saw the runway, and it was flat light
11 condition. So it was difficult to tell the condition of the
12 runway with the amount of snowfall, but I could clearly see the
13 runway -- clearly enough to make the landing.

14 Touched down in Scammon Bay without any incident. Noticed
15 that there was a lot of snow on the runway, more than a clear
16 runway, but there was -- it was still low enough snow to still
17 conduct the flight safely. Landed in Scammon Bay, taxied in and
18 offloaded my nine passengers. Picked up two passengers then and
19 light cargo -- not much; it was just a TV -- and loaded it onto
20 the airplane.

21 And then I got a clearance from Anchorage Center to depart
22 Scammon Bay over to Hooper Bay, IFR. So I took off out of Scammon
23 Bay light, not a lot of weight, and flew over to Hooper Bay. On
24 the way to Hooper Bay -- because I felt the weather was
25 deteriorating; it was worse than reported -- I listened to the

1 weather at Chevak to see whether or not I was going to Chevak.

2 As I was looking at Chevak's weather, it was reporting lower
3 than what was legal to shoot the approach into Chevak. So at that
4 time I determined Chevak was going to be a cancelled run, and I
5 was going to go Hooper Bay back to Bethel once I landed in Hooper
6 Bay. I listened to the weather in Hooper Bay, and it was high
7 enough to make the attempt to land in Hooper Bay.

8 So I come in, I'm cleared for the approach for runway 1-3
9 into Hooper Bay, and again it's low visibility when I break out of
10 the clouds. I can see the runway, but basically all I can see is
11 the runway lights -- but not really the lights, just the stem that
12 the lights are on. I can just see the black dots outlining the
13 runway, but there's just white on white on white.

14 I landed down in Hooper Bay, and when I did, I found again a
15 lot of snow on the runway from how long it had been snowing since
16 I had left Bethel. Touched down in Hooper Bay without incident,
17 taxied off safely. Once I was in Hooper Bay, I called Bethel
18 dispatch for Grant and told them that Chevak's weather had dropped
19 too far, I'm cancelling the Chevak leg, and I'm going to go Hooper
20 Bay back to Bethel.

21 And then when I landed, I got out and I talked to the Village
22 agent, and I said, I'm no longer going to Chevak, so give me all
23 of your Bethel passengers that you can, and we'll take your Bethel
24 passengers. So rather than picking up only two more additional
25 passengers, I picked up an additional five passengers, making it

1 seven passengers total. And then one passenger had a lot of bags
2 and we weighed the bags, and so I was going to be leaving a lot
3 heavier than I would have had I just gone to Chevak.

4 And then once I landed, a Bering Air King Air landed right
5 behind me off the approach. He taxied there and offloaded his
6 passengers for a charter, and then I let him know that he could go
7 first since he -- I was still waiting on passengers. We were just
8 about ready to both taxi at the same time. I was like, you can go
9 taxi out first, and I will wait for you.

10 So once I loaded up all my passengers, I was waiting for the
11 King Air to taxi out. The King Air taxied out, took off safely
12 without any incident. And then I got clearance from Anchorage
13 Center to go ahead and depart off of Hooper Bay. The wind was
14 pretty much across the runway, but it was still favoring Runway
15 1-3, so I taxied out and back-taxied Runway 1-3 and used up as
16 much room as I could as far as the back taxi.

17 When I aligned myself straightforward again, it was flat
18 light conditions. Even though I had listened to the weather when
19 I taxied out that I had the visibility to take off, with the flat
20 light condition it was very difficult to see very far down the
21 runway or to have very good depth perception.

22 So I configured the aircraft for takeoff as I did the 180
23 degree turn on runway 1-3, power fold for takeoffs, pull forward
24 and mixture at high idle, ignition on and flaps set to 20. I
25 rolled down the runway at first without any incident or anything,

1 noticing anything different. Even though there was snow on the
2 runway -- deeper snow on the runway, it rolled okay at first. And
3 then as I was rolling on, the takeoff speed was taking a while to
4 get there, and I was just like, well, that's just the snow; it
5 will build up. And then by the time I could see the end of the
6 runway, I had realized I was gobbling up too much of it to what I
7 felt was to safely stop in time, to abort.

8 So I committed to the takeoff. I got the aircraft -- you
9 know, firewalled the power to full power, over torqueing -- you
10 know, full torque on the throttle, got the aircraft free of the
11 snow. Stall warning horn was going off, so I was trying to keep
12 her from stalling but was not very high off the ground. So I
13 tried to put it into ground effect, check stalled airspeed.

14 As I did, I took off, off the runway and cleared the end of
15 the runway, put it into -- tried to put it into ground effect to
16 keep the aircraft from stalling, and the aircraft settled a little
17 bit, which caused the main gears to make contact with the snow off
18 of the end of the runway. This slowed me down and put my nose
19 gear into the snow again which sucked my plane back into the snow,
20 and I came to a stop.

21 From when my first gears touched to when I stopped was not
22 very far. The aircraft was only maybe 150 yards away from the end
23 of the runway, and my stopping distance was very short thankfully
24 due to how much snow there was. It really helped cushion the
25 impact. Once I came to a stop, I secured the engine by bringing

1 throttle to idle, prop feathered, mixture cutoff, flaps up,
2 fire -- or the fuel shutoff turned off, and cabin firewall shut
3 off -- or pulled, both of those I pulled.

4 Turned back to my passengers, made sure -- I asked if
5 everybody was okay. Everyone said they were okay, and I said,
6 well, that's one way of doing it, and then they all had a slight
7 chuckle. I then turned off the battery and the starter on the
8 aircraft, exited the aircraft and evacuated the passengers from
9 the rear of the aircraft.

10 Q. Thank you, Jake. Do you -- can you describe for me or do you
11 recall what the runway conditions were when you departed?

12 A. As far as what exactly?

13 Q. As far as the depth of the snow, was it light fluffy snow,
14 was it wet heavy snow? Just a little more information about those
15 conditions.

16 A. It was covered. Ice on the bottom of the runway, completely
17 covered so there wasn't any exposed gravel or anything like that.
18 On top of that was wet, heavy snow, not fluffy, dry snow. I
19 couldn't tell exactly the depth of it on the runway. The only
20 judgment I had of the depth was on the ramp, and I deemed it
21 between -- anywhere between 3 to 5 inches.

22 Q. Okay. And you mentioned picking up some more passengers out
23 of Hooper Bay due to the cancellation at Chevak. How -- can you
24 describe for me how, at Hooper Bay, you obtained the weights for
25 your passengers and luggage?

1 A. The passenger bags are weighed by the Village agent to get a
2 rough number, and then I have a fish scale that can weigh each
3 individual package. So we weighed those to make sure what the
4 actual cargo weight was. Passenger weight, it's asked what the
5 passenger's weight is, and then we add ten pounds to it. So
6 that's how we were able to add the passenger weight and then the
7 bag weight.

8 Q. And so the -- thank you. So the bags that were put on the
9 airplane at Hooper were weighed with the fish scale that you
10 carry?

11 A. The fish scale that I carry and then also combined with, the
12 Village agent gets a -- he has a digital scale as well. He weighs
13 them too, so we can cross check them to make sure that they are
14 the same.

15 Q. Okay. So the bags are actually weighed twice then; is that
16 correct?

17 A. Generally, yes, if it's done by the Village agent. Because
18 sometimes the Village agent doesn't have a chance to do it, then
19 it will be done by me. But our Village agent had done it prior,
20 so this time we could do it twice.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. But sometimes the passenger shows up, and I just weigh it.

23 Q. Okay. Thank you. And then what's the procedure for
24 computing the weight and balance? Do you compute every weight and
25 balance before takeoff, and what system do you use for that?

1 A. Every weight and balance is computed before every takeoff,
2 and then we have a plotter and graph on board in our camps to plot
3 where you put the weights and then where the CG weight should be.

4 MR. BANNING: Okay. Thank you. I think at this time I'll go
5 ahead and go around the telephone here and see if anybody else has
6 any additional questions.

7 Charlie, do you have any additional questions for Jake?

8 MR. GILLESPIE: Yeah. Hey, Jake. When you get those
9 weights, are you writing the passengers' names down on a manifest
10 and then writing the weights down? How do you -- I mean, are you
11 documenting that?

12 MR. O'SHEA: Yeah. So we get a paper manifest from the
13 Village agent, and it has the names, the payment method, and then
14 the weights, and then the to-and-from destination of each
15 passenger. So that's how we are able to get the weight of the
16 passengers, and I can have it documented when we are out in the
17 Villages.

18 MR. GILLESPIE: Okay. That's all I have right now. I'm
19 looking through my notes here.

20 Brice, you pretty -- you hit all the highlights there.

21 MR. BANNING: Dan, do you have any additional questions for
22 Jake?

23 MR. KNESEK: Not at this time, Brice.

24 MR. BANNING: Eric, do you have any additional questions?

25 MR. SWENSON: I only have one. You guys might have already

1 said it, and I apologize if you did, but how long roughly was the
2 turnaround time from when you landed to going on the departure
3 there?

4 MR. O'SHEA: It's hard to say exactly, but I'd say anywhere
5 between 15 to 20 minutes, somewhere around there.

6 MR. SWENSON: Okay. No further for me. Thanks.

7 MR. BANNING: Okay. And I just maybe have one or two more
8 questions here, Jake.

9 BY MR. BANNING:

10 Q. With regard to the contaminated runway, the snow there on the
11 runway, when you get a report from your dispatch -- it sounded
12 like you got a report on the conditions of the runway from your
13 dispatch prior to departing; is that true?

14 A. Out of Bethel, yes. And that's prior to us even getting a
15 manifest or anything like that. Runway conditions are part of the
16 go/don't go decisions.

17 Q. And do you recall what they were when you received that
18 document?

19 A. It was just that the runways were clear. I don't have
20 anything more in detail than that.

21 Q. Okay. And are there any restrictions in the company at a
22 certain level of contaminated runway that you don't go? Are there
23 any restrictions in your GOM or your risk assessment of that
24 nature?

25 A. That I -- contaminated runways are a risk that we are

1 supposed to throw into our considerations, but as far as the true
2 details of exactly how and what contaminated makes certain
3 decisions, no. I don't have the best, like, information that
4 determines what is the actual line.

5 MR. BANNING: Okay. No problem. I appreciate that. And I
6 think I'll go around the room one more time just to see if anybody
7 else has any questions.

8 Charlie?

9 MR. GILLESPIE: Yes.

10 BY MR. GILLESPIE:

11 Q. To kind of carry on what Brice started there, so there are no
12 parameters in your GOM that say -- like a common one is a 5-3-2
13 and 3-2-1; you can land with 5 inches of dry snow, 3 inches of wet
14 snow and 2 inches of slush -- yeah, 2 inches of slush, and you can
15 take off with 3 inches of dry snow and 2 inches of wet snow and 1
16 inch of slush. There's nothing like that in the GOM that you guys
17 can reference when you're faced with a condition like that?

18 A. To my knowledge, no. Like you say, we have addendums for
19 contaminated runways as far as making sure that they are put into
20 considerations, but as far as those kinds of depths or anything
21 like that, no.

22 Q. Okay. All right. Have you ever heard of the 50/70 rule?
23 It's an old rule that -- I think they started passing that around
24 back in the 80s and 90s where, when you're dealing with soft
25 runways or especially snow-covered runways, you kind of pick the

1 halfway point out on the runway, and if you're not at 70 percent
2 of your liftoff speed by the time you get to 50 percent -- by the
3 time you have used up 50 percent of the runway, you abort. Does
4 Grant have anything in their manual that would allude to that?

5 A. I have heard of that, you know, rule-of-thumb rule before.
6 It's something that I carry in my back pocket for my tools. But
7 as far as abort points, again, I'm not sure if it's in there or
8 not. That's mostly one that I just have as my own personal thing
9 to have.

10 MR. GILLESPIE: Okay. Well, that's all I have, Brice.

11 MR. BANNING: Dan, any additional -- any other questions?

12 MR. KNESEK: No, not right now.

13 MR. BANNING: And Eric?

14 MR. SWENSON: Nothing. Thank you.

15 MR. BANNING: Is there anything, Jake, that you want to share
16 that I didn't ask that you think I should have or is important
17 that we know?

18 MR. O'SHEA: Not at the top of my head. I wanted to give as
19 much of the accounts to the detail I felt that I have.

20 MR. BANNING: I sure appreciate it. And with that we are
21 going to go off the record at 10:31.

22 (Whereupon, at 10:31 a.m., the interview was concluded.)
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24
25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

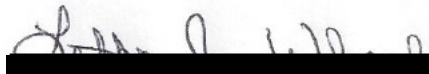
IN THE MATTER OF: GRANT AVIATION CESSNA 208 CRASH
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ON FEBRUARY 4, 2020
Interview of Jacob O'Shea

ACCIDENT NO.: ANC20LA020

PLACE: Via telephone

DATE: February 13, 2020

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.



Letha J. Wheeler
Transcriber