

ANC25MA018

OPERATIONAL FACTORS

Attachment 3

FAA Personnel Interview Transcripts

August 5, 2025

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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FATAL COMMUTER PLANE CRASH NEAR *

NOME, ALASKA ON FEBRUARY 6, 2025 *

Accident No.: ANC25MA018

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Interview of: CRAIG KENMONTH, Primary Operations Inspector

Federal Aviation Administration

via Zoom

Thursday,
February 20, 2025

APPEARANCES:

STARR BLUM, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

PAUL SUFFERN, Meteorologist
National Transportation Safety Board

BRIAN WECKWERTH, Director of Safety
Bering Air

ROBERT PECK, Flight Standards District Office
Federal Aviation Administration

KATHLEEN BANASZAK, ESQ.
Federal Aviation Administration
(On behalf of Craig Kenmonth)

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I N T E R V I E W

(1:33 p.m.)

MS. BLUM: Okay. Today is February 20th. It's 1:33 Pacific Standard Time. And we're here for the investigation on February 6th involving Bering Air Flight 445.

We're sorry that this happened, and sorry that we have to be here. But as you know, our role is safety and trying to get to the probable cause of an accident.

As you also know, we're an independent agency. We don't have anything to do with the FAA or the DOT so we're not here to assign liability or blame. We don't have any enforcement capability as well.

And why don't we go around the room and have everybody introduce themselves.

MR. SUFFERN: Yeah. So, Craig, my name's Paul Suffern. I'm a meteorologist with the NTSB. Been there about 14 years or so.

Before that, I actually worked up in Alaska. I was in the Juneau area and did a little bit of south central for the National Weather Service.

So that's a little bit of my background.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Rob.

MR. PECK: Craig, Rob. I'm down here in Fairbanks. Not Fairbanks, from Anchorage. I was a POI just like yourself and sat on the other side from Starr not too long ago, and now I'm back on this side. But I am an FML currently down here.

1 Prior to that, come in to the FAA. Prior to that, I was with
2 Alaska Air Transit down here, had about 3,000 hours in the
3 Caravan, TKS, G-1000-type airplanes.

4 And that's kind of why they brought me into this deal. I'm
5 here, as you know, just from a safety perspective, not anything
6 other than. Helping the NTSB in that part of this deal.

7 And prior to that I was military for about 21 years in the
8 herc world.

9 MS. BLUM: Okay. Brian.

10 MR. WECKWERTH: Brian Weckwerth, director of safety for
11 Bering Air. I've been in Alaska, like, 31 years now. Most of
12 that flying in the industry.

13 Spent a time with Bering Air actually from 1998 to 2007.
14 Went to Fairbanks and spent 15 years there; 3 years flying for two
15 operators out of Fairbanks, and 12 of those years, I was actually
16 at the FAA until I came back to Bering Air 2-1/2 years ago and
17 became their director of safety. Been director of safety for,
18 what, for a 1-1/2 or so.

19 And just here as party coordinator for this accident
20 investigation. And, then, the ops member -- is that the correct
21 term, Starr, on this interview?

22 MS. BLUM: Yeah, you're an ops group member.

23 MR. WECKWERTH: Okay.

24 MS. BLUM: Again, thanks for being here helping us gather
25 this factual information to help us.

1 Please just answer all the questions to the best of your
2 recollection. If you don't know the answer to something, I don't
3 know is a perfectly fine answer. And, again, if there's something
4 that you don't understand, please just ask us to clarify.

5 You are entitled to have a representative of your choosing
6 present at this interview. Is there someone you'd like to have?

7 MR. KENMONTH: If that addressed to me --

8 MS. BLUM: Yes.

9 MR. KENMONTH: -- Kathleen's here.

10 MS. BLUM: Okay. Kathleen, you -- please refrain from
11 answering any questions for Craig. If you -- you can say don't
12 answer that question, or you can -- we can take a break, and you
13 guys can confer by yourselves if you need to.

14 And, again, if anybody needs a break, bathroom, water break,
15 whatever, just say the word.

16 Anybody have any questions before we begin?

17 (No audible response.)

18 INTERVIEW OF CRAIG KENMONTH

19 BY MS. BLUM:

20 Q. Craig, if you would, would you please state and spell your
21 name?

22 A. My name is Craig Kenmonth. That's Craig with a C, and last
23 name, Kenmonth, K-e-n-m-o-n-t-h.

24 Q. All right. Thank you. And how old are you, Craig?

25 A. I'm 69 going on 70.

1 Q. Excellent. And what is your title at the FAA?

2 A. I'm an aviation safety inspector at the Fairbank FSDO,
3 FSDO-01. I'm currently assigned as principal operations inspector
4 for the Bering Air certificate, amongst others.

5 Q. Okay. When did you get hired with the FAA?

6 A. I was hired October 7th, 2016.

7 Q. And when did you become the POI for Bering Air?

8 A. I took a permanent assignment as the POI in spring of 2022.
9 And prior to that, I had a temporary duty for a period time, less
10 than 6 months.

11 Q. Okay. You said you have other operators that you oversee,
12 how many would that be?

13 A. Currently I'm on the POI for about half a dozen operators and
14 air carriers. I also oversee the Designated Pilot Examiner group
15 for the Northern District.

16 Q. Okay. I've only had one other POI interview. Six doesn't,
17 that seems like a pretty decent load because other POIs I've
18 talked to have 30 or 40. Why is your number lower?

19 A. I too have had 30 or 40. There's a lot of single pilot
20 operators, small operators.

21 And when we see the 30 and 40, but when we see the 20 to
22 30 operators, they're typically less complex, small operations as
23 opposed to Bering Air.

24 Bering Air is one the largest airlines in the State of
25 Alaska. And given it's complexity, my workload is limited. When

1 I -- initially Bering Air was my only operator. That did not last
2 long due office work demand.

3 Q. I forgot to ask. What certificates and ratings do you hold?

4 A. I have an Airline Transport Pilot certificate, Multi-Engine.

5 I have a Certified Flight Instructor certificate. I have a

6 UAS certificate. I have a Ground Instructor certificate.

7 Q. Okay. Great. And do you have Caravan time?

8 A. I do.

9 Q. Yeah. About how many hours would you guess?

10 A. I was a Caravan PIC at least 15 years ago and estimating
11 around a thousand hours. And those were 208s and when 208Bs came
12 out, booted Caravan.

13 Q. Okay. Great. So tell me a -- what are your duties and
14 responsibilities being the POI for Bering Air?

15 A. As a POI, I'm -- my role is to ensure regulatory compliance
16 and promote the highest level of flight safety from the
17 30,000-foot perspective.

18 Daily duties are ongoing surveillance, manual review, manual
19 acceptance, manual approval, training programs, check airmen
20 approval, those assignments, route checks and inspections, the
21 safety assurance system, database, in general.

22 Ask me something more specific, and I can drill down if you
23 need.

24 Q. No, that's okay. It's sounds like they keep you busy. Yeah.

25 When you became a POI, does the FAA provide training to

1 become one?

2 A. Yes. There is multiple trainer requirements to complete
3 prior to becoming a principal inspector, and there's ongoing
4 training as well, constantly.

5 Q. Oh, really. So is it like a ground school that you go for a
6 couple weeks?

7 A. Initial training is, it's more immersive than that. I think
8 I spent a total of 16 weeks initially at Mike Monroney Academy in
9 Oak City.

10 Then there's ongoing OJT training for the position, the
11 office. There is recurrent courses at Oak City available.
12 Post-COVID, much of it is virtual, but there's ongoing training
13 requirements as well as training activities.

14 Q. Okay. Great. On the certificates that you are responsible
15 for, how many are those 135 operators?

16 A. They're all 135 operators.

17 Q. They're all. Okay. In general, how would you characterize
18 your workload, is it manageable?

19 A. There's always work to be done.

20 Q. Understand. Do you feel like you -- I guess in regards to
21 Bering Air, how often are you on the property?

22 A. I schedule myself a week a month out there, first week of the
23 month, and I typically -- there's events that, a medical event for
24 instance, I will miss a tour. But basically a week a month and
25 have been ever since I was assigned the POI duty.

1 Q. Oh, that's great. What are your typical duties when you're
2 out there, or what are you doing that week that you're there?

3 A. A variety. It depends. I have ongoing oversight duties, and
4 these are going to be, you know, surveillance, weather. It'd be
5 land surveillance, enroute surveillance.

6 I find myself most of my time with Bering Air -- we have
7 rewritten the General Operations Manual, rewritten the training
8 programs.

9 I've spent a significant amount of my Bering Air time on
10 manual edits, manual reviews, manual approvals, training program
11 review, training program approval, training surveillance from
12 ground school to flight training to include check airmen
13 surveillance.

14 So, as I say, there's always work to be done.

15 Q. Sure. What are your feelings about Bering Air as an operator
16 as your role as POI?

17 A. To be perfectly honest, let me break that down into two
18 answers.

19 Pre-accident, I felt great. I felt I was very privileged, I
20 was very fortunate to work with what I consider the gold star
21 airline of the State of Alaska. Extremely responsive, extremely
22 competent. Great employee group. A lot of competency, a lot of
23 admired by everybody to ensure -- I was glad to be a part of it.
24 I felt that I had an effective role in part of their success.

25 Post-accident. I spend every day, if not every hour of every

1 day, wondering what I might have done differently looking back to
2 prevent this.

3 Q. Sure. Have you thought of anything that you wish you could
4 have done differently or been a part of?

5 A. Starr, every hour of every day. It would be speculative.

6 I have not been privy to any of the investigative findings.
7 There's been a firewall between me and the investigation. So you
8 anything would be speculative and pre-mature but every hour of
9 every day.

10 Q. I'm really sorry you're having to go through this. And, fair
11 enough, that's why we're here, right, to figure this out.

12 So we understand that you were observing a check ride; we
13 spoke with Nick. Can you walk us through your experience the day
14 of the accident from start to finish?

15 A. My mission that week was to advance a professional
16 development program across the finish line; it's a program we had
17 been working on for several years.

18 Backing up, my endeavors at Bering Air most, as I say, the
19 manual reviews, surveillance, the ongoing rewrites, the Cessna
20 SkyCourier program, has been dominant. It's been occupying a lot
21 of my time.

22 And, in short, it was sort of the first sky courier in
23 Alaska, if not one of in the country, to be put online in a
24 135 operation. And it was a new aircraft to the industry, of
25 course, as well as at Bering and, then, there's a lot of work in

1 developing the program to include the pilot training, pilot
2 certification, loading, operations, you know, route checks and
3 validation flights, I should say.

4 All that has been accomplished very successfully. Excellent
5 job by everybody involved at Bering Air.

6 The next step to that was to go -- it's a single-pilot
7 aircraft. It's a large aircraft. And it was ideally suited to
8 mentor new pilots, and Bering Air had requested a PDP or a
9 OpSpec A062 that permits pilots who act as second in command in
10 the right seat of an aircraft that's not type certificate approved
11 for two pilots.

12 But the purpose is of mentoring new pilots, as well as
13 loading and offloading 5,000 pounds a pop, but the purpose is to
14 mentor new pilots in the new company. Bring them up *ab initio*
15 style, you know, from young pilots.

16 Anyways, it's -- there's not very many of them in the
17 country. Bering Air has applied for and we've approved the
18 training program. We've approved the OpSpecs. And the final
19 hurdle was to observe ground training and to certify the initial
20 cadre flight instructors and check pilots for the Cessna 408 SIC
21 code, the (indiscernible) so that week was spent with the SIC PDP
22 program.

23 Monday was observing ground school. Tuesday was observing
24 ground school and working through oral exam between the two
25 applicants which was, Brian mentioned Nick and Josh.

1 And it was late in the day so we were going to continue the
2 flight portion of the 135 293 SIC checks in the 408 with the two
3 initial cadre applicants, Nick and Josh.

4 The (indiscernible) forecast, we looked at the day before was
5 actually for great weather. Astonishingly good visibility and
6 high ceiling.

7 So back to your question, that morning, I woke up to go do
8 those check rides. The weather was not as forecast; however, it
9 was a typical sort of peninsula February weather. Perhaps a bit
10 on the warm side. Definitely on the calm side. But if I recall,
11 visibility METARs were around 3 miles with 15 to 2,500 foot
12 ceilings. It was light snow.

13 We gathered at the terminal for a morning departure,
14 scheduled at 9:00-ish. The aircraft, the initial C-408 that we
15 had, had an anomaly on the prop de-ice system and so it, the
16 aircraft was squawking ground and it did not -- we did not go out
17 for a flight in it. We pull it back in the hangar to have
18 maintenance look at it.

19 It was approximately an hour or two, you know, to determine
20 the fix was going to be extensive. Another 408 became available,
21 and it was in the hangar, and so it was pulled out to do the check
22 ride.

23 At this point, and I do have a log. Let me refer to my
24 notes. That is, I made notes, I take them on every check ride.

25 We pulled out after noon in the new, in our new 408 which

1 would be 701 BA. And as I say, it was the hangar, it'd been
2 snowing. We de-iced it. I did the pre-flight checks, taxied out.

3 Understand that I'm in the back in an observer's seat of a
4 cargo plane with no windows. And so I peer through a tri-panel,
5 the middle of a tri-panel up in the cockpit. And my visibility's
6 rather limited; it's a tunnel perspective.

7 However, my role there is to, you know, observe the check
8 airman candidate demonstrating his -- administering a check ride.
9 So I can see the panel of the aircraft. I can see the applicant
10 and the pilot. I can see a little bit straight ahead.

11 I do recall taxing out. It was snowing. I do recall that
12 there was snow on the runway. I do recall -- back up, and this is
13 important to this discussion.

14 Prior to their departure in the first 408, the weather was
15 worsening that was forecast the day before. We discussed the
16 icing issues, and there was a -- there was icing forecast.

17 This is a booted aircraft so we briefed prior to departure
18 that if we did encounter ice, we had multiple landings to do, they
19 would be unable to take off after landing if we had residual ice
20 on the booted aircraft.

21 This has been an anti-ice, de-ice point of conversation for
22 several years at Bering Air.

23 And just as an aside, the booted aircraft, my experience and
24 Rob, weigh in here, is when you're flying a booted aircraft
25 through ice, you're going to have residual ice after landing. And

1 the (indiscernible) to that cleared aircraft concept you cannot
2 take off.

3 So, back to the flight particulars. We had briefed in the
4 event of icing encounter and when we do our landing, we will do a
5 check, you know, of representative service and if there's any
6 icing, the check ride will have to be terminated. We'll have to
7 bring it back to base for de-icing or Plan B, whatever that may
8 be.

9 So, taking off, I do recall it was snowing out. It was light
10 snowing out. It was collecting on the runway. As a matter of
11 fact, through my tunnel perspective out the front of the aircraft,
12 we did do a take off, off center line to be operated on the
13 brushed area of the runway.

14 We took off. We did some maneuvers. It was -- my
15 perspective is limited; however, I did notice at points in the
16 flight that the windshield was collecting ice, and it was the
17 typical wave scenario of ice where it's not a continuous icing.
18 You could be flying along and it's high and dry and, then, swat,
19 you encounter the swathe of ice on the wings and windshield. It
20 was that type of phenomenon.

21 So fast forwarding to the approach, I could see ice on the
22 center line faraway (Ph.) and it was, you know, there was no
23 discussion. Everybody knew as per the pre-flight brief that this
24 flight was terminating upon landing, which it was.

25 We taxied it in, pulled it in the hangar. I got out of the

1 plane, and I looked at it, and there was residual ice on all the
2 booted surfaces of the aircraft.

3 It was about 15 minutes after that -- by the way, that
4 was a -- we departed at 1:45 local, landing at 2:43, according to
5 my notes. So we're back in the hangar about probably 3:00, and it
6 wasn't within 10 minutes that Russell Rowe had come down.

7 And I was talking with Patrick, the rotor pilot, and he was
8 asking them to prepare the helicopters because there is an
9 aircraft 20 minutes over due.

10 And I can -- from that point on, I took notes. If you have
11 any questions on what happened subsequently, but I think your --
12 have I answered your questions specifically what I was doing that
13 day?

14 MS. BLUM: Yeah, no, that's great. Thank you for sharing
15 that, and I think that may have, I don't know, sincere visibility
16 was limited, but I think that's a good time to let Paul just have
17 -- just some questions for you.

18 MR. SUFFERN: Yeah. Thank you, Craig. I appreciate you
19 being so diligent in taking those notes. It sounds like it's a
20 common practice and so that's very helpful.

21 BY MR. SUFFERN:

22 Q. Do you recall, yeah, I know your visibility was limited, do
23 you recall what altitudes you were at when you saw the icing on
24 the windscreen?

25 A. As I say, it comes in swathes so I couldn't identify, you

1 know, an altitude, a specific altitude that it was occurring at.
2 And because we were climbing, we were from, you know, the surface
3 up to 8,000 feet variable.

4 So, no, I couldn't answer the icing level. It was in
5 swathes.

6 I was just going to add. It was a phenomenon where when we
7 were maneuvered -- we were maneuvering north and west of the
8 airport most of the time. When we did our procedure turn in for
9 the 28 ILS, we would be out 10 to 15 miles to the west, and we
10 were at 8,000 feet, and I had ground contact. As a matter of
11 fact, we had Nome in sight from 10 miles out.

12 So it was that phenomenon where it's a sky obscured from the
13 ground; however, the slant range down, you could see through it.

14 Q. It sounds like you were only at 8,000 feet, but do you recall
15 seeing any cloud tops or anything like that?

16 A. No cloud tops. I say it was a, it was more of a obscuration,
17 partial obscuration.

18 Prior to departing -- and I did omit that. When we were
19 doing the weather analysis and pre-flight brief, I had asked Nick
20 or Josh if they had tops reports from the airborne Bering pilots,
21 and they said there were no tops reports.

22 Q. So when you were at 8,000 feet, do you recall still seeing
23 some clouds above you at points?

24 A. I mean, in a obscuration, I -- is it clouds or obscuration, I
25 couldn't (indiscernible) I'm sorry.

1 Q. Okay. Do you recall when you were doing the pre-flight what
2 weather products were reviewed and which ones specifically were
3 reviewed for icing?

4 A. Yeah. PICs, of course, with Nick and Josh, and they're --
5 and they saw that they were using the standard protocol on their
6 iPads. And as well, had a -- had icing reports.

7 The specific product, I imagine was AAW graphical forecast,
8 but that's a question for Nick and Josh.

9 Q. Stepping over to your role as POI and checklists, you were
10 speaking earlier to one of Starr's questions about promoting being
11 safe as POI is one of your overall roles. So how do you promote
12 being safe in weather as POI?

13 A. Besides constant vigilance, training, experience, I'm always
14 looking for more and better intel.

15 I guess, as to this discussion, I would answer that by an
16 examine, and when we had -- a couple years earlier, we had an
17 operator, a Fairbank's operator, do a loss of control in a 208,
18 and it was due to a heavy Caravan flying in severe ice, and the
19 aircraft stalled with a lost control for almost 10,000 feet.

20 I was IIC on that. It was a very, very sobering
21 investigation. I had just become the POI at Bering Air and, in
22 example, that incident was discussed in detail with everybody at
23 Bering Air as a way of what can we do to learn from these
24 mistakes, what can we do to improve on this.

25 It was the whole issue of forecast weather. Bering has long

1 asked for more weather products. This is not a criticism, Paul.
2 I think the AWU provides excellent products. I don't know how we
3 can get better at forecasting specific regions and altitudes of
4 dangerous icing. Maybe that's a question back to you. But I --
5 but in promoting the ice level safety, I'm continuing on the
6 search for answers to that question.

7 Backing up to the example, the elements of that action were
8 discussed in detail with director of operation, the chief pilot,
9 the prior director of training, check airmen, just to get that
10 information out there.

11 Looking in arrears, I would say there's a bit of a disconnect
12 on that communication as that was a booted Caravan. And I think
13 the whole industry at the time consider the TKS Caravan a
14 different animal. I think that'll be reflected on differently
15 going forward now.

16 But anyway, as an example, I've taken other incidents and
17 bringing it, discussing with the leadership at the organization to
18 how we can improve, you know, our aviation safety based on, you
19 know, recent experiences in the region and same type aircraft
20 over.

21 Q. Okay. So it sounds like, yeah, I understand your perspective
22 there and things.

23 When you're doing enroute surveillance, how do you do enroute
24 surveillance as far as weather and being safe in that? Is there,
25 like, a checklist or documentation that you take when you're doing

1 the enroute surveillance and things like that?

2 A. We do enroute which I take notes on them and debrief the
3 pilot afterwards. We have several areas of surveillance. Often
4 I'll record it back in our SAF documentation.

5 But to answer your question, there are multiple elements that
6 can be checked. Do we check all of them every time? No. Are we
7 selective? Yes.

8 Weather is -- the weather that Bering Air pilots have is, as
9 I say, part of their electronic flight bag kit on their iPads, and
10 so they have access to, you know, digital weather, all of them as
11 part of their required equipment, part of their pre-flight.

12 The GOM details pre-flight duties for all the Bering Air
13 pilots, and I have not seen any deviation from the GOM protocol at
14 Bering Air.

15 MR. SUFFERN: Okay. Thank you, Craig. That's all the
16 questions I have for right now. Thank you.

17 MS. BLUM: Okay. Rob.

18 MR. PECK: Craig, again, sorry we're even asking questions.

19 MR. KENMONTH: Yeah.

20 MR. PECK: A terrible deal. I understand completely.

21 BY MR. PECK:

22 Q. Just a quick question. Did you do your own RO-- full RM
23 sheet, or did you use Bering Air's approved --

24 A. No, we -- no, I don't do it for any -- I don't do FAA or on
25 Bering Air flights.

1 Q. Okay. And from what we found out that or, I guess, kind of
2 was told that they don't really have a ORM sheet they fill out
3 every time, is that how you understand it?

4 A. Correct.

5 Q. When you did this check airman observation flight, you said
6 originally you were northwest, and that's where you did the
7 maneuvering, correct?

8 A. Right. We took off 28. We maneuvered to the north and came
9 back around for an ILS 28 followed by a missed approach.

10 Out to the east, the teardrop back in to an RNAV 10 approach
11 to a landing.

12 Q. Okay. So in that northwest area where you're -- I'm assuming
13 you were doing the maneuvers, steep turns, whatever --

14 A. No steep turns.

15 Q. Oh, okay. Was there icing in that arena over there to the
16 northwest that you noted?

17 A. As I was saying to Paul, Rob, I'm in a tunnel and so I can't
18 be definitive about where we were picking up ice other than it was
19 coming through in waves.

20 Q. Okay. All right. Can you just expand a little bit about,
21 you know, the efforts, I guess, after the accident, you were IIC
22 with their -- that you shared with us kind of with Bering though,
23 what did they kind of concentrate on, if anything, after that when
24 -- in those discussions?

25 A. During the event in general is relevant. The icing avoidance

1 and exit from icing condition is an element discussed. And I
2 would probably say what is paramount in my memory would be minimum
3 air speeds and icing in the Caravan.

4 Q. In your, I'm assuming here, but assuming that you've done
5 check airmen observations also in the Caravan, is that correct?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. So in those experiences, have you been in situations where
8 they have done some of those things, the avoidance part and/or
9 complied with those air speeds, for instance, in icing --

10 A. Of course.

11 Q. -- or that -- not that --

12 A. Yes, every flight.

13 Q. So, I guess just in general, what is your thought on the
14 culture there with -- that Bering Air and operating those aircraft
15 within those limitations?

16 A. Rob, I think I defer back to my answer to another form of
17 this question, before accident and after accident.

18 Before accident, I believe Bering Air, as I say, because
19 they're focused on safety, was an excellent operation, compliant
20 and a corporate culture of safety first.

21 I think, and I said I wasn't going to speculate to start, so
22 I'll go out on the limb here, that I say, once again, I think
23 there is an over estimate of the effect in this of a TKS-equipped
24 airplane. And I think that has changed since the accident with
25 everyone.

1 Q. So -- okay. Great observation on that, and I can't disagree
2 with you at all.

3 Had you ever seen or been exposed to a TKS system that up
4 until, well, I guess, not up until, but have you ever been exposed
5 in a TKS system that couldn't keep up with icing?

6 A. No.

7 Q. Have you ever PIC'd, then, an actual TKS aircraft?

8 A. And I was going to have -- no, I have not. My experience
9 with booted Caravans, more than 15 years ago.

10 Q. Right. So everything has been just on probably check airmen
11 observations mainly, right?

12 A. That was correct. It's all been check airmen observations
13 (indiscernible) and instructor pilot observation.

14 MR. PECK: That's all I have.

15 MS. BLUM: Okay.

16 MR. KENMONTH: And, Rob, to add on that. Enroutes in
17 Caravans, you know, flying through the (indiscernible) --

18 MR. PECK: Yeah, that's a good point.

19 MR. KENMONTH: -- and TKS and service, you know, at the base
20 stations, and I had a lot of questions about it because I didn't
21 have the personal experience.

22 MR. PECK: So just again, more for the record, that would be
23 a 135 299 check that you're talking about, the enroutes mainly?

24 MR. KENMONTH: No, they would be enroute surveillance. Yes,
25 we would do 299 -- 135 299 check are typically combined with the

1 293 flight.

2 So I have done both. We've flown the Caravans on 299 check
3 rides as well as enroute surveillance flights which were just
4 added inspections.

5 MR. PECK: Now, I didn't have any more questions, but I got
6 another one.

7 How about the 244 -- 135 244, have you actually participated
8 in those types of flights?

9 MR. KENMONTH: Hundreds of hours, Rob. At Bering Air, none.

10 MR. PECK: Oh, okay. Thanks.

11 MS. BLUM: Okay. Brian.

12 MR. WECKWERTH: Well like the other interviews, I don't have
13 any clarifying comments.

14 I very appreciate you being here, Craig, and being here at
15 this last, during that week was appreciative at length, and sadly
16 that you had to be here for that, but it was great to, I'm just
17 making a statement, it was great to have a POI as involved as
18 Craig is and as experienced as he is to be here for us and help us
19 through this thing.

20 But, again, I don't have any clarifying questions or
21 anything. I like all the questions that you've been asking.
22 Appreciate the time to be here, for sure.

23 MS. BLUM: Okay. Thanks, Brian.

24 MR. KENMONTH: Thank you, Brian.

25 MR. WECKWERTH: Yeah.

1 BY MS. BLUM:

2 Q. So just talking about your experience overall with the POI
3 for Bering Air.

4 In your time as POI or to your knowledge or recollection, the
5 previous POI, were there any focused inspections or problem areas
6 that you needed to address or maybe prior to you that you heard of
7 with Bering?

8 A. No, ma'am. Not that I'm aware of.

9 Q. Okay. As far as their training goes, how close to that are
10 you, like, do you get reports about check rides, whether they pass
11 or fail?

12 A. I do.

13 Q. You do? How do you feel that ratio is as far as the
14 pass/fail ratio?

15 A. I feel it is usual, normal and customary. Probably a higher
16 pass rate than other carriers. They have an excellent training
17 department; they have excellent personnel in their training
18 department. They have a combination of outsourced training
19 through AL31 third-party contract training specifically as to the
20 Caravan, the training as provided by both FSI and in-house
21 recurrent.

22 And the goal of the program was to put all initial 208
23 drivers and their first recurrent through FlightSafety and, then,
24 have an in-house recurrent training program.

25 And I'm a huge proponent of out-sourced training for

1 135 operators and that has been a push of mine since I became
2 their POI, and they now have out-sourced training for the
3 Caravans, the King Airs and, of course, the SkyCourier 408.

4 The company is so large, FSI is so impacted, it would be
5 improbable or not, if not impossible, to schedule at every
6 recurrent training event for Bering pilots through FlightSafety as
7 they have to be accomplished once a year. And there are so many
8 pilots and only so many slots in FSI.

9 So I might be the digressing here but just trying to expand
10 on the strategy of the Bering Air training department and this
11 goes my answer that there are few unsat check rides because it has
12 a very effective training program, and that is due to a
13 combination of out-sourced training and high-caliber personnel in
14 house.

15 Q. Thank you. Have you ever received any complaints from pilots
16 regarding the company?

17 A. No.

18 Q. More pay, more time off, it wouldn't be those things, right.

19 A. Well, good. And, you know, I'd even have a hard time
20 identifying that. It's probably the most content group I've seen
21 in my life.

22 Q. I'm sorry, the most what?

23 A. The most content pilot group I've seen in my life. You don't
24 -- they've got excellent equipment, excellent facilities,
25 excellent route structure, excellent reputation, excellent

1 benefits, it is -- there's always room for improvement, Starr, but
2 I would say it's been the gold standard air carrier, in my
3 experiences.

4 Q. Okay. Great. Did you ever fly with Chad?

5 A. I did not know Chad. No, I did not fly with him.

6 MS. BLUM: Okay. Thank you. Paul.

7 MR. SUFFERN: Just one more question, Craig.

8 Not only as POI, but your sense of Alaska experience and
9 things up there, if there was one weather tool that you could
10 have, either to help you or to help other pilots make things
11 better in Alaska, what would that be?

12 MR. KENMONTH: Excellent question, Paul. I appreciate that
13 question. I wish I could -- I wish that I had anticipated that
14 and prepared a response.

15 The accuracy of icing forecasts has always been -- in a
16 forecast, there's room for improvement.

17 And I empathize with issues the forecasters are doing but, in
18 honest response to your question, I would say better, more
19 accurate icing forecasts, tough thing.

20 I think the Weather Unit does an excellent job, I'm repeating
21 myself. I would say that the change in weather reporting tools
22 over the last 20 years has been phenomenal, from AWOSs to ASOSs,
23 the weather cams. From 20 years ago, night and day. And I, I
24 lived it and breathed it back there so I sincerely say, fantastic
25 improvement. A lot of people haven't known any other world, and I

1 think they kind of take it for granted.

2 That being said, there are still sites that could use weather
3 observation equipment, and I would suppose the ongoing maintenance
4 of installed equipment is probably the weigh point in weather
5 reporting out in rural Alaska. We will have AWOS or ASOS
6 equipment that will be out of service for weeks and weeks at a
7 time.

8 And so, once again, I recognize the difficulties involved in
9 servicing high-tech equipment in rural Alaska but, once again, in
10 answer to your question, I would say forecast icing tools and more
11 reliable, more quantity, more maintenance of existing weather
12 observations.

13 Q. Okay. That was open-ended question on purpose. So if you
14 think of other ones, you can always contact me, but I really
15 appreciate your perspective and your time up there. It's been
16 really helpful.

17 Thank you, Craig.

18 MR. KENMONTH: Sure.

19 MS. BLUM: Okay. Rob.

20 MR. PECK: I guess it helps if I take my mic -- my mic on,
21 right?

22 I really don't have a lot other than more maybe clarifying to
23 -- just for the record-type thing.

24 MR. PECK: With the question about unsat check rides, the
25 check airmen for Bering Air also have the ability to stop a check

1 ride and go into a training mode and, then, come back into a check
2 ride.

3 So because of that, that kind of, I guess, negates or limits
4 unsat check rides just because of that ability, is that correct?

5 MR. KENMONTH: That's an accurate observation, Rob; however,
6 that's a check airmen discretion thing, and there's ongoing
7 discussion on that between me and the check airmen.

8 It's a check ride, it's not a training flight. And if there
9 is -- if there are minor transients or check airmen sees a way he
10 could improve performance, that check ride can be temporarily
11 halted for a bit of mid-check training and then resume.

12 Excuse me one minute.

13 As you brought it up, I just felt the need to expand on your
14 comment on that.

15 What we do -- we do a lot of discussion. Once again, it's a
16 check ride, it's not a training event. If in a check airman's
17 assessment of the ride so far is, this person needs to be returned
18 to a training status, he needs to do that.

19 So I call it a UTS event, as you refer to, an unsat Training
20 SAT. Those are for transients or if we can pile on to maneuver,
21 if we can polish the maneuver, is what those are reserved for.

22 Furthermore, the Bering Air check ride form, that would be
23 noted as U/S on the check ride form. It wouldn't just be an S.

24 So those records are available for review by, of course, not
25 only me, but the rest of the training department at Bering Air.

1 A proliferation of U/S's on one check ride form would bring
2 the legitimacy of the check ride into question by anybody looking
3 at it.

4 Did I counter -- did I address what your issue is here?

5 But you're right, I used -- a UTS is a check airmen tool,
6 but, Starr, if I'm getting too far afield here, I didn't want the
7 inference that that would serve to cloak or obscure an
8 unsatisfactory performance because there'd always be an S in that
9 block.

10 If there was an unsat training SAT event, it would be noted
11 as U/S by the check airman. It would be subject to scrutiny. A
12 proliferation of them would certainly be subject to scrutiny.

13 And backing up once again, if you are a current qualified
14 instructor pilot and check pilot, you could do that.

15 MR. PECK: I have no further questions. Thank you.

16 MS. BLUM: Brian, you still good?

17 MR. WECKWERTH: Yeah. I was going to -- I got them when I
18 asked this question. I have to here from Kathleen probably on
19 this.

20 BY MR. WECKWERTH:

21 Q. Having been at the FAA and knowing that they have a tool in
22 the safety assurance system called the RPAT, Risk Profile
23 Assessment Tool, I've just got to ask if in that tool, has there
24 been any increased notations showing that there'd be increased
25 surveillance on Bering Air at this time?

1 A. Post-accident, Brian, is that specifically what you're
2 referring to?

3 Q. Yeah. And I -- I mean, I'll admit it. I had first-hand
4 knowledge of it before I left the FAA to come back to Bering Air,
5 and Bering Air scored really pretty quite low in that RPAT.

6 I'm just curious at what point it might be now, but I do
7 believe the accident doesn't dump into the RPAT 'til later
8 anyways.

9 I'm not asking for that score, but I believe that carriers
10 were scored in a quintile, if I recall, and just curious about
11 what quintile they may be in, if that's even available to us.

12 I know it's not available publicly, I know better than that.
13 But if there's heightened awareness and heightened surveillance
14 coming down our way, I guess, you know, knowing that CHEPs come
15 our way and stuff, is that something that can even be discussed?

16 A. I think that, part of that might have been me, but part of
17 that goes back to maybe Rob.

18 As far as the RPAT, too soon for any change from this FSDO.
19 Yeah, and I knew it was specifically discussed between me and my
20 front line, and we need information. We have no investigative
21 data whatsoever, and so no RPAT changes will get contemplated
22 until then.

23 Does that answer the question, Brian?

24 Q. Yeah. I believe the accident -- the NTSB website doesn't
25 even load into this until it actually is, a final is given anyways

1 so we don't even see any influence in the RPAT until this is done
2 and final's issued even a year from now, if I recall that
3 correctly.

4 A. It would -- there will be risk to (indiscernible) --

5 Q. No, that wasn't it.

6 A. -- had it prior to the final NTSB report, or is that to Rob?
7 So let me back up and question.

8 Rob, you're FAA, are you an FAA IAC on this, or who is?

9 MR. PECK: I am not. Todd Gentry is IIC. I am just part of
10 this operation's team that -- from the NTSB. That's all I'm
11 doing.

12 MR. KENMONTH: Mr. Gentry, he's AVS so he's at the FAA. I
13 see. Okay.

14 MR. PECK: AVS 100, correct.

15 MR. KENMONTH: And you're just a subject, you're here as a
16 subject-matter expert or air expert?

17 MR. PECK: Yes, sir.

18 MR. KENMONTH: Thank you for that.

19 MS. BLUM: Okay. Was that all you had, Brian?

20 MR. WECKWERTH: Yeah. That was it.

21 BY MS. BLUM:

22 Q. Okay. We ask this question to everyone, Craig. Is there
23 anything we didn't ask you that you wish we would have?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. And what would that be?

1 A. Go back to paragraph A. Every hour of every day, and, you
2 know, I would love to be able to offer my thoughts or my
3 suggestions using my position, my experience, but I can't because
4 it's premature. We do not have the investigative data.

5 Q. I understand.

6 A. There's nothing more I would love to be a part of preventing
7 this from ever occurring to anybody ever again.

8 Q. Yeah. Absolutely. Well, you can always, like Paul said, you
9 can always give us a call --

10 A. True.

11 Q. -- and you'll have my contact info.

12 And, of course, the IIC as well of this case. Again, just
13 the operational factors part of this, but is there anything else
14 that you can think of or somebody that we may have not spoken to
15 that could help us in this investigation?

16 A. Not knowing to who you've spoken with, I can't answer that
17 accurately, but I know that you're out there weeks.

18 The management group at Bering Air including the director of
19 the safety, Brian, the Caravan instructor pilots and check airmen.
20 If you haven't talked to them, it's worth you time to talk to them
21 for their suggestion.

22 I would imagine everybody's going to be shackled as me
23 not having investigative data to be able to make an informed
24 conclusion from, but at some point, there is a ton of experience
25 and expertise in that company, and I'm sure everybody is equally

1 motivated to prevent a reoccurrence, and I'm sure you've talked
2 with them all.

3 Anyways, that's a group I would make sure to focus and
4 canvas, everybody in the 208 program at Bering Air, management,
5 directors, check airmen, instructor pilots.

6 MS. BLUM: Okay. Well this has been very helpful and, again,
7 we're really sorry that we're here, but we really appreciate your
8 time.

9 So with that, let's end the interview at 2:36.

10 (Whereupon, at 2:36 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: FATAL COMMUTER PLANE CRASH NEAR
NOME, ALASKA ON FEBRUARY 6, 2025
Interview of Craig Kenmonth

ACCIDENT NO.: ANC25MA018

PLACE: via telephone

DATE: February 20, 2025

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.


Christina H. Neilson
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of:

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FATAL COMMUTER PLANE CRASH NEAR

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NOME, ALASKA ON FEBRUARY 6, 2025

*

Accident No.: ANC25MA018

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Interview of: CRAIG KENMONTH, Principle Operations Inspector

FAA

Nome, Alaska

Wednesday,
May 7, 2025

APPEARANCES:

STARR BLUM, Operational Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

TIM SORENSON, Aviation Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

PAUL SUFFERN, Meteorologist
National Transportation Safety Board

ROB BECK, Aviation Safety Inspector
Federal Aviation Administration

SABRINA WOODS, Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

KATHERINE WILSON, Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

BRIAN WECKWERTH, Director of Safety
Bering Air

KATHLEEN BANASZAK, Attorney
(On behalf of Craig Kenmonth)

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I N T E R V I E W

(10:38 a.m.)

MR. WECKWERTH: Sorry, I do my notes on a cell phone. I'm not sitting over here texting. Just a non-paper --

MS. BLUM: Today is May 7th, 2025, and it is 10:38 Alaska Daylight Time. My name is Starr Blum, and I'm an operational factors investigator with the NTSB. And we're here to talk with you again about the accident that occurred on February 6th, involving Bering Air Flight 445.

As you know, the NTSB is an independent agency. We're not connected to DOT or you, the FAA, and our mission is simply to determine the probable cause and see if there's any safety recommendations that can be made to prevent this from happening again. We don't have any liability or blame.

We will be recording this interview, so it can be transcribed. After the transcription, we will go around in this group and make corrections for typos, whatever correction's needed, and then Kathleen will provide the transcript to you, for you to do that, as well. If you disagree with the content of the transcript, I can't change that, but you can provide an addendum that will be attached to that transcript, that'll go in the public docket. Let's go around the room, so everyone can introduce themselves.

MR. SORENSON: So my name's Tim Sorenson. I'm an accident investigator with the NTSB. Also, the investigator in charge for

1 this accident.

2 MS. BLUM: Everybody speak up, please.

3 DR. WOODS: Sabrina Woods, human performance investigator
4 with the NTSB.

5 DR. WILSON: Katherine Wilson, human performance, NTSB.

6 MR. SUFFERN: Paul Suffern, NTSB meteorologist.

7 MR. BECK: And Rob Beck, FAA from Anchorage. I'm not here --
8 I'm here with the NTSB, not from an enforcement standpoint.

9 MR. WECKWERTH: Brian Weckwerth, Bering Air. I'm director of
10 safety.

11 MS. BLUM: And you are entitled to have a representative. I
12 see you have someone here who is representing you.

13 MS. BANASZAK: Kathleen Banaszak.

14 MS. BLUM: Can you spell your name?

15 MS. BANASZAK: K-A-T-H-L-E-E-N, last name B-A-N-A-S-Z-A-K.

16 MS. BLUM: Thank you. Kathleen, please refrain from
17 answering any questions for Craig. If you guys would like to
18 confer, no problem. We'll stop the recording, and you guys can
19 take a break. And also, if anybody needs a break at any time,
20 whether to stretch your legs, use the bathroom, get water, please
21 say so, and we'll stop.

22 Craig, as before, just please answer the questions to the
23 best of your recollection. And if you feel like you don't
24 understand, or something's been misstated, just ask us, and we'll
25 try to make it more clear. Does anyone have any questions before

1 we begin? Okay. Okay. So you provided some of this in our last
2 interview. But just to get a refresher, can you tell me how long
3 you've been the POI for Bering Air?

4 MR. KENMONTH: No, I didn't provide you dates last time. But
5 approximately three years. I gave you exact dates in the last
6 interview.

7 INTERVIEW OF CRAIG KENMONTH

8 BY MS. BLUM:

9 Q. Okay. And if I recall, you said that Bering Air was the only
10 135 certificate? Is that correct?

11 A. Initially, when I was assigned, Bering Air was the only 135.
12 Very shortly afterwards, I maintained about a half a dozen 135 --
13 other 135 operators, as well as oversight for the northern
14 district DPEs, designated pilot exchanges.

15 Q. Okay. And the last time we spoke, you said that, on average,
16 you were out at Bering Air a week a month.

17 A. That's correct.

18 Q. Okay. Has that been the entire time you -- did you have
19 Bering Air that whole three years? Or --

20 A. Yes, and I schedule a week a month out there, and I have --
21 sometimes stuff happens, and I miss it. But that's my schedule
22 I've tried to comply with.

23 Q. Okay. And is that because it's required, or because you felt
24 that that was needed, to be there a week?

25 A. Well, an onsite presence is required. To what degree is

1 unspoken, unwritten. That's a personal work schedule I've imposed
2 on myself.

3 Q. Why have you decided to spend more time -- or you're making a
4 personal choice to be at Bering Air for that week? What was your
5 decision behind that?

6 A. Well, it's a complex operator. Certainly the most complex
7 operator on my workload, and one of the most in the state. Being
8 in the industry almost 40 years, I also recognize the value of
9 onsite surveillance. So to be an effective FAA safety inspector,
10 I believe a personal presence is required. You can't perform
11 surveillance, collaborate with the carrier, from the cube.

12 Q. Okay. Let's just get right into it. Like, part of some of
13 what I want to talk about. You and I had a phone conversation
14 before, but I want to get it on record, the discussion about max
15 gross takeoff weight and some of the confusion that's come from
16 there. Do you mind sharing the conversation we had about your
17 approach to the confusion about the STC Supplement 1?

18 A. I believe the discussion you're referencing is, you'd asked
19 me specifically, what's the confusion about FIKI weights in the
20 Caravan, modified with aftermarket STCs?

21 Q. Yes.

22 A. And I'd responded that to me, it's black and white. There is
23 however some industry misconceptions about it. And specifically,
24 my response -- generally, my response was, all the aftermarket
25 STCs that have increased gross weights, and there's several, do

1 not address flight in known icing conditions. And that is the
2 grey area to some, as they read it in the various flight manual
3 supplements by the STC holdings.

4 Q. So what did you explain to Bering Air the max gross takeoff
5 weight in FIKI is?

6 A. Ultimately?

7 Q. Ultimately.

8 A. As it stands today? As it stands today, Bering Air has
9 clarified their process, and have identified two max gross takeoff
10 weights for their 208s, one in accordance with the Aeroacoustics
11 payload extender STC, at 9062, and then the AFM max gross takeoff
12 weight from Textron, for the 208, of 8807. And so today we have a
13 crystal-clear policy in the manual set, and in practice,
14 identifying what we'll call a FIKI weight, which is a Flight in
15 Known Icing -- it's short for Flight in Known Icing conditions.

16 And Bering Air has implemented, to their credit, a very
17 robust flight release tool that identifies flight in a known icing
18 conditions, based upon an AAWU icing forecast. And this would
19 trigger a mandatory FIKI weight limitation. There's no longer any
20 grey area.

21 To expand, to answer questions that weren't asked, one of the
22 grey areas in the past has been -- and it still is, by some
23 carriers -- is the concept of flight in known icing. There are
24 carriers, even to this day, as I talk to the other 208 operators
25 and other POI operators, that will take the position that flight

1 in known icing is literally that, it's a flight in known icing.

2 And I respond with, that's just an absurd concept. If you
3 have an aircraft that's prohibited, that's limited to flying in
4 known icing, the time to determine that you're in known icing is
5 not looking at your wing and see it on the wing. So it's a
6 preflight planning issue. And all we can do in a preflight
7 planning is to work off a forecast, which -- excuse me, Paul, for
8 saying in advance -- they're paid to be wrong 49 percent of the
9 time. But that goes with the territory of aviation forecasts.
10 There is no other tool to use.

11 So either way, the point is, there are some in the industry
12 that still believe that they can't base their preflight planning
13 on a forecast tool. Bering Air has implemented in writing and
14 practice, and has been under a fair amount of surveillance,
15 internally and externally, to follow that procedure, which we've
16 refined over the last few months, as well.

17 The FIKI conditions, once again, are based off, solely,
18 specifically, the AAWU forecast. There are other forecast tools
19 out there that may be more convenient. However, as Bering Air
20 works through this process, they're working the AAWU forecast
21 solely now. They have a natural takeoff weight limitation of 8807
22 in FIKI conditions, as originated in their dispatch release
23 department.

24 The 119ers will determine FIKI conditions. All aircraft
25 are, from that point on, until the forecast change, limited to a

1 max gross takeoff weight of 8807. That forecast, in the event of
2 an erroneous forecast, can be, air-quote, overruled, with PIREPs
3 from aircraft on that route of flight at those altitudes,
4 submitted within 60 minutes.

5 Q. Yeah, we were learning about that yesterday.

6 A. Is this answering your questions? Or is it more detailed --

7 Q. Well, my follow-up question is, what was your position on the
8 gross takeoff weights and FIKI before the accident?

9 A. What was my position?

10 Q. And what did you impart to Bering Air?

11 A. My position was, it was not a special emphasis item.

12 Q. Can you expand on that? I don't know what that means.

13 A. It was not a focusing or a special emphasis item. The 208
14 training, when I came along, was the only third-party training
15 they were doing, and it's the training at Flight Safety, where
16 it's going to be the 8807 gross weight. They'll have an aircraft-
17 specific, operator-specific course, they're called a GOS course,
18 general operation subjects, where aircraft differences, including
19 those differences from the third-party trainer flight safety to
20 the Bering Air aircraft, modified with an aftermarket FTC. Those
21 differences are taught. And it was not a special emphasis of mine
22 to monitor that at that time. And it became a special emphasis
23 after the accident.

24 Q. Okay. Yeah, because I know you were integral, from what I've
25 learned, in helping get that flight safety training for Bering

1 Air.

2 A. Correct. I'm a big proponent, third-party training.

3 Correct.

4 Q. And I know the sim is 675 shaft horsepower is, what, that
5 lower weight. Right? So just to clarify, that wasn't an emphasis
6 item. So it wasn't discussed -- I mean, we recognize the
7 confusion --

8 A. That's correct.

9 Q. Okay. Okay. So in the course of the investigation, you
10 know, we found that the accident flight was about 1,000 pounds
11 overweight, and the flight before was overweight. And this is
12 things we've heard is a common practice at Bering Air. How would
13 you respond to that?

14 A. I would respond in echoing what I said in my first interview.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. When asked what my professional opinion of the Bering Air
17 operation was, I said it was hands-down the best operation I've
18 ever seen in my life. A blue-star operator, blue-ribbon
19 operator. Whatever words I used. At post-accident, I've had some
20 questions and doubts. To answer your question, to answer this
21 question, I'll answer similarly. Prior to the accident, I had no
22 indications of overweight operations, especially -- chronic
23 overweight operations, is what you say you've heard?

24 Q. Yes.

25 A. Is that substantiated? Just curious. Or when you hear it

1 from -- hear it from who?

2 Q. I can't expose that right now. Yeah.

3 A. Okay. That's fine. That's fine.

4 Q. Yeah, sorry.

5 A. It's kind of just a way of me asking questions I'd been
6 excluded from in the investigative information or data points
7 through this whole thing. So if there's information, I'd welcome
8 it, because I'm still their POI. Any rate, there were no
9 indications of overweight -- certainly chronic overweight --
10 flying to me at all from anybody at Bering Air. And being in the
11 industry, this is not a new problem for Alaska 135. So it's a
12 question I commonly ask when I ramp check and route check Bering
13 Air pilots.

14 And I would say, prior to the accident, my impression, from
15 everybody that I asked, was that was the most compliant carrier
16 that they've flown with. As a matter of fact, that was one of the
17 reasons there was such high pilot satisfaction, employee
18 satisfaction, because there wasn't any pressure to do any of those
19 overweight flying, below minimum flying, which unfortunately has
20 plagued the Alaska 135 industry for a long time. My impression,
21 for the interviews, from my on-person surveillance, was that there
22 was none of those pressures.

23 Offering information, but in the spirit of fully answering
24 your question, after the accident, I reflect differently on it. I
25 don't believe that Flight 445 was the first aircraft on the Bering

1 Air certificate to fly overweight. So special emphasis,
2 processes, procedures, post-accident, have been implemented, as
3 well as increased auditing, externally to the FAA, and internally
4 by Bering Air.

5 I would note that there's a difference between the overweight
6 -- referred to as 1,000 pounds, and I can't comment on -- you're
7 saying 1,000 overweight for 445. I don't know. I never saw a
8 manifesto on it. But I know you did forensic investigations.
9 Probably have a pretty good idea, generally, what was on them.
10 However, back to the FIKI question, the FIKI weight is basically a
11 250-pound difference. So you have to make the distinction between
12 the FIKI weight being causal in this thing, versus a gross
13 overloading of the aircraft.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. Am I making that distinction?

16 Q. Yes. Yeah.

17 A. Okay.

18 Q. So they'll get into some of what you've addressed later, but
19 let's start with that new flight release tool that -- Brian showed
20 me the high level, and we talked to the pilots a little bit about
21 it. What was your involvement in creating this tool?

22 A. Oh, I did the whole thing from the beginning. I wrote the
23 program. I wrote the code. Strike that. Too late.

24 Q. What's his name? Andy (ph.)?

25 A. Andy. Actually, I have been talking with Andy for well over

1 a year on it. The origins of it were an approved risk assessment
2 program, which Bering didn't have. And that's where this thing
3 started out on. And it got kicked into high gear after -- and
4 Andy did a great job designing an operational risk management tool
5 that would bring, in an automated manner, increasing levels of
6 operational control presence, as risk factors elevated due to --
7 you know, from mechanical to environmental to human factors, et
8 cetera. And it's a common tool these days in 135.

9 Bering did not have a formal -- so to answer your question,
10 this has been something that I've been pushing for quite a while.
11 And Andy had been developing it, and as I say, rolled it out with
12 additional tools, such as integrated automated weather reporting
13 into it, FIKI boxes, pilot currency.

14 Q. Okay. That was going to be my next question, because I want
15 to understand the positive things that this thing's bringing,
16 because my high-level, so far, what I've taken from it is, the
17 weights are auto-populated -- I'm not quite sure yet if the pilot
18 selects the gross weight or not. You could -- let me finish the
19 question.

20 And also, I know that the TKS fluid is now part of the
21 operating weight, instead of empty. I know that it -- trying to
22 think what else I've learned, the last couple days. I'm sorry I'm
23 forgetting them now. But how do you -- what other features to
24 this tool have a positive -- and oh, the signatures going for
25 operations control? Can you tell me what else is beneficial about

1 this --

2 A. So back to your former question, the accountability was a
3 factor I'd been leaning on the 119ers at Bering Air. Currently,
4 prior to the FRT, Flight Release Tool, they did have a general
5 operations manual procedure involving elevated OC levels as risk
6 factors went up. However, there was no accountability. There was
7 no process to verify that indeed, a cheap pilot had involved --
8 had been called in and involved in the go/no-go decision, because
9 of elevated risk factors. In other words, if you're going to have
10 that -- I think my quote that's overused is, in this industry, if
11 it isn't written, it didn't happen.

12 And so as to that discussion of -- the Flight Release Tool
13 evolved to also have those accountability signatures in it. So
14 that goes both for the FIKI tool -- for example, if it is
15 overridden by a PIREP, there will be a PIREP time reference
16 written, and who the OC person was that concurred with that, to
17 override a FIKI condition. If an elevated-risk flight required OC
18 participation, that OC name, timestamp, would be on that flight
19 release tool.

20 Q. Would you say that's the accountability?

21 A. That's accountability. If it's not written, it didn't
22 happen. So those have also been -- those have been ongoing issues
23 of discussion for quite a while at Bering Air, which are all now
24 formalized in the FRT program. I think, backing up, you mentioned
25 you were going through a list of FRT issues. One of them was the

1 -- what we call operating weight empty. And this was a factor
2 with confusion, prior to the accident, which has been clarified.

3 And heretofore, prior to the accident, there were written
4 procedures, to include TKS fluid and onboard equipment into the
5 operating weight empty of the aircraft, for the pilot to do that
6 calculation. Post-accident, there's a written policy separating
7 those items out, so that they are not all mashed together into a
8 number from the pilot's brain. But they are accountable numbers
9 that could be verified and audited.

10 Q. Understand.

11 A. As well as, the onboard equipment is a standardized weight,
12 where it was, before, a more of a general, dare I say, tribal
13 knowledge number.

14 Q. Okay. We talked to the pilots about their weather training.
15 Have you ever observed the ground training at Bering Air?

16 A. I've observed portions of many curriculums.

17 Q. Were you involved in -- did you sit in on anything where FIKI
18 was being taught to the pilots, or definitions thereof? I mean --

19 A. FIKI, as we're discussing it today, is the post-accident
20 concept. And so what was issued was pilot bulletins, in the form
21 of general operation manual revisions, as well as special emphasis
22 bulletins. And that was the distribution of the pilots' group,
23 without a formal classroom. And specifically, have you seen them?
24 Bulletins 90-10, 90-11?

25 Q. I do have a lot of them. I'm sure I have them somewhere,

1 but --

2 A. Yeah. And so those are bulletin revisions to the GOM. Those
3 are requirements for the employee group to follow. Those are
4 carried with the employees in their EFB pads on the plane. They
5 were immediately distributed. And it's evolved. 90-10 was the
6 FIKI discussion. And it had several evolutions, reiterations,
7 since February 6th. The most current one is March 29th. March
8 22nd. Oh, I take that back. March 29th. I'm correct. It was 29
9 March '25. The pilot book 90-10 is the revision to
10 (indiscernible) 5.29's flight release, included the Flight Release
11 Tool.

12 Q. Okay. Prior to the accident, were you confident that the
13 weather training, teachings, were adequate? And were you able
14 to --

15 A. Prior to the accident, I repeat that Bering Air had the most
16 professional pilots, the best equipment, infrastructure, excellent
17 airline, excellent training, commitment to third-party simulator
18 training. Pilot interviews, ramp inspections, were all very
19 positive.

20 Q. Okay. Fair enough. Do you get out to Kotzebue and
21 Unalakleet?

22 A. I do, occasionally.

23 Q. Occasionally? What takes you out there? What check? Is
24 there an en route check --

25 A. En route checks, correct.

1 Q. When you're at the -- do you do anything, any checking there,
2 about the operations? Or is it just simply the flight there and
3 back?

4 A. No, of course we always do a base inspection, when we're
5 there. And there's the typical items that consistently are
6 surveilled -- will be things like scales. Deice equipment's a
7 very big one. In the case of recent trips to Unalakleet and
8 Kotzebue will be the load diagram process, which is a computer
9 program available only at the Bering Air bases, so I make sure
10 those are in place, installed, and employees know how to use it.

11 Q. Okay. Since the accident, we found that TKS fluid was not
12 readily available in Unalakleet. Had you checked up on that at
13 all?

14 A. I had not done a TKS fluid availability check in Unalakleet.

15 Q. Most pilots have told us they haven't had the need to get it
16 in other stations.

17 A. Your words. I would say there aren't Unalakleet-based planes
18 that depart out of Nome.

19 Q. Okay. So I've been learning a little bit about SAS, DCTs,
20 and CHAT. These are all new terms to me from the FAA. Can you
21 give me the high-level of what SAS is, and how that affects your
22 job and what you do?

23 A. SAS is our Safety Assurance System, FAA database where
24 surveillance is outlined, data's collected and reported. We all
25 use SAS. DCTs or data collection tools, which are specific audit

1 points that are the -- that come from SAS and assigned by the
2 automation to inspectors to their carriers, relative to their
3 operation.

4 Q. And CHAT? The Certificate --

5 A. The Certificate Holder Assessment Tool. That's correct.
6 That's part of the SAS program where various factors are going to
7 determine or indicate a carrier's health or risk.

8 Q. I don't know the answer to this. When did SAS come about at
9 the FAA? Do you know approximately what year?

10 A. SAS evolved into the FAA. When I started, it was basically
11 nonexistent, and now it's controlling. Can I buy a vowel?

12 Q. Sure.

13 MR. WECKWERTH: It began to roll out in 2014.

14 MS. BLUM: Okay.

15 MR. KENMONTH: And I came in in 2016.

16 MR. WECKWERTH: It was deployed in October of 2014.

17 MR. KENMONTH: Yeah.

18 MS. BLUM: Okay. So you didn't really have a good look at
19 what it was like before the evolvement of this?

20 MR. KENMONTH: Au contraire.

21 BY MS. BLUM:

22 Q. Oh, okay.

23 A. I lived and breathed it as a 119er for 30 years. So I'm
24 familiar with the FAA oversight process from ATAS to --

25 Q. Okay. I stand corrected. How do you feel about these data

1 collection tools, and the whole program?

2 A. I don't know if I'm prepared to answer that.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. It's frustrating for someone like me. I'm a brick-and-mortar
5 generation guy. It's more of an office, computer-based
6 surveillance system. I'm, once again, from the old school, mano a
7 mano, in-person surveillance and observation, as opposed to
8 computer-dictated surveillance. It's like anything -- it's like
9 anything that's new. It's takes a while to be comfortable with
10 it, and to be good at. SAS is relatively new to FAA.

11 Q. Sorry, I didn't hear that last part.

12 A. SAS is relatively new to the FAA. I think all inspectors
13 struggle to integrate it in their surveillance program.

14 Q. Yeah, that's what I'm trying to understand and learn. So I
15 pulled -- I've requested the ECTs and the CHAT for the last, I
16 think, three years, for Bering Air.

17 A. Sure.

18 Q. And you know, looking at those tools -- and, you know,
19 it's -- trying to understand who does what. I mean, is it that --
20 like, let's just say the ECTs. Do you have so many tasks a year
21 that you have to accomplish?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. How many --

24 A. We're assigned them quarterly. We're assigned inspections
25 quarterly. From flight engineering to flight operations to

1 training to ramp. Every facet of the air carrier has got SAS
2 inspections.

3 Q. Okay. So for your responsibility, how many a quarter would
4 you say you have?

5 A. I would say -- how many specific DCTs?

6 Q. Mm-hm.

7 A. Oh, 30 to 50.

8 Q. Yeah, I don't know. Is that reasonable for someone to get
9 their work done? Is that a lot of tasks? Is it --

10 A. No.

11 Q. It's not a lot. Okay.

12 A. It's manageable.

13 Q. Okay. So if you get assigned those tasks in a quarter, does
14 that have to be completed in that quarter? How --

15 A. There's some flexibility, but yes, it's a work program, and
16 the inspectors are expected to comply with the work program.
17 There's flexibility, and for one reason or another, you can
18 move -- you can move inspections to another quarter, or do in-
19 advance inspections for convenience's sake, that are due some
20 quarters down the road. So there's a high degree of flexibility
21 with it.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And all the way from doing them to resource-not-available,
24 you know, for some carriers. Sometimes an inspection is not
25 possible. Sometimes it's not warranted. Sometimes it's not

1 possible, due to manpower. Sometimes it's not warranted, due to
2 the operator. None of that, of course, applies to Bering Air
3 DCTs. Those are all done. None of those are RNA, Resource Not
4 Available.

5 Q. Okay. So going back and looking, like, in light of this
6 accident, I was trying to figure out when, like, weight and
7 balance would be a part of a DCT that you wouldn't --

8 A. Yeah, there's several DCTs that would cover weight and
9 balance. And again, repeating an earlier response, is, I could do
10 the DCTs. You're doing surveillance. You're also doing
11 surveillance not associated with DCTs. It's ongoing safety
12 practice and regulatory compliance.

13 And I do a fair amount of ongoing ramp inspections out there,
14 and there have been no indications of weight and balance problems.
15 Understand that the issue with all operators, when you're doing a
16 ramp inspection or route check, you're reviewing paperwork. Very
17 rarely does FAA offload an airplane and weigh every item and
18 cross-check the data that's on the manifest.

19 Q. Understood.

20 A. It does happen, but it's very rare.

21 Q. Understood.

22 A. I can say that that has happened with Bering Air, subsequent
23 to the accident.

24 Q. Understood. Just curious, so I understand, because I saw you
25 did these a number of times, where you -- the weight and balance

1 would've been part of it. When it comes to -- and what I'm
2 learning is, some inspectors kind of stay in their lane. Would a
3 maintenance inspector look at that? Or is that just a box they
4 might check off? I mean, is that out of their lane, to have that,
5 like, the weight-and-balance portion, in their DCT?

6 A. I don't know specifically if a DCT would or wouldn't cover
7 that. I would say it is typically out of the maintenance and
8 avionics inspectors' lane. Maintenance and avionics inspectors do
9 participate with the route check process, which is an overall
10 surveillance, and I'll say, post-accident, that the Bering Air
11 maintenance and avionics inspectors are looking at weight and
12 balance documents as they have been -- I have requested they do
13 so, and briefed them as to what to look for. Prior, I would say,
14 yes, it's out of their discipline, out of their lane.

15 Q. Okay. You know, I'm trying to understand the DCTs. Like,
16 there's NO, not observable. And then sometimes, like -- can you
17 leave a box blank?

18 A. No.

19 Q. No.

20 A. No. No. If you want to do a non-observable, you would go
21 and you would make an inspector comment as why.

22 Q. Okay. Can you leave one blank?

23 A. No. Not to my knowledge.

24 Q. Okay. Okay. (Indiscernible). So let me try to understand,
25 with regards to, you know, this program and route checks. Does

1 this directly affect surprise en-route ramp checks?

2 A. Does this directly affect -- say that again, please, sorry?

3 Q. A surprise en-route ramp check. Because now, it seems like
4 the operator knows when FAA is showing up.

5 A. Oh, sure. Yeah, sure.

6 Q. Do you think that you would get a better temperature if there
7 were more -- the temperature of what surveillance or maybe risks
8 or the health, the culture, whatever it is -- do you think
9 surprise checks would help?

10 A. Unannounced route checks, or even sleeper inspectors on board
11 planes, are always going to be an increased surveillance. No
12 doubt about it.

13 Q. What do you mean by sleepers? Is that, like, somebody from
14 another FSDO?

15 A. Correct. I can't show up, unless -- I can't show up
16 undisguised on any air carrier's plane in the interior. I'm a
17 known entity. So there's -- so in essence, when your name is put
18 on the reservation list, it's an announcement in advance. So
19 there are some FSDOs that have employed a strategy of bringing in
20 outside inspectors and booking them on places for that unannounced
21 route check.

22 But it's a relatively small community, and not only does
23 everybody at Bering Air know who their POI is by name and face,
24 but I've been a long time in this industry. I couldn't book
25 myself on any flight. You know, out of Fairbanks, Nome or

1 Kotzebue without everybody going, FAA, coffee's hot.

2 Q. Yeah. What about somebody from the Anchorage --

3 A. Careful on the runway.

4 Q. Could you have brought in somebody from Anchorage? I mean,
5 not to Monday night --

6 A. Yeah, wow, we could Monday night quarterback, certainly,
7 in --

8 Q. I'm just trying to --

9 A. And as I -- just in answer to that, previous to the accident,
10 I had no risk indicators to do anything like that. As a matter of
11 fact, quite the contrary. This was one of the most polished
12 airlines I'd ever seen. And the customers felt the same. The
13 employee group felt the same.

14 So we do -- as to the level of inspection, the time focused
15 on an element is, we -- you know, I have to prioritize where I
16 spend my time. It's called risk-based decision-making. And so
17 we're going to respond to risk indicators and -- against our
18 two -- these pre-accident risk indicators just are not there.
19 From the operations, from my observations, from the safety record
20 of the airline, from the reputation with their traveling public,
21 their customer base, and to their employee group.

22 Q. How about the --

23 A. Once again, hindsight 20/20, looking over our shoulder, would
24 I have done things differently? I don't think anybody at this
25 table or in the industry wouldn't agree they would've done

1 something differently.

2 Q. Understood. What about the rapid growth and expansion? Did
3 that cause any alarm bells and --

4 A. The growth and expansion has been the downfall of many of an
5 airline --

6 Q. That's what I'm learning.

7 A. -- in Alaska. And back to that point, was it an issue of
8 discussion? Certainly, it was. I would counter that with, again,
9 the infrastructure, the ground support, the equipment that Bering
10 Air had and has, is still unparalleled in the 135 Alaska industry.
11 So I would equate that with responsible, measured growth.

12 The growth -- you speak of rapid growth. The route structure
13 has not changed. They didn't bring on any new O&Ds. They had a
14 significant change in the commuter industry when Ravn and -- or
15 Frontier Flying Service, haggling for Ravn -- PenAir, all went out
16 of business, creating a void in several markets, which other
17 carriers raced to fill. Bering Air did not. Bering Air did not
18 race to fill voids in Barrow, Bethel, Aniak. They stayed right
19 there.

20 Their route structure remained the same. So what it was was
21 the fortification of their existing route structure. Just to make
22 the distinction, when you say rapid growth, it was a -- it was a
23 solidification of their existing structure. Not to be -- not to
24 be confused with, you know, a route --

25 Q. Okay. Okay. No, please, let's, you know --

1 A. -- with route expansion. The O&Ds -- the number of O&Ds
2 didn't change one iota.

3 Q. I don't know what an O&D is.

4 A. Origin and Destination.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. (Indiscernible).

7 Q. So increased flights. Is that correct? Increased tier
8 planes?

9 A. Whereas their market share will have increased in those -- in
10 their existing markets, with the exit of another airline, they
11 will have to bring on more aircraft, because of the market
12 portion. More people, more men. That is true. And in that
13 sense, they were solidifying their existing structure. And they
14 did it, once again, I think very responsibly, by not racing out
15 into new markets they're unfamiliar with, that they didn't have
16 expertise in.

17 And I can emphasize the word expertise. Bering Air serves
18 Nome, Unalakleet, Kotzebue areas better than any carrier in time
19 has. There's a high level expertise here. So they do expand that
20 route structure. They expand their airline, not in route
21 structure, but in infrastructure, meaning aircraft and, I would
22 imagine, the number of flights increased, as I said, responsibly.

23 I saw aircraft expansion in a standardization of the fleet.
24 An unparalleled standardization of the fleet. The whole fleet,
25 when I came there, well, of the Navajos were parked. The 206s and

1 207s were gone, and the Navajos were parked. The booted Caravans
2 were gone. It's a standardized fleet of Beech 1900s, King Airs,
3 Caravans, all TKS, 208B Caravans. All identical. The difference
4 being the number placard on the panel.

5 And once again, to Bering Air's credit, and an example of
6 responsible expansion. As a POI, I loved that. I love aircraft
7 standardization. It fosters aviation safety in that there aren't
8 a myriad of differences from end number to end number to end
9 number as pilots train. Hopping in one 208, and another one the
10 next day, and they're all identical.

11 The expansion to accommodate increased business would be in
12 facilities, the beautiful facility you've seen there. I think
13 that enhances safety. We're not crowding people into small areas
14 where they can't efficiently perform their work. We have ample
15 storage area for maintenance, spares, equipment, ground handling
16 equipment, deice equipment. I mean, those are all examples of
17 responsible expansion, is my emphasis.

18 Q. Okay. Thank you for that. On the CHAT, you made a few
19 entries post-accident. Do you recall those?

20 A. I recall making entries.

21 Q. Do you recall if you added any increased surveillance needed?

22 A. I did. Starr, as I say, before accident and post-accident, I
23 believe that things weren't as I thought, and recommended
24 additional surveillance, in very specific areas, as I am retiring
25 out, and I wanted to make sure that that information was carried

1 forward to the next inspector. I've had those discussions with my
2 office, with the other inspectors, as well as my FLM, on the areas
3 of concern. And those were reflected in my SAS comments.

4 MS. BLUM: Okay. Thank you. Those are my questions,
5 (indiscernible). Tim?

6 MR. SORENSON: Do you need a break at all?

7 MR. KENMONTH: Am I looking like I need a break? Counselor,
8 do I look like I need a break? Maybe I should take a break.

9 MR. SORENSON: No. No. Just take a break.

10 MR. KENMONTH: Okay.

11 MS. BLUM: We'll go off the recording at 11:29.

12 (Off the record.)

13 (On the record.)

14 MS. BLUM: Recording starting at 11:36. And we're passing it
15 off to Tim.

16 MR. SORENSON: Craig, just a couple questions at this point.
17 I'm sure before the accident and after the accident, you've looked
18 at the STC supplements, both for the Textron TKS system, and for
19 your --

20 MS. BLUM: Can you speak up?

21 MR. SORENSON: Okay. Sorry. And the Aeroacoustics extender.
22 Do you have an opinion on the wording on those?

23 MR. KENMONTH: Yeah, excellent question, Tim. Think of how
24 to respond.

25 BY MR. SORENSON:

1 Q. That's fine.

2 A. As I say, I discussed the FIKI 208 issue with other
3 operators, other POIs, other managers. And there exists,
4 statewide, a misunderstanding, to my perception, of how those SECs
5 modified the weight. So I think that the SEC could've done a
6 better job in emphasizing the FIKI weight for modified aircraft.
7 I've talked with the president at length of Aeroacoustics on it.

8 And fair enough, the process to change that is extensive, and
9 in his view, not necessary. I've, in response to that, said, I
10 understand the logistical problems, the distribution problems and
11 legal problems in that. However, maybe your sales department
12 could do a better job of casing this, as far as the FIKI weight
13 goes.

14 The issue is, the Aeroacoustics -- by the way, it's not just
15 the Aeroacoustics STC. This is common with other STCs that modify
16 the gross weight of the manufacture Textron. And as an aside,
17 there's a loss of control in the Caravan a few years ago, out of
18 Fairbanks, I was the IIC on, and found that to be the case, as
19 well.

20 Also, digressing, that was a -- that was an issue that I
21 brought back to Bering Air, and we discussed at length. So that
22 would've been three years ago, and how these FTC modified gross
23 weights, you know, don't apply to icing flight in the 208.
24 Anyways, there may have been a better way of wording it, or
25 special emphasis, and the flight manual supplement for the

1 Aeroacoustics, yet however, as far as I'm concerned, currently
2 states that for FIKI Flight C, the Textron approved, the Cessna
3 approved, aircraft flight manual or supplements.

4 And I think that some operators viewed the, in this case,
5 Aeroacoustics supplement itself as a supplement that was being
6 referred to, post the new -- the higher 96C3 weight. And therein
7 lies the confusion. So I'd recommend an emphasis by Aeroacoustics
8 to emphasize that flight in known icing weights was 8807, that
9 this wasn't the approved supplement for FIKI weights, was
10 referring.

11 I think that all the operators that I've been in contact with
12 in the state, as well as the other principals that I've been in
13 contact with, have taken that back to their operator, and
14 emphasized that, and hopefully clarified the confusion. However,
15 not to say that there isn't the possibility of this being a
16 misunderstanding, five or ten or 15 years from now. So did that
17 answer your question?

18 Q. I think so.

19 A. I think a special emphasis and better re-wording. However,
20 legally speaking, it's on target. Once again, ditto with Bering
21 Air. They had procedures, processes, preventing all the
22 regulatory nonconformity associated with 445. And it took this to
23 make a special emphasis to expand, to improve, to refine, those
24 written procedures.

25 Q. So if I understood correctly, in your opinion -- please argue

1 with me -- in your opinion, the flight manual supplement,
2 specifically the Aeroacoustics, is clear that you would then go
3 back to the Textron TKS supplement. Did I understand you
4 correctly?

5 A. In my opinion --

6 Q. That's all I'm asking. That's all I'm asking.

7 A. -- it's clear, and I hope that I balance that with saying, I
8 can see where there is misunderstanding, albeit.

9 Q. Okay. Fair enough. You had made a comment about the
10 accident of the 208 here in Fairbanks, and that additional payload
11 STC and flight in known icing. With reference to the
12 conversations you had with Bering Air that you mentioned, what was
13 the nature of those, if you recall? What was the outcome of
14 those, to the best of your recollection?

15 A. The nature was, it was an educational discussion, and it was
16 one of continued operational safety. I'm involved in a
17 potentially similarly horrific accident, because aircraft had a
18 loss of control at almost 11,000 feet instead of 4,000 feet, had
19 the altitude to recover from, among other reasons. And so lessons
20 learned are taken back to my operators. And the story's recounted
21 that it's -- can I take a -- just pause here to --

22 MS. BLUM: Sure. Let's pause the recording at 11:48.

23 (Off the record.)

24 (On the record.)

25 MS. BLUM: Recording back on at 11:48.

1 MR. KENMONT: So I think the question was, discussions as to
2 previous loss of control incident in a 208. And I said, of
3 course, we're discussing lessons learned and how to prevent it, a
4 similar event, at Bering. That's my job. That's management's job
5 at Bering Air.

6 The issues discussed were all of the above. The FIKI weight
7 issue. That plane, similarly, was grossly overweight. It was,
8 once again, another well overweight airplane, well in excess of
9 the FIKI weight. And he had had a severe icing conditions,
10 abnormal icing conditions -- it was an August event, as a matter
11 of fact, which is rare -- and once again, a startup from almost
12 11,000 feet.

13 And it being August, he went through a freezing layer of
14 about 7,000 feet, so it had time to deice on its way to the ground
15 and recovered, you know, less than 1,000 feet AGL, with the eight
16 passengers on board, and substantial airframe damages, result of
17 tolerance exceedances on the way down, as well.

18 Anyways, the lessons learned and taken back to Bering Air,
19 and discussed in Bering Air, were the three issues that I
20 associate, in my opinion, with Flight 445. As I have not been
21 privy to the investigation facts, I've had -- I've seen some
22 pieces of information. I've had some casual conversation.
23 However, I have no data points from the -- I have no flight data
24 points, I have no forensic data, I have no numbers. So it's all
25 my opinion.

1 My opinion is that the Caravan is -- my opinion is, I don't
2 believe any other -- the 208, the Cessna Caravan, has been the
3 aircraft in 135 fatalities more so than any other aircraft up there.
4 Also, because it has a wide exposure to accidents, it's a
5 fantastic airplane, and it's the mainstay of 135 commuter flying
6 up here, so there are a lot of operations.

7 However, I see a common thread with these fatal Caravan
8 accidents, and they all seem to have the same three elements to
9 them. And the elements are, the aircraft's overweight, the
10 aircraft's in icing conditions, and the aircraft is going too
11 slow. The issues in the previous loss of control, all three of
12 those elements were stressed with the Bering Air folks.

13 And they'd all had written procedures addressing all of
14 those. Their training covered weight and balance issues, of
15 course. It covered icing avoidance. There's very specific pre-
16 action language in the GOM to avoid icing. There's very specific
17 minimum airspeeds in the Caravan AFM of 120 knots minimum airspeed
18 for the Caravan.

19 There was a Caravan SOP that I approved for Bering Air, with
20 an emphasis on icing conditions and the tactical writer, Ben Rowe,
21 to his credit, added into that SOP blue icing paragraphs all
22 throughout, and once again emphasized the need to escape ice and
23 the 120-knot minimum speed in icing. The checklist, the company
24 abbreviated checklist, had a minimum airspeed in icing of 120.

25 To reiterate -- to answer your question directly, all those

1 elements were covered in my discussions from the previous
2 Fairbanks loss of control, is that -- with the Bering Air
3 management, and yet here they are again, I think, foremost in the
4 445 flight. And my opinion, in closing on that, was, I do make a
5 distinction between FIKI weight and grossly overloaded weight.

6 There was icing involved in the area. I don't know what
7 airframe icing was on that plane, nor do I know if anybody will
8 ever know. I don't know if it was -- if there's contributing
9 equipment failure of any type. Was there engine response issues,
10 due to ice ingestion? Was TKS pour services frozen over? Were we
11 getting a wet-out wing? We don't know if the anti-icing systems
12 were operational at the time of the accident. We don't know the
13 intent to deicing at the time of the accident.

14 However, it appeared it was unusually significant intensity.
15 I would call it severe, from what I saw. Like I say, I was flying
16 in the area at the same time, and we terminated our flight. But
17 at the end of the day, it would be a failure to maintain flying
18 speed. And that, in my opinion, is why 445 lost control.

19 And how do we prevent that going forward? That's what I hope
20 to impress with that Bering Air, in my the few remaining days.
21 The training department agrees. It's certainly more than a
22 special emphasis item. It's the most important item in a 208 at
23 this point. I offer that back to you, Tim, in response to, what
24 were the issues discussed as a result of the loss of control in
25 Fairbanks, and my discussion with Bering Air management.

1 MR. SORENSON: I appreciate the in-depth, thoughtful response
2 very much.

3 MR. KENMONTH: Too much?

4 MR. SORENSON: No. Perfect. That's all the questions I have
5 at this time.

6 MS. BLUM: Okay. Sabrina?

7 DR. WOODS: Thank you. I'm going to be bouncing around a
8 bit, because a lot of what I have is based on the questions that
9 have already been previously asked. In fact, going all the way
10 back to almost the first question, I think, that Starr asked, you
11 had said that Bering Air is a complex operator, and I guess, what
12 is the -- what is the definition of complex?

13 MR. KENMONTH: Oh. The aeronautical definition of complex is
14 not what I meant. When I meant complex, my opinion, it's got
15 multiple aircraft. It's a day, night, IFR, BFR, single-, multi-
16 engine, commuter aircraft, large aircraft, helicopters. It's got
17 a wide mix of operations of aircraft.

18 BY DR. WOODS:

19 Q. And so I think you just said that that is -- is that a you
20 definition, or is that an FAA definition?

21 A. The definition of -- the definition of complex in aviation is
22 typically an aircraft with retractable landing gear, controllable
23 pitch, prop and flap. So it's not really relevant. So it would
24 be a me definition of a complex carrier.

25 Q. Okay. For your workload overall, I recognize that you said

1 that Bering Air is your most complex operator in your purview. So
2 how much of your workload would you say is divided up, providing
3 oversight for that operator, versus all the other ones you have?

4 A. That's a good question. Understand, there is more elements
5 to my job than operator surveillance. So --

6 Q. All tasks assigned --

7 A. So you mean of all my -- of my workload -- well, we do more
8 than surveillance. We have a very robust -- we attend constant
9 training. It takes a fair amount of our time. Operations
10 inspectors are also involved in an FAA flight program, which is a
11 significant -- takes a significant amount of our time.

12 Quarterly, we fly to Texas and do single-engine, multi-
13 engine, IFR, BFR, flight checks, as well as all of our field
14 rental checks and trailable aircraft, seaplanes. We do walk-ins,
15 we do pilot certifications, Part 61. So it's not just 135s for
16 me. So how much of Bering Air surveillance, how much of -- what
17 size is that slice of pie to everything else I do with the FAA?

18 Q. Correct.

19 A. Going to redirect -- re-ask the question. No offense. I
20 would probably say roughly, some months, it occupies -- some weeks
21 it occupies 100 percent of my time. Overall, I would probably
22 throw on the wall 10 to 15 percent of my time.

23 Q. Given that time is finite, is that enough? In that you have
24 to accomplish all those other tasks. Is that enough?

25 A. Enough to do what? I maintain an ongoing presence,

1 communication. I meet the regulatory requirements of my job, and
2 I meet any regulatory requests from the operator. So does it meet
3 the bare minimum? Yes. Is it enough? Heck, no. From an ops --
4 from an ops inspector position, I don't know if there is ever
5 enough. Certainly there is, from a carrier's perspective. But
6 from a ops inspector's, you know, I mean, there's never enough.

7 Q. You talked about special emphasis items. I guess, what makes
8 it, in that, for instance, weight and balance was not, prior to
9 the accident, a special emphasis item? So what makes for a
10 special emphasis item?

11 A. Risk indicators. Risk indicators. A problem.

12 Q. Can you give me an example of the end result, though? What
13 is the item which is now being specially emphasized?

14 A. The process whereby we compute a weight and balance, all the
15 way back to, where are we getting the weights of each element,
16 from the aircraft to the onboard equipment, where those weights
17 originate, and how are they verified, and where in the calculation
18 process they're inserted.

19 Q. Not my question. What I'm asking is, what makes an item now
20 a special emphasis item? How is it determined to be, all of a
21 sudden, this thing we're looking at is now going to be a special
22 emphasis item? What is that process?

23 A. Risk indicators.

24 Q. Can you give me an example of one prior to the accident?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Would you like to go on?

2 A. I've answered your question. I'm sorry. You want me to give
3 you --

4 Q. What is an example --

5 A. You want me to give you examples of special --

6 Q. Of the special emphasis item, prior to the --

7 A. Special emphasis ideas where I've had questions, due to
8 observation, that I've followed up on, would be, like, a deicing
9 program at Bering Air, would be deicing ramp personnel training,
10 deicing quality control, anti-icing temperature applications.
11 Those questions. And I have asked those questions and followed
12 up, and we've done walk-around audits with employees and
13 management, where I've felt there was an increased risk, because I
14 saw -- I didn't observe what I expected for controls in those
15 areas.

16 Q. Do you get a lot of control over that? Or do other people, I
17 guess, higher than you in the FAA, do they have input, as well?
18 In other words, is somebody telling you, hey, go look at this? Or
19 do you have most of the control to determine that this is what I'm
20 going to go look at?

21 A. We have an outline of work program from our SAS work program
22 that will ask questions about the deicing program. So a
23 combination of both. I have economy to focus through special
24 emphasis digs on any operational element at Bering Air, and I have
25 a work program tasking me with surveillance on specific work

1 areas.

2 Q. You had asked Starr earlier about -- and I recognize you're
3 not privy to the information that's coming out from the
4 investigation -- about how we went about verifying the aircraft
5 was overweight. So I guess, when you conduct your surveillance, I
6 know that it's a lot of documentation data that you're looking at.
7 But what types of tools do you have to go and engage in
8 verification measures of your own?

9 A. What type of tools do I have to verify, for example, weight
10 and balance procedures?

11 Q. Sure.

12 A. Is that what I'm -- not sure what kind of tools -- I have the
13 ability -- A, it starts with approving the design of the process.
14 It's all approved by me. To audit it, I have the ability to ask
15 at any time to inspect the pilot's paperwork before the flight, on
16 the flight or after the flight, for the, in this case, weight and
17 balance. I have the ability to verify that by pulling that box
18 off and putting it on a scale, if I so want. So I have, I guess,
19 almost unlimited ability to verify the weight and balance, from
20 design to performance.

21 Q. For some of the special emphasis items -- again, this is
22 prior to the accident, and as you said earlier, weight and balance
23 wasn't necessarily one of them, but as an example you provided,
24 deicing was one. I guess, how much of your surveillance is
25 divvied up between that paperwork, versus being able to go verify

1 that somebody's doing what they say they're doing?

2 A. I don't understand the question.

3 Q. I'm guessing, just by what you described, they're linking --
4 it sounds like it takes time, takes, like, a lot of time to -- an
5 example you gave for weight and balance, to maybe go, you know,
6 pull a box off and weigh it, or check the paper and compare it to
7 this, that and the other.

8 A. It takes time and it's very invasive to the operator, of
9 course. It rarely happens.

10 Q. So I guess that's what I'm getting at, is how often would you
11 actually get that opportunity to verify to those lengths?

12 A. If the big question was concerning my surveillance of a
13 weight and balance procedure, in this case, my weight and balance
14 review is going to start with a paperwork review, because that's
15 the record. I might add that Bering Air makes all their weight
16 and balance data available in the archive. And so these are
17 documented. You can review per flight, by the flight, before the
18 flight, during the flight, after the flight, a month after the
19 flight.

20 That's an extra regulatory -- Bering Air does that. It's not
21 a requirement to document -- to document and archive single-engine
22 weight and balances. It's a regulatory requirement to document
23 and archive multiengine weight and balances. Bering Air does
24 this, once again, out of this highest level of safety that they
25 ascribe to operate by.

1 So the documentation is going to be my first source to go
2 review stuff. That's where everything is summarized. Pilot
3 weights, aircraft weights, onboard equipment weights, fuel on
4 board, load, passenger weights. So of course, when I'm doing
5 surveillance, that's what I'm going to be documenting. If that's
6 what I'm surveilling, if there are risk indications apparent to
7 me, I will probe deeper.

8 There haven't been risk indications prior to the action that
9 there was any reason to probe deeper. Obvious risk indications
10 would be grossly underinflated passenger weights, which is not
11 possible. The pilots aren't entering the passenger weights.
12 Customer service is entering the passenger weights. Their actual
13 weights, back to the question, do we go -- what do we look at, at
14 bases? We go look at scale. Passengers do weigh themselves on
15 scales, or they'll go on ask weight plus ten pounds. The point
16 being that those are not obviously generally or even easily
17 underestimated.

18 We'll look at fuel weight. Fuel weight has to meet a minimum
19 fuel required, which would be trip fuel, plus 30 minutes VFR, plus
20 45 minutes IFR. Bering Air requires to land with an hour of field
21 reserve. Once again, extra-regulatory, voluntarily, extra-
22 regulatory. But I do go and reality check on the fuel weights
23 posted.

24 So if I don't see any inconsistencies, underinflated numbers,
25 that -- there would be no reason for me to go take a deeper probe

1 on an invasive practice such as delaying the plane and taking
2 passengers and putting them on the scale, or offloading boxes back
3 onto the scale. In other words, I could, I suppose, but it is --
4 we have an obligation to offer it in collaboration with a carrier.
5 And we will do the paperwork on it with no indications of a
6 problem. There's typically not a reason to dig deep.

7 Once again, the process has been approved by me. In other
8 words, where they're going to get the weight, how they're going to
9 do a calculation, where they're going to archive those numbers.
10 And those numbers are available for their internal auditors, their
11 management, and FAA, at any time. They pass the smell test.
12 There's typically no reason to dig deeper. The accident of 445
13 was a reason to dig deeper. That would be an obvious risk
14 indication on the validity of those numbers. And that I've done
15 in-depth since then. Did I answer your question?

16 Q. Yeah. Thank you.

17 A. Sorry if I misunderstood your terminology. Seemed like it
18 was a broad question.

19 Q. Yeah. Feel free to correct, because I don't know -- I've
20 never been you, so I don't know the language. I'm just going off
21 what I think I know. So feel free to correct or adjust if you
22 realize I'm going off topic. I recognize that, like, an approved
23 flight risk assessment is not a requirement for Part 135, other
24 than aeronautical. And I recognize that it's still not, even with
25 the coming Part 5. However, I guess, what is your professional

1 opinion about an approved flight risk assessment as a tool for an
2 operator?

3 A. What is my personal -- my professional opinion? My personal
4 professional opinion?

5 Q. Yeah, given your experience.

6 A. Given my experience? I've found them to be a nuisance to the
7 flight crews. I've found them to have a high degree of inaccuracy
8 or irrelevancy. I feel they are imperative. Even with all those
9 shortcomings, they add far more good than the shortcomings. I'm
10 an advocate of operational risk assessments on all flights. A
11 strong advocate.

12 Q. Is that a conversation that you ever had with Bering Air?

13 A. As I've said -- answered this before -- on the flight release
14 tool, for years, I've been a proponent in pushing for it. And
15 that was, my opinion, part of the genesis of the FRT program, back
16 over a year ago. My request to have a formal flight operational
17 risk management program in the Bering Air dispatch process.

18 Q. And so what kind of power do you have as a POI to influence
19 the operator to get on board?

20 A. Good question. That's a great -- that's a great human-side
21 question. I have go/no-go power on regulatory issues. I have the
22 power of persuasion, collaboration and salesmanship on extra
23 regulatory issues. And you choose your battles, because you're
24 not going to get them all. And I think I've had an excellent
25 relationship with our Bering Air manager. They've been very

1 receptive to recommendations. They've been very resistant to
2 other recommendations.

3 Q. We've talked to quite a few people now, and I mean, people
4 who obviously work for the organization to -- organizational
5 structure, leadership, and now regulatory oversight for the
6 organization. Everybody kind of says the same thing. Bering Air
7 has a high standard of safety, just high standards, achieve the
8 high standards, high standards.

9 But for some of those people, when we dug deeper into, okay,
10 well, what makes for high standards and what makes for good
11 safety, it came across as that simply the lack of an accident,
12 like, nothing bad has happened yet, therefore it's high, therefore
13 it's good. So I'm trying to dig a little bit deeper to that,
14 because, you know, safe doesn't always equal just no accidents.

15 So, like, as the POI -- and you have sprinkled some examples
16 in over previous questions -- what makes for high standard of
17 excellence? What makes for safe? What are those indicators,
18 those risk indicators that you look for, that tells you this is a
19 high standard, this is safe? Other than, there hasn't been an
20 accident.

21 A. So from a human performance perspective, it's an excellent
22 question. It's probably one that I best -- I would best answer
23 with some preparation. I'd be glad to forward you a more
24 thoughtful response to that question. You're preaching to the
25 choir, however, that a safe operator is not safe solely because of

1 a previous safety record, or a record without action. Like, I
2 can't agree with you more.

3 However, that is a risk indicator. An operator with an
4 accident-laden, violation-laden history is going to be a much
5 higher risk indicator than an operator without an accident,
6 violation history. However, that does, I agree with you, 1,000
7 percent, that does not define a safe operator. I would say a safe
8 operator was one that is proactively, constantly improving,
9 constantly preventing occurrences before they occur.

10 Q. Are these conversations that you would have with, I guess,
11 Bering Air executive leadership, in determining how they are
12 constantly, proactively identifying their hazards and risks?

13 A. In many languages, with many people, yes. The 119ers, the
14 training department, the safety department. These are ongoing
15 conversations. With the pilot group.

16 Q. Are you ever invited to, like, pilot standups or meetings, to
17 present or speak?

18 A. I have never been invited to a pilot standup meeting in my
19 life. It's a good question. Is it me? Am I acerbic?

20 Q. Jumping around a bit, what are the tools that the FAA has
21 decided for, now Part 135 operations, get on board, this is the
22 Part 5 SMS? I guess, what are your thoughts on that, and to what
23 level, recognizing you're exiting soon, I guess, to what level
24 have you been engaged in Bering Air developing their safety
25 management system?

1 A. On the lower side of the scale. I'm leaving. I've had
2 discussions with the director of safety, as to their transition.
3 Understand I am leaving.

4 Q. Yes.

5 A. Understand that there is a fair amount of grey area existing
6 on how that's going to look, how that's going to roll out, that
7 inspectors have not even been trained on it.

8 Q. From what you do know about it, do you think it'll be a
9 useful tool?

10 A. For the most part. For the most part, I believe so. I
11 think, from my opinion, I think there's some relevancy and scaling
12 problems with it to the smaller operators.

13 Q. Recognizing you're leaving, what recourse do you have as an
14 FAA employee, as the POI for the airline? Who do you go to talk
15 to about your concerns within the FAA? Is there somebody to go
16 talk to?

17 A. FAA's a big organization. My concerns are many. So I guess
18 it would depend on the concern.

19 Q. Specifically about, like SMS implementation and scalability
20 to a smaller operator.

21 A. Oh, as to SMS -- specifically as to my insecurities or
22 commitment issues with SMS, to small operators, I don't have
23 anybody I can go talk to. As I say, there's not been SMS training
24 at the inspector level. I don't know of any -- our FAASTeam
25 personnel is the lead on our SMS program. And his training is

1 starting now.

2 Q. So most operators have, let's say, three years. Three years
3 from when the rule came out to implement. Has there been any sort
4 of similar schedule provided to the inspector level that, hey,
5 within a one-year, we're going to get you guys trained, within two
6 years, we expect you to be able to --

7 A. No, no specific timetable that I'm aware of. It's oft
8 referred to in general, in meetings I've attended, there will be
9 training that this is coming, there will be more guidance.
10 Understand, I wouldn't be the ideal recipient of such a broadcast,
11 either. So just because I say I haven't seen it doesn't mean it
12 doesn't exist.

13 Q. Okay. That's fair.

14 A. I'd refer to my agency FLM on the left here, to answer that
15 question about SMS rollout. Jump in there.

16 Q. We talked a little bit earlier about kind of the surveillance
17 tools, like SAS and DCTs and things like that. And I guess, as
18 you, as the end user -- so now you are the end user of these
19 tools. Has feedback ever been solicited from you about how the
20 tools are working for you, if you feel the tools are, you know,
21 doing what they say they're supposed to do?

22 A. Not really. There was feedback opportunities that I recall,
23 in my earlier years. Doesn't mean there isn't opportunity in the
24 agency for -- oh, there is. There's ongoing feedback opportunity.
25 I mean, we can make corrections requests, SAS, all the time. That

1 should be -- if there was -- if there is any kind of, hey, you're
2 part of the design team, what would you do for DCT, no, there
3 isn't that.

4 Q. But as the end user, shouldn't there be feedback method for
5 DCTs?

6 A. There is.

7 Q. Shouldn't you be part of building that process?

8 A. I haven't been.

9 Q. Are you -- been afforded the opportunity, even though you
10 haven't been?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. So the opportunity is out there. It's just something that
13 you've not personally been a part of.

14 A. Yes. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. So regarding DCTs earlier, you said that, you know,
16 they're mandatory, essentially. What you have set forth is
17 mandatory. And I thought to myself at the time, when you were
18 having the conversation, I believe, with Starr, that just because
19 it's mandatory doesn't mean it's reasonable. So I guess, how has
20 your -- how has managing your DCT load in conjunction with all
21 those other duties assigned been?

22 A. I'm sorry, I don't understand the question. Is this a
23 workload management question?

24 Q. Yes.

25 A. How do I integrate DCTs into my workload?

1 Q. Yes.

2 A. It's a job requirement. So I manage it.

3 Q. I mean, I get that, but it still doesn't mean it's
4 reasonable. There's a lot of job requirements I have that I feel
5 are sometimes unreasonable. So I guess that's all I'm trying to
6 feel, is, with the workload management --

7 A. Sabrina, I've been more than willing to offer my opinion on
8 particulars about 445. I'm unable to offer my opinion on some of
9 these FAA programs.

10 Q. I did mean specifically the DCTs for Bering Air, but
11 that's --

12 A. No, I understand. I understand, you're talking in the big
13 picture work. I just -- you know, it's a job requirement. I
14 don't control it. It's part of my job. I don't feel that I want
15 to express my opinion on some of these FAA programs at this
16 hearing.

17 Q. Okay. We talked about Caravan accidents that you've seen in
18 the past, and that they sometimes follow a similar trend of, icing
19 is involved, overweight, too slow.

20 A. Right.

21 Q. I kind of have a longstanding philosophy that nobody wakes up
22 in the morning intending to have an accident. Right? So I guess
23 what I'm wondering is, despite the fact that these things have
24 been taught and identified -- icing, overweight, too slow -- and
25 specifically have been taught to Bering Air, pilots were

1 mentioned, or -- it's been a topic of conversation. So why do you
2 think we're at this -- how did we get to this point, then? And
3 I'm not --

4 A. Okay. So back on my opinion again. Once again, absent any
5 data, you know, I'll be happy to give you my opinion. Once again,
6 it's my opinion. And you're asking an excellent question from
7 human performance perspective. I addressed it from a higher
8 airline perspective. If I hear you correctly, you're asking,
9 what's my opinion, how does the sequence of events combine to go
10 bring an airplane out of the sky? How does that happen from a
11 human performance perspective? Am I rewording your question
12 accurately?

13 Q. Yes. And how does it keep happening, if that's the same
14 reason Caravans are --

15 A. How does it keep happening? All part of --

16 Q. -- tend to have accidents.

17 A. My opinion -- once again, it's an excellent question. I
18 would like to have the opportunity to follow up in writing. A
19 small textbook on that answer. However, to summarize it, in this
20 board, I think it's a variety of factors. Once again, it's never
21 one.

22 I'm going to start with, the 135 world has always been
23 plagued with pilot turnover. It's been a training ground for
24 majors. People come and get their first commercial jobs. They're
25 low-experience. They get hours built. They're eligible for hire

1 for majors, and move on. So 135 world has always been a high-
2 turnover world. It's been a training ground for pilots in a large
3 degree. You know, the point being that you end up with lower-
4 experience pilots.

5 In Alaska 135 world, you have another rarity in the
6 commercial aviation, and you have single-pilot operations, as
7 opposed to 121 operation, where you have two-pilot crews.
8 Caravan's a single-pilot airplane. By nature, by the job
9 requirement of short, unimproved fields, we're having small
10 aircraft. They're single-pilot aircraft.

11 So to answer your question, now we have this combination of
12 things, where we have lower-experience people flying single-pilot
13 airplanes without that copilot, without the conscience on their
14 shoulder, without ongoing mentoring, even, as a copilot in that
15 same plane, for years. And they're sitting by themselves in the
16 PIC seat.

17 So we have a relatively inexperienced flight group, flying
18 single-pilot airplanes, into some very challenging environments.
19 We're low-level. We're not above the weather. We're right in the
20 weather. Icing is difficult as it gets anywhere in the United
21 States. We have forecast weather issues. Big state. Broad
22 forecast. Lot of changing weather.

23 We have, back to the single pilot in the airplane problem --
24 they have, partially from their experience, partially because of
25 their lack of monitoring or mentoring, they succumb to human

1 pressures. I see it through the years -- through the years, as
2 the whole can-do concept for pilots. Pilots want to perform.
3 Pilots will go put more on their airplane than they've been
4 taught. Pilots will put more on their airplane than is legally
5 permitted.

6 Why do they do that? It's a human issue. It's a can-do
7 issue. Is it an outstation pressure? Saying, hey, you know,
8 we've got to clean out the station before the holiday. Is it a
9 passenger issue? Hey, we've got a storm coming and we're going to
10 be stuck here for three days. I've got to get back. Hey, I've
11 got to meet Alaska Airlines in a part in two hours. All those
12 pressures bear on the most vulnerable of the pilot group in the
13 country. The unexperienced guy with his first or second job in
14 aviation, sole crew member on a single-pilot airplane, working in
15 remote Alaska.

16 So my opinion, from the human performance perspective, on how
17 an accident might happen, all those are elements. There's
18 pressures on the pilot, contrary to his written procedures,
19 contrary to his training, contrary to his aircraft flight manual
20 limitations. Why is he out there putting more people-pounds on
21 the plane than he's permitted? It's a human vulnerability. They
22 do it because they're inexperienced.

23 They do it, honestly, part of it -- a corporate culture that
24 could use improvement. I think it's a risk indicator of a
25 corporate culture that needs improvement. I would say that in

1 this case, that did not happen the first time. So I look hard at
2 the corporate culture of Bering Air. And I would say it's
3 probably a result of conditioning, operant conditioning. Pilots
4 will get away with it. Nobody will say anything about it. It's
5 okay. It gets repeated. I believe that's the first time.

6 So I hope this is the discussion that you're asking for.
7 Otherwise, I'm going to feel awful embarrassed about waxing on.
8 But these are the human conditions, these are the human elements,
9 that I think were part of the problems on 445. The inexperience,
10 operant conditioning that it's okay, culture -- shaped a culture
11 that needs improvement, so people know that that's not okay.
12 Maybe additional monitoring, mentoring. As I say, you have
13 single-pilot crews.

14 As an aside here, Bering Air has the most robust pilot
15 mentoring practice of any 135 operators that I've seen. There are
16 regulatory minimums for observed line checks, where the pilot gets
17 checked out in an airplane. And they're going to be typically 15
18 to 20 hours, by FAR. There's going to be company requirements,
19 and Bering Air has a hundred-hour mentoring requirement, far in
20 excess of the regulatory minimum.

21 Is that enough? I would say sometimes yes, sometimes no.
22 You have inexperienced people, single-pilot airplanes, I would say
23 additional mentoring, monitoring, would be required. The industry
24 would certainly benefit from it. Was there initial route checks
25 done during the summertime? Maybe none of that monitoring

1 happened during the wintertime. Maybe there should be seasonal
2 ongoing line checks by the company for the monitoring aspect.

3 Anyways, I identified, those are all contributing factors to
4 the holes that lined up on February 6th. Inexperience, can-do
5 pressures, an improvement in safety culture. I might add, so that
6 doesn't get misinterpreted, that the safety culture of Bering Air,
7 rank and file, is probably the best I've seen in any operation
8 ever. It is a group of very smart, capable, conscientious,
9 knowledgeable, trained employees.

10 And the manual sets, the policies, procedures by Bering Air
11 are the best I've seen in any 135 operator in 40 years. There is
12 a glue, I guess it is, that's the corporate culture that holds all
13 those things together. So I would say there's probably room for
14 improvement for the corporate culture, and I might add, from the
15 top down. Rank-and-file has an excellent safety culture. Can I
16 say that?

17 Q. Thank you. My last question is, you said -- and you made me
18 think of it, because you talked about training, like going to
19 Texas and things like that. Do you ever have a chance to, like,
20 crosstalk forums with other POIs in your similar position, or that
21 have your similar, you know, I guess, like, Part 135 operators, or
22 operators in general, under them --

23 A. Certainly. Certainly.

24 Q. -- to just kind of learn about trending across the FAA,
25 across --

1 A. You understand, as aviation safety inspectors at the FAA, we
2 have no friends anymore. So our only friends are other
3 inspectors.

4 Q. Other inspectors.

5 A. So we talk. We talk a lot. All those training events are
6 also crosstalk, as you say. Cross-pollenization is the word I
7 use.

8 Q. Arguably, I understand that Alaska flying is a little
9 different than the Lower 48, but I'm just wondering if there's
10 opportunities to kind of talk about what you're seeing trending.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Although Alaska flying is different, other people fly
13 Caravans, for instance. What are they seeing? What's going on?

14 A. There's some excellent POIs in Alaska. And specifically, to
15 answer your question, take the bench at 445, I have been
16 discussing with the other 208 POIs, and on a regular basis. The
17 FIKI process fixes is one that has been taken back to most, if not
18 all, the major 208 operators I know of, as a result of Bering
19 Air's processes and refined procedures.

20 DR. WOODS: All right. Thank you. Appreciate it.

21 MR. KENMONTH: Sure.

22 DR. WOODS: That's all I have. Starr?

23 MS. BLUM: Everybody still doing okay? Anybody need a break?
24 Okay. Kat?

25 BY DR. WILSON:

1 Q. I'm going to lean forward, just so you can hear me. I don't
2 like to --

3 A. Yes, I was leaning in to Sabrina, too, so --

4 Q. Not coming at you with my posture right now.

5 A. No, that's why I'm leaning towards you.

6 Q. I just want to follow up on the discussion that you had with
7 Sabrina, because I think it's really important observations that
8 you've made about some of the potential causal factors of this
9 accident. And I don't necessarily disagree with you on the aspect
10 of it being a breakdown in the culture at the organization that
11 may have contributed to this. So I'm curious, from your
12 perspective, as the POI, what can you do, or how can you influence
13 the culture there? How can you get across to management how
14 critical a positive safety culture is and, you know, that changes
15 may need to be made from that aspect?

16 I think you've given us a lot of information about, you know,
17 they're well-trained, they've got this great reputation. They've
18 got all these positive things. But how do you get through to them
19 and say, maybe we need to really look at the culture that we sort
20 of instilled here, and whether that, you know, made an impact on
21 February 6th?

22 A. So just so -- I can't let it go. Kat. But I didn't say a
23 breakdown in culture. I said room for improvement. And it is a
24 positive safety culture, rank and file, in an exemplary way, like
25 I haven't seen in -- there's room for improvement. If I hear your

1 question, it's, what can I do to improve that culture, from the
2 top down?

3 That then goes back to a previous answer I had about
4 collaboration, mutual respect, salesmanship, and that's all I can
5 do. That's all I can -- that's all I can do. And I think I have
6 a pretty positive relationship with the leadership at Bering Air.
7 And we do have talks, as I say. Some of my recommendations are
8 accepted, and some are rejected. I think you're talking in a non-
9 regulatory arena right now, though. So I am limited as to what I
10 can have impact on.

11 Q. Yeah, I do think it's a -- well --

12 A. I can give you many examples of recommendations that I've
13 made that Bering Air has voluntarily accepted, taken the ball and
14 run with it, even improved on it. So I don't want the wrong
15 impression here. But there is room for improvement on the safety
16 culture, obviously. When you had Flight 445 departing off
17 overweight, over water, obvious regulatory violations, that
18 doesn't happen in a vacuum. That happens, I think, a result of
19 the operant conditioning we were discussing. And that's a direct
20 result of safety culture from the top down.

21 Q. Is that a discussion that you can have with them? I mean, I
22 understand that there's no --

23 A. I said we had that discussion. We had that discussion in
24 various languages all the time, the question -- what impact can I
25 have? I can't have a -- I could have one through salesmanship,

1 collaboration, collusion, partnership. But I don't have a --
2 corporate culture's not a defined regulatory black-and-white issue
3 that I can read and correct.

4 Q. Do you think the company buys into the importance of Safety
5 Management System Part 5?

6 A. I believe some do.

7 Q. Who is it that, at Bering Air, that you interact with?
8 Multiple people? One person?

9 A. The short list is people I don't interact with at Bering.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Pilots, mechanics, customer service agents, management,
12 owners. Trainers, checking --

13 Q. Do you have one main point of contact?

14 A. Excuse me?

15 Q. Do you have one main point of contact?

16 A. The liaisons to the FAA for certificate of carrier are going
17 to be what we call the 119ers. The chief pilot and director of
18 operations are the primary liaisons. I have a fair amount of
19 interaction, of course, with the training or training-and-checking
20 department, as well.

21 Q. Do you observe training also?

22 A. I do.

23 Q. What do you think of their training for icing?

24 A. I think the icing training is above the regulatory minimum.
25 I think the classroom presentation is adequate. I think,

1 obviously, operating in icing conditions is going to be a subset
2 of the safety culture. And I think there needs -- room for
3 improvement.

4 Q. You mentioned in your previous interview that you go to
5 Bering Air about once a month for a week. The first week of the
6 month, I believe you said you travel there? Do you ever do any
7 unscheduled surveillance?

8 A. Not about in Nome.

9 Q. Do you do it somewhere else, unscheduled?

10 A. I kind of answered that question indirectly. My name, my
11 smiling face -- I'm recognized from afar. I can't go -- I can't
12 do surveillance in Bettles, because everybody knew the day before
13 that I had reservations on the schedule carrier.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I'll take that back. There are places in close where I will
16 do unscheduled surveillance, where I fly a known airplane, too.
17 So I'm limited by that radius. I don't fly out to Nome, no.

18 Q. When you first took over as POI for Bering Air, 2022, how do
19 you get up to speed with a new operator?

20 A. Jump in.

21 Q. Okay. Are you reading manuals? Are you --

22 A. Yeah. Yeah, you familiarize yourself with the training
23 program, with the general operations manual, SAS histories,
24 discussion with other inspectors. But it's a -- if I can just
25 fast-forward here -- it's an on-the-job training. It's an on-the-

1 job familiarization.

2 Q. You mentioned that you'd made recommendations, some that are
3 embraced by the company, and others that they've been resistant
4 to. Can you give us some examples of those that they've embraced
5 and those that they have been less receptive to?

6 A. Yes. An example of a successful collaboration would be --
7 and I mentioned earlier -- would be the load planning sheets, that
8 would be extra regulatory, that I had brought with me from
9 previous experience, as being load planning sheets for aircraft,
10 load diagrams. And when we're dealing with large aircraft,
11 Twelve-Five aircraft, it's not the same as throwing some boxes in
12 a wing locker, nose.

13 So anyway, I had pressed forward load diagrams, and some
14 examples of what I thought a load diagram process would be. And
15 Bering Air -- it was a condition of putting the plane online. So
16 of course, Bering Air was persuaded. However, they took the ball
17 and really ran with it, and came back with probably the best
18 computerized load planning process I've seen in the industry.

19 I think I referred to it earlier as -- was a route check item
20 to go see the computers were installed with on-base inspection.
21 And my further request has expanded through all the aircrafts in
22 the fleet, which they haven't done. However, they have expanded
23 to other aircraft. So there's an example of both, where it's been
24 effective, and there's room for improvement.

25 Q. What about one that they just said no, we're not going to do

1 that?

2 A. Oh, I get that all the time. Example?

3 Q. What would be one that you really felt like, ah, shoot, I
4 still really feel like they need to do that one?

5 A. There are several. There are several practices that I've
6 strongly recommended that -- particularly in the area of ice
7 flight. It's a big issue with me. Has been, way before I came
8 along to Bering Air. And I have some solutions that I have
9 employed in the industry, that I've requested of Bering Air, that
10 they have been reluctant to implement.

11 And this would be point in case, the ability to deice
12 aircraft at destinations without deicing equipment. And it's so
13 we don't have destination deicing equipment -- needs to be carried
14 on the plane. And of course, this impacts operations. It takes
15 up room space. So the airline's reluctant to voluntarily do it.
16 We're still having that discussion.

17 The interim solution, you might ask, as it is a regulatory
18 issue, would be, there's GOM language that if the aircraft is
19 going to be in ground icing condition, or expects to have airframe
20 icing or residual icing after landing, they're to divert from that
21 airport, is their answer. My response is, that's kind of a
22 pressure on the pilot, that impacts the can-do area, that I don't
23 even want to see put in the pilot's lap. I think we need to
24 provide that equipment at the airport or onboard the aircraft.

25 Q. Anything else that you want to add for the record?

1 A. No, I want to answer your questions on the record, Kat.

2 Q. The post-accident changes that have been made, do you follow
3 up with Bering Air on the impact it's having, either good or bad,
4 on the operation? So the flight release, the FIKI, those things.
5 Do you follow up with them and say, how's this going, how is the
6 implementation going? Have you gotten any feedback?

7 A. The FIKI process, as I say, was patent March 29th. Five
8 weeks ago. Is that right? Yeah. Five weeks ago. I had a
9 follow-up -- I've been to Nome once since then, would've been the
10 first week of April -- where I did a 100 percent surveillance on
11 all the 208 flights departing while I was there. So yes, there
12 was a 100 percent compliance with the program.

13 My next visit is tomorrow. So I can follow up with you on
14 that. I have asked, interim, between my beginning of April and
15 beginning of May, for a paperwork review. And I've requested
16 pilot flight reports, weight and balance information, which they
17 have sent to me, for in between visit surveillance.

18 Q. Okay. I saw in some of the data, we have the CHAT data
19 spreadsheet that we got. There was a note about the maintenance
20 program having an ASAP, the maintenance crew having ASAP. To be
21 honest, in all of our discussions that we've had over the last
22 couple of days, it hasn't come up, but does the pilot group have
23 an ASAP program?

24 A. No, they do not.

25 Q. Okay. Is that a recommendation -- just curious -- that

1 you've ever made to them? Or do you know the reason for not
2 having an ASAP for the pilots?

3 A. That's a voluntary program --

4 Q. Is there a benefit to having a program like that?

5 A. A properly administered and conducted ASAP program has great
6 benefits.

7 Q. Do you think that a properly implemented ASAP program could
8 exist at Bering Air?

9 A. Oh, it definitely could exist.

10 Q. Part of that improvement in the culture?

11 A. Perhaps.

12 Q. Also, reading through your previous interview, you talked
13 about -- you gave us details on your day, of the accident, what
14 you did, and the check ride, and the different experiences you
15 had. And you walked us through the day, up until the company, the
16 operator, was notified about the accident.

17 But then there wasn't any details after that. You had
18 mentioned that you were taking notes, once you were notified about
19 the accident. But I'd appreciate it if you could walk us through.
20 What did you do, once you knew that the accident had happened?
21 What actions did you take? What role did you play? And any of
22 that emergency response plan that was happening.

23 A. I was an observer.

24 Q. How do you think it went?

25 A. I think everybody was very grateful to have an emergency

1 response plan that they followed, broke out. And that was
2 critical glue through that period. And they had it out, and they
3 had an emergency response conference room set aside, and as I say,
4 kudos to the ERP, and that's what was the glue through those first
5 hours.

6 Q. Once the dust settled, was there a debrief on how the ERP
7 played out, and, I guess, one -- two-part question. Was there a
8 debrief? And the second question would be whether you were a part
9 of that, or heard about how the debrief went.

10 A. I don't know. No, I wasn't part of that.

11 Q. Okay. I believe it was when Sabrina was asking you questions
12 that you were describing a safe operation, and one of the things
13 you said was that it's an operator who's constantly preventing
14 occurrences before they occur. And I was hoping you could give
15 some examples of what you observed with Bering Air of how they
16 meet that criteria.

17 A. How is Bering Air proactive with aviation and safety, as an
18 operator? Am I rephrasing the --

19 Q. Yeah. Sure. Yeah. I'm just -- your words were, they were
20 an operator's constantly preventing occurrences before they occur.
21 So yes, taking a proactive approach to --

22 A. I think that was my response to Sabrina that the definition
23 of safe operator is not one that doesn't have accidents, who is
24 constantly improving and --

25 Q. Yeah. Yeah.

1 A. -- being proactive with aviation safety, is what I said. I
2 would say Bering Air embodies that. Are there examples? Yes. I
3 mean, from their hiring, from the pilot hiring procedures to their
4 pilot training procedures to their pilot mentoring procedures,
5 everything speaks towards aviation safety.

6 It is an employee-friendly business. They're courting the
7 best they can. Of course, they have to go out to Nome. They have
8 excellent infrastructure, equipment, salaries. I mean, as a
9 business, I think they're very proactive on putting together a
10 safe airline in everything they do.

11 Q. What about the importance of identifying your misses, and how
12 -- what would you say they do in terms of recognizing those?

13 A. I would say there is room for improvement, and because
14 Brian's here, I'll have to give him kudos here, that I think he's
15 part of that improvement, as a safety department, in establishing
16 a safety hazard reporting process with the safety department,
17 where trends, near misses, can be identified by an objective,
18 independent observer.

19 Q. Do you become aware of, or do you get a report of, safety
20 concerns that have been brought up to the operator?

21 A. No, I don't get a report. I have on occasion asked Brian for
22 his database.

23 Q. Has there been any discussions from that, seeing that data,
24 that's led to recommendations that you've made to the
25 organization?

1 A. No, I have not submitted reports into the safety database
2 myself.

3 Q. Well, I meant, in terms of -- so you've asked Brian for
4 access to the data, the safety reports, that have come in. Has
5 there been discussion of, you know, how -- you know, how has the
6 operator addressed it? Or, these are things that the operator
7 might want to consider in order to address these?

8 A. Have Brian and I had discussion as to improvements or in
9 processes or culture? Yes, we have.

10 Q. And have those always been positive discussions? You feel,
11 at the end of those discussions, that those improvements can or
12 will be made?

13 A. Yeah, I feel improvement will be made, in general. I will
14 answer that in the affirmative.

15 Q. From those discussions, has there ever -- do you ever follow
16 up with Brian and say, like, hey, you know, we discussed this
17 stuff, have you all taken any of these -- implemented any of these
18 things that we've talked about, or made some changes in those
19 regards?

20 A. Has there been follow-up to previous discussions we've had,
21 where there's room for improvement? We've had follow-up
22 discussions where issues are still issues.

23 Q. Then I guess I'm making an assumption that you don't have the
24 enforcement or regulatory authority to push for any of those
25 improvements.

1 A. As I say, we are tasked with regulatory compliance. In that,
2 we have a black-and-white authority, and we're also tasked with
3 improving aviation safety at the highest level, in a million
4 aspects. And that is a -- that is one of cooperation, alliance,
5 salesmanship, as I've stated earlier. Collaboration, in a word.

6 Q. In line with the collaboration, with the Part 5 regulation,
7 are you actively working with Bering Air as they're developing
8 their SMS? Or is that something that they just develop on their
9 own, and then they present it to you when it's ready?

10 A. I am not -- no, I am not actively working on -- Brian is the
11 representative for SMS for Bering Air. And he is the company, the
12 corporate action, on SMS. But I'm in the dark about it as much as
13 most other inspectors.

14 Q. Okay. In the previous interview, you talked about, you know,
15 every day you think about, what could you have done differently as
16 an inspector? And you know, now that more time has passed, I just
17 wanted to follow up on that and -- you know, is there anything
18 that you have thought of that -- not that you can do and say, what
19 could you have done to prevent that, but in a way that you are
20 thinking of how you might change how you do surveillance, in order
21 to maybe be more in tune, and maybe to identify risks in the
22 operators that you oversee?

23 A. Is this what would I do differently?

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. Or what am I doing differently?

1 Q. Well, I mean, if you are already doing things differently --
2 but I mean, has your approach to surveillance changed in any way,
3 and what are you doing?

4 A. Yes, my approach to surveillance has changed. It's far more
5 intense. And my attention, time spent on others, is less. So now
6 there's a cost on that other side of the airport.

7 Q. Are you able to do surveillance above and beyond the minimum
8 that's --

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. And are you doing that with Bering?

11 A. Yes. And I always have.

12 Q. Do you do that with all of your operators, or just Bering in
13 particular, that --

14 A. I would say I do, obviously, more surveillance of Bering than
15 any other operator. And I do more surveillance that is a
16 regulatory minimum requirement, with all my operators.

17 DR. WILSON: Thanks, Craig. I think that's all the questions
18 I have for now.

19 MS. BLUM: Okay. Great. Paul?

20 MR. SUFFERN: Anybody need to take a restroom break before I
21 get started?

22 MR. KENMONT: No, I'm good.

23 MS. BLUM: Okay. We'll go off the recording at 1:07.

24 (Off the record.)

25 (On the record.)

1 MS. BLUM: Interview recording started at 1:14.

2 BY MR. SUFFERN:

3 Q. All right. Craig, thanks for giving the time -- and I think
4 we'll pivot a little bit towards -- I think my lines will be a
5 little bit along the GOM, the update there, and flight in known
6 icing. And I know Starr had a little bit of questions, and you
7 had some dialog there on that. But just to understand a little
8 bit more of the background of the new GOM and the flight in the
9 known icing policy, were you part of that discussion with Bering
10 Air?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. How much input did you have on, basically, I guess, two
13 levels of criteria there, and with the policy?

14 A. How much input did I have on what criteria?

15 Q. So when I look at the GOM, there's the AAWU three-hour icing
16 forecast, and then there's the icing PIREP. The one, two -- the
17 policy. Did Bering Air come up with those two criteria, and
18 you --

19 A. Those are my recommendations.

20 Q. Those were your recommendations.

21 A. I guess that answers the previous question, too.
22 Recommendations, accepted.

23 Q. Have you received any pushback on those recommendations?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Can you speak a little bit to that?

1 A. As I say, it was an evolution through a couple reiterations
2 of the policy. The one that has been accepted is the March 29th.
3 There have been subsequent versions submitted, two additional
4 versions submitted, that I would not accept. Can I answer the
5 question that way?

6 Q. What did those two other versions have that were different?

7 A. My requirement for an accepted improved 208 FIKI policy was
8 that there was clear, definable, objective, black-and-white,
9 determinate criteria, with no discretionary interpretations
10 permitted, because we're at that point in this process. And so
11 subsequent policies, to answer your question, did not meet that
12 bar of clear, objective, definable, black-and-white criteria, and
13 were retracted.

14 Q. Makes sense. I hear what you're saying there. So as far as
15 -- based on what you have spoken to others, and what's within that
16 policy, would you agree with the statement that flight into known
17 icing can be determined while you're on the ground, in preflight?

18 A. As I stated earlier, that's my premise for a 135 operator,
19 that with the unusual circumstances of the Caravan having now an
20 operational split max gross weight, that it is a preflight
21 determination, and therefore it can only be based on a forecast.

22 Q. Was there anything else, weatherwise, whether it's preflight,
23 inflight or postflight, that you would like Bering Air to -- that
24 you have recommendations on or thoughts on, that they could
25 improve?

1 A. Maybe I don't understand the question. As stated, the
2 trigger for a FIKI weight is the forecast for a pilot. Okay? So
3 to meet clear, objective, you know, definite criteria, no, there
4 isn't anything else. Company chatter doesn't work. village agent
5 doesn't work. It needs to be a system PIREP or a MWS forecast for
6 the FIKI condition now.

7 Q. Okay. What I was more speaking to was, for example, in,
8 like, a post-flight, you've landed on the ground, it'd be great if
9 everybody could give one PIREP now, just as an example, or
10 something like that. Have there been any other suggestions that
11 way, that you've had?

12 A. Once again, the PIREP relief is through a system PIREP, like
13 through a station or ATC. And so it's not a company PIREP, if I'm
14 understanding your question correctly. And so there wouldn't be a
15 one communication after landing. That PIREP would be issued in
16 the air. And it'd be in the system. And part of the strategy
17 there was to go give National Weather Service forecasters some
18 more information to refine their forecasts, was the thought. And
19 I'm certainly open to any suggestions to further improve the
20 forecast ability, from your offices.

21 Q. I know you -- since the new GOM policy has been implemented,
22 you mentioned late March, you've been to Bering, I believe you
23 said, one time in early April, and you're also going tomorrow.
24 Have you received any feedback about challenges that Bering Air
25 may be having with receiving PIREPs within the system?

1 A. The latency problem?

2 Q. Yes. The latency.

3 A. You bet. That's ongoing issue. Thank you for asking. Would
4 welcome any suggestions that would improve the latency issue.
5 There have been concerns on time lag. Once again, these have got
6 to be verifiable PIREPs to go relieve the FIKI burden. Once
7 again, to meet the clear, definitive, black-and-white objective
8 criteria bar.

9 And as well as, we discussed the accountability, where there
10 is a PIREP referenced to go lift the forecast, FIKI forecast,
11 because a PIREP was submitted that conflicted with the forecast.
12 So there have been concerns about how long it takes for that
13 forecast, for that PIREP, to get back into the system. And I
14 guess I'm asking you, what is your expectation of an airborne
15 PIREP to be available for dissemination for flight service?

16 Q. I could answer that at a different point in time. But --

17 A. Okay. That's right. You're asking the questions here.

18 Q. That's right. But in that latency answer that you provided,
19 did they specifically specify -- or maybe even in your
20 surveillance, if you, you know, viewed any PIREPs, things like
21 that, have they mentioned it was flight service specifically, or
22 Anchorage Center or --

23 A. No. Latency in general.

24 Q. In general. And then I think one of my final questions is,
25 as part of flight into known icing and the FAA definition on that,

1 one of those is the presence of visible moisture.

2 A. Correct.

3 Q. What is visible moisture to you?

4 A. Visible moisture to me is what it sounds -- it's visible
5 moisture. Fog, rain, precipitation, snow.

6 MR. SUFFERN: That's all the questions I have right now,
7 Craig.

8 MS. BLUM: Okay. Great. Rob?

9 BY MR. BECK:

10 Q. So Craig, I've just got a couple. You were here pre-SAS.
11 PTRS, they called it.

12 A. Yeah. That's right.

13 Q. Pre-SAS. Now we have SAS. And just your personal opinion,
14 has it made it better or worse, SAS?

15 A. My personal opinion, as far as inspector workload, or an
16 effective surveillance management tool for the industry? Is it
17 better for --

18 Q. You to do your job.

19 A. For me to do my job? Personally, I would say PTRS, for me.

20 Q. Okay. Talked about known/forecast icing. Yes or no
21 question. Would it be better if the Aeroacoustics STC had known
22 and include forecast icing?

23 A. Certainly, if the -- certainly.

24 Q. My last -- the DO at Bering Air is leaving here shortly. I'm
25 sure you know that.

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Do you think, from your personal, professional opinion, that
3 will be a good thing or a bad thing for Bering Air?

4 A. The current DO is very experienced, very dedicated, very
5 knowledgeable. One of the most familiar people in the world with
6 that operation. I think it'll be a better thing to replace him.

7 MR. BECK: That's it.

8 MS. BLUM: Okay. Brian?

9 BY MR. WECKWERTH:

10 Q. Just going to the SAS questions, really. Rob asked a couple
11 of questions. You know the seven safety attributes. Right? You
12 know those intimately. Right?

13 A. (No audible response.)

14 Q. They have it -- you realize that they were built with SMS
15 background in them, built into them? You're aware of that, that
16 when they first were fostered into the -- brought into the SAS
17 system, is the way I remember it?

18 MS. BLUM: Can you speak up?

19 MR. WECKWERTH: What is it?

20 MS. BLUM: Can you speak up?

21 BY MR. WECKWERTH:

22 Q. Do you think that helps, when you're doing a surveillance, to
23 have those safety attributes, as -- in a two-part question --
24 water-cooler talk around here, do they help the inspector
25 workforce assess, when you're doing surveillance, in each one of

1 those DCTs, to have the seven safety attributes on all these DCTs?
2 They're on every one of them.

3 A. I'm going to reserve comment on that. I'm going to reserve
4 comment.

5 Q. Okay. Good enough. Oh, and I was going to just ask,
6 based -- kind of what Kat was getting down. Where's your main
7 point of contact for your GOM SOP pilot training program revisions
8 here at Bering Air? Here at Bering Air. We're at Bering Air.

9 A. Well, the FFA liaison is, like I said, is the one director of
10 operations, chief pilot. The training aspect is going to be the
11 chief pilot's responsibility. There's a director of training that
12 I spend more time discussing issues with. There's a technical
13 writing department I spend even more time discussing things with.

14 Q. Okay. And the technical writing is --

15 A. The technical writing department is a vice president --

16 MR. WECKWERTH: All right. That's all I had.

17 BY MS. BLUM:

18 Q. Okay. Round 2. I appreciate your candid opinions and
19 answers. I want to jump into the 120 knots, the magic number that
20 I'm --

21 A. Minimum airspeed for icing.

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. So when we had the previous phone call together, I told you
25 that I'd never flown a Caravan, and you have had time in it. And

1 you were telling me, in your experience, that this airplane needs
2 to be flown fast. So as I've been, like, just kind of -- like,
3 simply some confusion about FIKI and the gross takeoff weight.
4 I've been trying to understand 120. So when we talked to the
5 flight safety instructors, it came up. And looking back at the
6 transcript, I was questioning exit strategies, and what do they
7 teach? And one answer was, well, if your airspeed is getting to
8 120, you need to exit. Right? Okay.

9 A. You need to do what?

10 Q. Exit. Icing conditions. And then --

11 A. It's a trend assessment.

12 Q. Yeah. I'm sorry. Do you mind speaking up for the recorder?
13 And then when we talked to the Caravan pilots at Bering Air, it
14 seemed like everybody knew 120 was the number you didn't get
15 below. When I look at the Supplement 1 -- and we've had
16 conversations with the Textron pilot, safety pilot. And when you
17 look at the supplement, it says, 120 if the TKS system has failed.
18 Right? 120 is all over the POH.

19 A lot of it is due to equipment that you need in icing
20 conditions. But when you look at operating limitations in
21 Supplement 1, wing flaps up for takeoff or approach, it says, for
22 a fully functional TKS system, 95 knots. I still see, like, some
23 room in improvement. However that happens, I don't have the
24 answer. But I feel like there's some vague areas that maybe need
25 to be looked into, regarding speeds in the Caravan in icing,

1 however that leads. Have you --

2 A. I concur.

3 Q. Have you identified any areas that seem inconsistent
4 throughout not just Bering Air, but with the Caravan in general?

5 A. No, I think these are getting well-aired, unfortunately, due
6 to this tragedy. The confusion on the increased gross weight by
7 aftermarket STCs has been closely examined. The 120 knots has not
8 changed. The 95 with the fully functioning TKS system, I could
9 talk for hours on that.

10 I think the issue is the 120-knot minimum airspeed. I'm a
11 regulatory compliance guy. We've got Section 2 limitations, 120
12 knots. We have SOPs by Bering Air, 120 knots. We have checklists
13 120 knots. So I'm not going to delve into the aeronautical
14 engineering and flight test department, where 120 knots is the
15 minimum speed. And that's what I want to see in training, I want
16 to see in the cockpit.

17 Now, I will say, as far as the other issues brought up, the
18 Caravan is a fantastic platform. What a change in the last 50
19 years from what was flown, to what the Caravan is. The TKS system
20 is such an improvement over the booted airplane, combined with
21 what I would say -- the pilot turnover and the relatively
22 inexperienced pilot group don't remember the bad old days.

23 The TKS Caravan has got a reputation for an invulnerable,
24 invincible, flight through any weather aircraft, and that is the
25 problem. And that is a problem that's under the surface on

1 this -- there is no plane that's invincible in icing. And so just
2 as to your point about 95 knots and operative TKS system, and what
3 could be improved, I say, speed is essential to flight safety. It
4 could damage the aircraft. You know, aircraft operating in icing
5 conditions need to have the airspeeds, the manufacturer-
6 recommended minimum airspeeds, period.

7 The aircraft is not invulnerable to icing. People need to
8 know that. We still need to escape icing. It is not okay,
9 because your airplane's certificated for moderate icing, to
10 continue flight at that level. Seek new levels, seek an area to
11 exit icing. My response to maybe a question that wasn't asked.

12 Q. Okay. Part of the new SOP changes since the accident is
13 mandatory 120. Am I correct? Or is that incorrect?

14 A. No, that has never changed. The 120 has always been the
15 minimum speed of the SOP.

16 Q. Okay. And that's in --

17 A. It's a mandatory speed from the AFM Section 2 limitations.
18 None of that has been refined. The weight, the FIKI weight, a
19 load planning issue, was a result of the SOP's exchange for that
20 as a result of the accident.

21 Q. So I guess what I'm missing and I don't understand is why the
22 supplement, in the operating limitations, says a minimum of 95.
23 So that wasn't part of Bering's --

24 A. No. 120.

25 Q. So how does that go, when it's straight from the POH? It's

1 in their GOM and their --

2 A. I can't speak to that. But I can tell you that an SOP is how
3 an operator's going to fly its plane. And the FAM is going to be
4 back to minimums. An operator could refine that, improve on that,
5 as they wish. They're their planes. That's what an SOP is.
6 That's how we're going to fly our Bering Air aircraft.

7 Q. Okay, so just --

8 A. So we've got a 110 escape and a 120 minimum speed in icing.

9 Q. But the SOP prior and the --

10 A. It's the same. The checklists are the same.

11 Q. Okay. Do you have anything else to add about the 120, the
12 speed, before I move on?

13 A. No. But I hope -- sorry for dragging on so late. I hope my
14 opinions are helpful to the board. It's all of our desire to --
15 never again, another Caravan icing accident, an overweight
16 accident. So I'm sorry I drug everybody through my opinion, but I
17 hope it was helpful.

18 Q. Okay. My last question is just mere curiosity. Do you now,
19 being in Nome a couple times, do you -- is there a reason that you
20 know of that the director of safety is in the first hangar, and
21 then the rest of the executives are two hangars over?

22 MR. WECKWERTH: Three.

23 MS. BLUM: Three hangars over.

24 MR. WECKWERTH: I'm in 3. They're in 1.

25 MS. BLUM: Oh, you're in 3, they're in 1.

1 MR. KENMONTH: Sorry. I have comments on office
2 configuration. But it's definitely out of my lane. I'll reserve
3 comment on it.

4 MS. BLUM: Okay. Okay. Thank you. Do you have any --

5 BY MR. WECKWERTH:

6 Q. Craig, thank you again. Just a couple questions. So as far
7 as previously talking about oversight and routes, we've had pilots
8 tell us that they've, for weight balance situations, they bump
9 passengers, they've not loaded cargo. Just out of curiosity, have
10 you ever witnessed any of that activity by chance?

11 A. Yes. Yes.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. That's all right. That's not an unusual or irregular
14 process.

15 Q. Okay. Okay. Any issues with that, with the -- just out of
16 curiosity, straightforward --

17 A. No. As I say, the culture, rank and file, is an extremely
18 strong one. And I have witnesses, and it is their responsibility
19 to load their plane. And they are the final determinant. So
20 whereas cargo may have 20,000 pounds of mail to move between O and
21 D, and there's 20 passengers up there, it filters through the
22 pilot's go/no-go decision. So that is their job. They are the --
23 they are the final determinant of what gets flown on their plane.
24 And it is their decision to put few on board, so that changes to
25 the pilot's decision-making with whether -- the fuel required for

1 the flight, which would directly impact (indiscernible).

2 Q. Second, with respect to the dispatcher function at Bering
3 Air, I understand they're not dispatchers in a legal --

4 A. Correct. Understood.

5 Q. -- sense. But do you have -- would you be willing to offer
6 an opinion? Are they helpful? Are there opportunities for
7 improvement there? Are they an asset to the PICs?

8 A. I think they're imperative to the PIC. They are extremely
9 dedicated, smart people working there, flight following or flight
10 release or dispatch department. I don't know what to call it.
11 Once again, they have an expanded tool with the flight release
12 tool to ply their expertise. And it's a very, very busy job.
13 It's a very demanding job. Is there room for improvement?
14 There's always room for improvement. And I'd say the flight
15 release tool is a major step along improving.

16 Q. Okay. Fair enough.

17 A. Thank you.

18 MR. WECKWERTH: That's all.

19 MS. BLUM: Sabrina?

20 BY DR. WOODS:

21 Q. I just had one question. And is there any sort of avenue,
22 formal avenue, for those rank-and-file types -- so not the
23 executive level, the management level -- but for the rank-and-file
24 types, if they have a concern, or if they have feedback, or
25 there's really something that they want the FAA's attention on,

1 that they can have to you, or to someone else in the FAA?

2 A. Any airman or non-airman can report safety issues to me or
3 the FAA in general at any time, anonymously. Brian would be
4 better to answer the current safety, hazard reporting
5 opportunities at Bering Air, in place today.

6 Q. And he's been great, like, giving us information. I'm just
7 more of -- let's say somebody doesn't want to -- wants to go
8 outside of their organization and come directly to you, because
9 they see you as a source for getting their concerns addressed.

10 A. Sure.

11 Q. I just wanted to know if there was a way. Because I know
12 that you interact with the management level fairly routinely. But
13 that rank-and-file that we're talking about, like, how do they get
14 to you to go, hey, POI, I have concerns about XYZ, or I don't
15 understand the FIKI thing, or whatever it may be?

16 A. Regards to opportunity, I'm open and available for that,
17 7/24. As regards to the reality, I have many off-the-record
18 conversations with airmen from many companies. And I don't ignore
19 a single one of them.

20 DR. WOODS: Okay. That's my one question. Thank you.

21 MS. BLUM: Thank you. Kat?

22 BY DR. WILSON:

23 Q. I have one, but I guess I don't know what the right word is,
24 what I feel about it. But what you said about, you know, you're
25 not the person to be able to -- you know, maybe you have an

1 opinion about that organizational structure -- not the
2 organizational structure, but the layout of offices and things
3 like that. You're not the person to say, you know, something
4 about it. Who would be that person? I mean, how do you -- how do
5 we make improvements if nobody can be the person to stand up and
6 say it? How do we let them know?

7 A. Yeah, fair question. Yeah. Fair question. I don't know.
8 You just kind of choose your battles. I think I've said that.

9 Q. That's it. I don't know. My brain has a lot of different
10 thoughts flowing through it. But, I mean, we're all here to see
11 improvements in safety, and we want to -- we want to see -- we
12 know some change is needed. We want to see some changes made.
13 And I think there's some low-hanging fruit that could be
14 identified.

15 And I hope that if it's not something that you can share, as
16 their POI, that they are -- that you can encourage them to look,
17 you know, internally, and maybe identify some of those things on
18 their own. Because I do think that you play a powerful role in
19 being the POI.

20 A. Sure. And Kat, maybe a dumb misunderstanding. I'm not
21 saying I can't have those discussions. Actually, I do have those
22 discussions. But I think my answer that it's out of my lane, that
23 I don't have the hammer on some of these issues that you talk
24 about.

25 Q. Yeah. And I can appreciate that.

1 A. I can require regulatory compliance, and the rest is through
2 collaboration and salesmanship and, you know, partnership,
3 alliance, in making improvements together. So the office -- so
4 the office configuration, if that's really an issue at hand at
5 this meeting, is -- I think they have a new wing that the director
6 of safety is in, and my understanding, that's where the executive
7 office is going to move down to. And I was fully support of that,
8 because then it would leave the 119ers, the people with the
9 regulatory operation control authority, more independently located
10 in their wing.

11 DR. WILSON: Thanks, Craig. That's all I have.

12 MS. BLUM: Paul?

13 MR. SUFFERN: I have no more questions. Thanks, Craig.

14 MR. KENMONTH: Sure.

15 MS. BLUM: Rob?

16 MR. BECK: No more questions.

17 MS. BLUM: Ryan?

18 MR. WECKWERTH: I don't have any questions right now.

19 MS. BLUM: Okay. Craig, we appreciate you being here. And
20 we'll conclude the interview at 1:48.

21 (Whereupon, at 1:48 p.m., the interview was concluded.)
22
23
24
25

CERTIFICATE

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

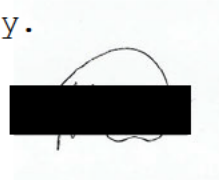
IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL COMMUTER PLANE CRASH NEAR
NOME, ALASKA ON FEBRUARY 6, 2025
Interview of Craig Kenmonth

ACCIDENT NO.: ANC25MA018

PLACE: Nome, Alaska

DATE: May 7, 2025

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.



Madison Wagaman
Transcriber

CRAIG KENMONTH Principal Operations Inspector ERRATA

Errata received via email from Kathleen Banaszak on July 2, 2025, stating the following:

Add a footnote to page 22, regarding answer on line 18

"CAP quarterly work program DCTs are all answered. Adhoc ramp and enroute inspections are multi-discipline DCTs and are selectively completed at inspector discretion. Inspector assumed board was still asking questions about work program DCTs."

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

*

FATAL COMMUTER PLANE CRASH NEAR *

NOME, ALASKA ON FEBRUARY 6, 2025 *

*

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Accident No.: ANC25MA018

Interview of: SCOT BROWN, Front Line Manager

Fairbanks Front Standards District Office

Nome, Alaska

Wednesday,
May 7, 2025

APPEARANCES:

STARR BLUM, Operational Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

TIM SORENSON, Aviation Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

PAUL SUFFERN, Meteorologist
National Transportation Safety Board

ROB PECK, Aviation Safety Inspector
Federal Aviation Administration

SABRINA WOODS, Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

KATHERINE WILSON, Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

BRIAN WECKWERTH, Director of Safety
Bering Air

KATHLEEN BANASZAK, Attorney Advisor
Federal Aviation Administration
(On behalf of Scot Brown)

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I N T E R V I E W

(2:04 p.m.)

MS. BLUM: Okay. Today is May 7, 2025, and it's 2:04 Alaska daylight time. My name is Starr Blum, and I'm an operational factors investigator for the NTSB and we are here to talk about the accident that occurred on February 6 involving Bering Air front 445. As you know, the NTSB is an independent federal agency and we don't have any liability or blame to sign. We are here strictly for safety and finding the problem of cause and seeing if there are safety recommendations that can come forward to prevent something from happening like this again.

We will be recording this interview so that it can be transcribed. After we receive the transcripts back, our group will go over them to make any corrections for typos, and then that will be given to Kathleen to give to you. So you have an opportunity to make corrections. You can't change content, but if you want content changed, you can add an addendum to the back that will be attached to the transcript which will eventually wind up in the public docket.

Let's first just go around the room and introduce ourselves.

MR. SORENSEN: My name is Tim Sorensen, I am an aviation accident investigator with NTSB. I've also been designated as the investigator in charge for this particular accident.

DR. WOODS: Sabrina Woods, Human Performance Investigator, also with the NTSB.

1 DR. WILSON: Katherine Wilson, I'm also a human performance
2 investigator with the NTSB.

3 MR. SUFFERN: Hey, I'm Paul Suffern. I'm a meteorologist
4 with the NTSB.

5 MR. BROWN: I know you.

6 MR. PECK: I'm Robert Peck. Coming up from Anchorage as part
7 this board though not here for enforcement or anything.

8 MR. BROWN: I know you.

9 MR. WECKWERTH: Brian Weckwerth, director of safety for
10 Bering Air.

11 MS. BLUM: And you are entitled to have a representative of
12 your choosing. If you have somebody here, can you please say who
13 that is?

14 Do you want Kathleen as your representative?

15 MR. BROWN: Yes, I probably should have. If she'll let me.
16 I don't know whether I should or not, so --

17 MS. BLUM: Yes or?

18 MR. BROWN: Yeah. Yes.

19 MS. BLUM: Okay. Could you please introduce yourself and
20 state your name and spell your name for the recording?

21 MS. BANASZAK: Kathleen Banaszak; K-A-T-H-L-E-E-N. Last
22 name; B-A-N-A-S-Z-A-K.

23 MS. BLUM: Okay, thank you Kathleen. Please don't answer any
24 questions for Scot. And again, if you guys need to confer, we can
25 stop and take a break and you guys can confer outside the

1 conference room.

2 We'll do two rounds of questions and we just ask that you
3 answer the questions to the best of your recollection. And if you
4 -- but if there is something that feels misstated and unique
5 clarification, please just ask and I will try to restate it a
6 different way.

7 MR. BROWN: Okay.

8 MS. BLUM: Does anybody have any questions before we begin?
9 Okay.

10 INTERVIEW OF SCOT BROWN

11 BY MS. BLUM:

12 Q. Can you please state and spell your name?

13 A. Scot Brown, S-C-O-T, B-R-O-W-N.

14 Q. And Scot, how old are you?

15 A. Sixty-one, almost 62.

16 Q. And what is your job title?

17 A. I'm a front line manager for the Fairbanks FSDO.

18 Q. When did you start as that here?

19 A. I believe --

20 Q. And if you don't mind, speak up a little bit for the
21 recording.

22 A. Yeah. I believe about July or August of 2018.

23 Q. Okay. Can you, were you with the FAA before then?

24 A. I was here, but I was an inspector.

25 Q. Can you give us like a Cliff notes of your history, work

1 history?

2 A. FAA or beyond that?

3 Q. Aviation basically.

4 A. Okay. I've been in aviation for a long time, 22 years,
5 military, worked on airplanes. Went to industry for about 15
6 years and then join the FAA. And then here was a PMI. I'm a
7 maintenance inspector by trade. So I was a PMI on the floor here
8 for Fairbanks for about three, three years and change. And then
9 got an opportunity and took an FLM position and been here ever
10 since.

11 Q. Okay. Were you on the CMTs with Bering Air as a PMI?

12 A. I was not.

13 Q. Okay. Do you hold any pilot certificates and ratings?

14 A. None.

15 Q. Okay, great. Sorry. So let's first start, can you tell me
16 what you do as a front line manager? What are your, what's the
17 description of your duties?

18 A. As a front line manager, basically I manage direct reports or
19 inspectors, and assign work, take care of anything else as far as
20 performance-wise, if it needs to be fixed. And you know, travel,
21 all kinds of approvals and stuff. Basically I'm a manager for the
22 set group. Largely a manager for the FSDO but I do have primary
23 direct reports that from a performance perspective I do that.

24 So a front line manager is basically a manager that manages
25 the work on the floor between the inspectors as a go-between.

1 Q. Okay. I'm learning about this, so I might ask some questions
2 that --

3 A. No worries, I get it.

4 Q. So in your chain of command, who would be above you?

5 A. My office manager in the corner.

6 Q. Dustin?

7 A. Dustin Cook, yeah.

8 Q. And then who's above Dustin?

9 A. Our division manager, who is Avi Asado (ph.).

10 Q. Okay. And then how about below you?

11 A. Below me as far as direct reports, I've got Craig. I've got
12 Dustin and Eric Wilson, which those guys are the CMT for Bering
13 Air. And then I've also got a couple of new hires and one other
14 inspector that has oversight on other 135s here.

15 And then probably indirectly, I'm the senior FLM here. So I
16 fill in and act as the office manager when Dustin is gone or help
17 run the core of the office, whether it be the administrative stuff
18 as well as inspectors and aviation pieces.

19 Q. Okay. Are there two Dustins? Did I hear that right? One
20 above, one below?

21 A. Yeah, Dustin Hopkins, he's the principal maintenance
22 inspector on Bering Air. He works directly for me. And Dustin
23 Cook is the office manager.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. So sorry I didn't clarify that.

1 Q. No, no worries. How many CMTs do you have?

2 A. I have the Wrights CMT, the Warbelows CMT, the Bering CMT,
3 and then those individuals also, are CMT, I have other operators
4 under them. So technically they are a CMT for every operator that
5 I have. In other words, I don't know if I'm making sense.

6 Q. I don't, if you could explain that would help me.

7 A. Every 135 operator has three CMT members, an Ops,
8 maintenance, and avionics. So we in this office have north of 40
9 certificates. So Bering has a CMT, but that same CMT group has
10 oversight over other operators. So that's another CMT. So I
11 would -- so like Craig has oversight over Bering Air, but also the
12 guys in Kotzebue, you know, Eric Sea (ph.), Artic Backcountry,
13 Golden Eagle, all of them are CMTs. They are the same people.

14 So to answer your question, I just want to explain it that
15 way. So I probably have CMTs, like there's probably 12 or 14.

16 Q. Okay. Sometimes they are the same individuals?

17 A. Yeah, sometimes, sometimes not. And then even in two cases,
18 you know, there is a member or two on the CMT that doesn't
19 directly work for me, but I handled the three commuters as well
20 since I'm the senior guy. So Wrights and Warbelows are commuter
21 and Bering Air. We only have three. Everybody else mostly has a
22 basic certificate or single pilot operators, small.

23 Q. Small.

24 A. Not with, they are not complex where Bering is a full
25 commuter and so is Wrights and Warbelows.

1 Q. Okay. And some of the smaller ones, those are 135 as well?

2 A. Yeah, they are all 135s.

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. You know, we even have some 91 stuff in the search and
5 rescue. But you know, they're all 135s.

6 Q. That's what I was going to talk, I'm jumping ahead, but I was
7 going to ask about general aviation. And like, I know there is
8 random ramp inspections and pilot mediations, accidents,
9 incidents, occurrences. How much of that falls in your
10 jurisdiction compared to 135?

11 A. All of it because we still do 91 here in the office. So when
12 it comes to an assignment of work, if we get an accident next week
13 a manager assigns it because we've got to make sure it goes to the
14 right person. And then occurrences, PDs, all of it. So all that
15 stuff gets funneled through NFLM for our work assignment.

16 Q. Is one more work than the other? Is 91 more than 135 as an
17 FLM?

18 A. It depends on the 135. Yeah, you know, we do a lot of ad hoc
19 work in the FAA and the FSDOs. So you know, there's a fair amount
20 of work with that through that piece as far as, you know,
21 assigning the PDs, assigning the accidents, helping the accidents,
22 reviewing the EIRs if there is a case being filed. It all gets
23 funneled through a manager, every bit of it. So --

24 Q. Does ad hoc mean not 135? What does ad hoc mean?

25 A. It's just something that comes up off the cuff and that's not

1 scheduled.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. You know, someone needs a ferry permit. You know, sometimes
4 it's a 135, sometimes it's not. It's usually a 91, but if they've
5 got to ferry something and they did their request to the FSDO.
6 All work assignments get assigned out by a manager.

7 Q. Okay, I understand.

8 A. So that you're assigning it to the right person and then if
9 I've got someone who needs training I can make sure they pair up,
10 those kind of things from an administrative, logical standpoint.

11 Q. Yeah, based on where an employee is --

12 A. Yeah, yeah.

13 Q. -- in their progression?

14 A. Certain ones, you know. And not all ferry permits are the
15 same. So you know, there may be something that's more complex. A
16 field approval that I can't give to this person because of their
17 background or their skill level.

18 Q. Sure.

19 A. So I will give it to this person and have this person help
20 for training, those kind of things.

21 Q. Okay. So how would you say the workload amongst your
22 principles is managed?

23 A. Can you clarify? Do you mean managed by them or managed by
24 the office?

25 Q. By you, by the office.

1 A. So how is it managed?

2 Q. Is there like a workload distribution with your principles?

3 A. Well --

4 Q. Or is it just skill or --

5 A. We manage it through our, we've got a work program. And like
6 the 135s have a certain level of set inspections based on how they
7 are scoped, based on the size of the operator, and those are the
8 baseline inspections.

9 And then, as the surveillance for that particular CMT is
10 happening, if they find higher risk or find things or that
11 operator has an accident or had something happen or gets a new
12 airplane, you know, then the FLMS work with that particular CMT to
13 adjust surveillance if necessary if you need to do more or not.

14 But if not, you're just managing the workload, making sure
15 they're doing what they're doing, plus all of the work that they
16 do when they complete it gets sent back to a manager to evaluate
17 for data quality to make sure they did what they were supposed to
18 do. It all, it all goes out by manager and comes back and gets
19 looked at by a manager and signed off.

20 Q. When you say it goes out by manager, is that you? Or is it
21 this tool that I've been learning about, SAS and DCTs?

22 A. It's both, but it's me. If I'm assigning something, I do put
23 in SAS. I send it out, take, you know, take, if a stakeholder
24 calls the office or if one of the 135 certificates calls and says,
25 hey, I need this, or even if the principal says, hey, this is what

1 they need done, we still track it all so it comes in whether it's
2 certificate management or something off-the-cuff.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. So when I say goes out, I mean from a manager gets assigned
5 and properly put in the work tool, the SAS. And then on the
6 return we also evaluating it, and when we are closing the activity
7 we or closing the task.

8 Q. So you are entering it into SAS. How do you determine what
9 goes into that? What you are going to assign?

10 A. We put everything in SAS.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. I mean, pretty much. There's a certain level of stuff that's
13 considered certificate management that's done on behalf of the
14 CMTs. You know, if a certificate is going to, you know, is it
15 requested change to the OpSpec, then they request a change in
16 writing and they request it to their principal and then the
17 principal can do the ad hoc activity, let the supervisor know,
18 hey, I'm changing the OpSpecs and then we'll see it as an activity
19 and evaluate it on the backside. So some of that stuff is
20 generated between the operator and the COT inspector.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Where like some of the stuff, the majority of 91 stuff and
23 stuff to the office, that's all, usually gets called into the
24 office or you know, a request, or those kind of things, those
25 originate from the manager to the individual.

1 Q. So for the 135 or not ad hoc stuff, is it the same system?
2 Or is it different?

3 A. Same system.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. All of our operators are all in there and they have work
6 programs that reflect their size and scope.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Because the 135 single pilots don't require a manual, so
9 there is no manual questions in there.

10 Q. Okay. In previous interviews we've learned that there is
11 really no slow season at Bering Air. You know, they are operating
12 365, there is really no change.

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. Or like a lower activity period. Are your other Wright and
15 Warbelows, I believe you said, are they the same way?

16 A. Yeah, they're full of the year-round commuter service to the
17 Fairbanks and the community. The only ones that we have that are
18 seasonal are some of the small 135s.

19 Q. So --

20 A. But yes.

21 Q. Okay. Sorry to interrupt. So considering the 365 nature of
22 it, is that something you, is that information that you consider
23 when you are signing certificates to CMT?

24 A. What I'm assigning, when we assign certificates? Because
25 when we assign the certificates we assign it and they are assigned

1 that complexity and those are their certificates for --

2 Q. I guess who you are choosing to be on that certificate.

3 A. Yeah, I would say more so if we're going to, I think we would
4 take that into account, but that's with respect to the fact that,
5 you know, we want to make sure someone's qualified. We're not
6 going to put a junior inspector on a major commuter, no. The
7 junior inspectors, we're going to give them single pilot operators
8 that only on two inspections a year mandated and don't have
9 complex programs or operating complex airplanes, or don't have
10 five different make model series. We would never give that, the
11 higher use stuff to a brand new inspector.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. If that makes sense.

14 Q. It does. It's helpful. Thank you. Do you check in or do
15 you have meetings with your CMTs to understand their surveillance
16 plan? And do you have information regarding what risk they may
17 have or may not have, or they have identified?

18 A. We communicate daily. I mean, that's one of the benefits of
19 a small FSDO. We are not remote. Everybody is right here. Plus
20 I hold a CMT meeting every Thursday in this room with everybody in
21 the building. And since I'm there with this guy it's more of a
22 collaborative effort just to get updates, out of cycle updates.

23 And also I think it's important we do it so that others CMT
24 members are aware of what's happening. That way one CMT may know
25 that another guy is traveling to the same destination like going

1 to Kotzebue or something. So if this person knows that, they
2 might want you to do some additional surveillance, or they might
3 want you to drop something off or anything. At least that way it
4 helps the CMTs work together better and it helps keep all three of
5 the FLMS up to speed. That way if I want to leave, one of the
6 other FLMS is not blindsided by what I've got cooking, so to
7 speak. So yeah, I guess a TDS briefing.

8 Q. Yeah. It seems like it's killing a few birds with one stone
9 and to be able to share the load and --

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. -- and be able to take some time off. Were you, I believe, I
12 guess for better words, were you aware of the expansion or growth,
13 however you want to classify it, since post-Covid with Bering Air?

14 A. Mm-hmm. And I don't have specifics, but I, with all of our
15 operators, we've seen a lot of that, you know, post-Covid. Some
16 of them, Covid didn't really affect them, you know. And then
17 others, even though most of the certificates in this office we
18 don't have any large airlines. But yeah, I mean I would say so,
19 yes.

20 Q. Was that a conversation that happened in your meeting or?

21 A. Yeah, I mean, I don't know if it was a specific conversation,
22 but I think from the management perspective it is, you know, and
23 then when you communicate with people I mean, because you don't
24 really know what to expect, you know. And we have those kind of
25 conversations along with conversations on our behalf just to make

1 sure that, okay, how do we reenter this because with the growth
2 comes the, you know, Covid, everyone is masked up, you can't get
3 to the villages.

4 You've got to logistically do other things coupled with you
5 might be going to areas where there hasn't been the level of
6 surveillance that was done before. So now you're changing some
7 things. So we had conversations about all of that from the
8 management side.

9 Q. Were you aware of the CMT talking about any projected or
10 planned increased surveillance due to that?

11 A. Due to post-Covid?

12 Q. Yeah, with Bering Air specifically?

13 A. Yeah, I don't recollect. Post-Covid, I think at that time, I
14 don't think I was on the CMT. I don't know. Maybe I should
15 clarify. But I have not been on the Bering Air CMT for seven
16 years. They were all under Polaris Air, which Jim Watson was
17 another FLM that was here.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And he left a couple of years ago right around the tail end
20 of Covid. So --

21 Q. So like 2022?

22 A. Yeah, somewhere, well, don't quote me. I'm not 100 percent
23 sure of the date, but I took over after that. So I don't know how
24 much of that may have been happening then and I don't recall any
25 specific conversations. I know we talked about it amongst all of

1 them. But as far as with respect your question, from the Bering
2 Air CMT --

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. I don't, I don't remember.

5 Q. Do you recall, did you say the previous was June?

6 A. Mm-hmm.

7 Q. Do you recall having any conversations while he's passing the
8 baton to you about Bering Air?

9 A. No, I don't recall.

10 Q. So we talked extensively with Craig about SAS and DCTs and
11 CHAT, and some of these tools you guys have. With all the tasks
12 that your inspectors must accomplish, do you feel that the amount
13 of people that you have, and if you want to divide it into between
14 operations, maintenance, and avionics, that you're adequately
15 staffed to do the job properly? Do you feel like you are
16 adequately staffed?

17 A. I personally do. I mean, you know, there's lots of work to
18 be done in any FSDO, but you know, I think we have the manpower to
19 do it now. Obviously, it would be nice to have more people, but
20 we get the work done. We don't rush the work. It's all done the
21 same. It's all done in accordance with what we need to do.
22 Even from a management perspective since Jim had left, you know,
23 we now have three FLMs as opposed to years ago where we didn't.
24 So as from even the management span of control, while I might take
25 a little bit more than the other two because they are young and

1 new at it, it's still better than doing it all yourself. So I
2 think yes, I think we are.

3 Q. Okay. I think I, you answered this question. You're
4 notified of tasks that need to be done or assigned?

5 A. Mm-hmm.

6 Q. Yeah, if you --

7 A. I assigned most of them.

8 Q. You assign them. Have you ever had any issues or conflicts
9 that one of your inspectors has brought to your attention
10 regarding any technical or safety or any kind of issue overall
11 with Bering Air that you recall?

12 A. If I understand you, I would say no. And I've had the CMT
13 come to me over things like a maintenance thing like hey, they had
14 this happen in the current so then they will discuss with me in
15 detail all of it, what's going on, what's happening, what are they
16 doing to fix it. And then we're looking at those type of events.
17 If that's what you mean, then yeah, I'm in the loop on lots of
18 that. But as far someone just coming to me with it side line
19 safety concern about them, I don't recall ever having that.

20 Q. And is that post-accident as well?

21 A. No, that would be pre-accident. Post-accident, you know,
22 obviously we've, ever since the report came out, the preliminary
23 report you guys put out, you know, I read that, we looked at that
24 and I sat down with the CMT collectively to try to balance out
25 some of the things that you guys identified into what are we going

1 to do to roll some increased surveillance in. Even though we
2 don't have everything nailed down we still have to do our due
3 diligence. So we've stepped up stuff like that. So since the
4 accident, you know, we've had conversations with the CMT.

5 Q. So which tool, if I wanted to go look at it, what I see the
6 increased surveillance and what that would be? Would that be DT?
7 Would that be the CHAT?

8 A. Everything is put in SAS as an activity. I mean, and it
9 depends on how it's, you know, a lot of it like ramp inspections
10 for instance, are in routes. You know, they get rolled up. They
11 are put in there whether it be as a custom DCT or just do the ramp
12 inspections. And then they roll up into the mother inspection.
13 But all of our stuff is in SAS.

14 Q. Can you share with me what surveillance you increased at,
15 post-accident?

16 A. What we initially did, because also what we had to go off was
17 your, the report. We kind of stepped up and I had the CMT start
18 doing a few more in routes from different locations. So this last
19 trip I had inspectors go do a couple of, well, we have done in
20 routes and done lots of them with Bering Air and they are always
21 forthcoming with that. But to go to some of the other remote,
22 further out stations rather than just going to Kotzebue and a few
23 of the other main ones. So we increased some of that.

24 We increased the ramp inspections and then, like I said,
25 pursuant to the report the maintenance guys have even been doing

1 it and looking at the weight and balance type stuff, looking at
2 configurations kind of with Craig.

3 Craig had even communicated with those guys. And when
4 they're out there, ask them to get some audit paperwork and pull
5 some of the post-flights and bring them back to him so that they
6 could audit some of these things. Those are the type stuff that
7 we've added on top of the normal surveillance.

8 Q. Okay. And so those increased checks, like to the villages,
9 was that already Craig and the team that's assigned or were they
10 outside?

11 A. For right now they had been internal. You know, we haven't,
12 we have not reached out externally to do anything. Not as of yet.

13 Q. Okay. Still learning all the duties of FLM. Do you ever go
14 out to Nome, or do you get out of the office and do you go to some
15 of these places?

16 A. I've been in Nome, but I have not been to Nome in a few
17 years. I've not.

18 Q. Okay. Can you give me the high level of say Fairbanks,
19 Anchorage, and Juneau. How do you guys, how does the FAA divide
20 this great state up with three FSDOs? Is it geographic? Is it --

21 A. There's a geographic line. I don't know who decided and how
22 but it's on that map out there. There's a definitive line.
23 Everything north of that line is the Fairbanks district to manage.
24 And then, below it there's a portion that's Anchorage, and then
25 down the inlet and Kenia and on down there's a line that, all

1 that's Juneau.

2 Q. So in your opinion, is it a fair distribution of the state's
3 certificates for each FSDO? Does one have more than another?

4 A. Well, I don't really know. Because you know, the bigger,
5 Anchorage is bigger so they obviously have more work, but I'm not,
6 I don't dig into that to really find out really how much more work
7 and then, based on throughout the work, you know I don't think I
8 can answer that. You know, I think that we, you know, we have no
9 problems taking care of our district. And we assist and they
10 assist us if need be. And if it's close to the line, a lot of
11 times we'll just say, hey, if you want, we'll take it. We'll take
12 it. We'll take it.

13 Or if they have a bunch of accidents and they don't have the
14 bandwidth, we'll assist them. Just like I'm sure Juneau does.
15 Yeah, I don't really know what the work load is to know if we're
16 all adequately if the puzzle is divided accurately.

17 Q. Okay. So thinking again about geographically, is it a
18 challenge for your principals to get to their assigned
19 surveillance for each operator?

20 A. You've got to fly. I mean, to get to Bering you've pretty
21 much got to go to Anchorage first, you know. So it's, and that's
22 probably one of the reasons when they go, they, you know, they
23 pretty much spend the week. You know, one's a travel day and you
24 get there and you might get some work done that afternoon, and
25 then you've got three and sometimes four hard days and then a

1 closeout day, you know.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. But you know, a lot of our operators, some of the other on
4 the roads assist them, whether it's inspectors going to Tok or a
5 few others. And then other commuters are right here in town. So
6 they're pretty easy. And a lot of our 135s are local.

7 Q. When you get a new operator, have you had a new operator
8 recently?

9 A. Yeah. Yeah. We have.

10 Q. How do you determine who will be assigned that certificate?
11 Is it just job, is it skill level of where you're at in your
12 training? Is it geographical, for somebody, how is that, a new --

13 A. No. That's decided based on, you know, work load and
14 qualifications. Again, if we've got someone who's a new entrant
15 that's got, going to put on a jet, I don't want to give them a
16 super new guy. If I have the manpower and someone just, that's
17 coming from a 121 background or something like that, then I'm
18 going to put that individual on it. So it's --

19 Q. What happens if you don't have that individual?

20 A. We reach outside the office. That's not uncommon either.
21 The Fairbanks, let's say district, or the Anchorage region, even
22 though we're not regions anymore. We work pretty well with the
23 other operators to where we would reach out and get somebody, Kim,
24 or somebody else who's, through their management has the bandwidth
25 and can assist us.

1 Q. So can you cross-train then? Can you take somebody that
2 needs the training and go to an Anchorage person that has the
3 skill?

4 A. Sure. If they're qualified, if they're a qualified ASI in
5 that discipline they're -- absolutely.

6 Q. Craig's been telling us about how he's done a lot of manual
7 and training, and training manuals that you use and updates. Are
8 you involved with that in any way?

9 A. Mm-hmm. Quite a bit. Not involved with the direction and
10 the building of them like he is, or working with Bering Air and
11 the 119 staff out there. But involved from the perspective that
12 beyond that, any SAS that's going to come across to me and I'm
13 going to have to review it.

14 But before that Craig keeps me in the loop with that. I know
15 he's done a lot of work with, you know, Brian and that team out
16 there with their SOPs, with their manual in the last couple of
17 years. Did a significant amount of work helping them get the
18 four-way put in there. You know, all kinds of stuff. But yeah,
19 I'm aware of and pretty much in lockstep with all that stuff
20 Craig's been doing.

21 Q. So can Craig sign off and then you sign off or do you sign
22 off and --

23 A. I'm just signing off the activity that the work's done. I'm
24 not looking at his stuff. I'm not even, I'm not a qualified Ops
25 guy.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. But you know, I'm in the loop. He tells me we're working on,
3 you know, revisions to their GOM and their, and this is what's
4 going in it and then when he's done it's packaged up and the
5 work's done and he sends it to me. You know, from that standpoint
6 I know what's happening. I know change is working and I know
7 they're collaborating with their, with the operator.

8 Q. Okay. So Craig's leaving.

9 A. He is.

10 Q. Yeah. Can you tell me what's in the process for his
11 replacement with Bering Air?

12 A. Yeah. What's in the process is we, a couple of things
13 actually. One, we just hired a new Ops inspector which obviously
14 won't be ready. But you've got to do something. And they haven't
15 showed up yet, but we just, we've been putting bids on the street
16 because I've known Craig's going to retire. So hopefully, his
17 security clearances go through.

18 And then secondarily, we've taken our other senior Ops
19 inspector in the office and we're going to do what we can often
20 do, place him on a temporary detail. And then, assign him to the
21 Bering Air certificate. But when we do that, I also am taking,
22 you know, a whole bunch of other operators off of him. Because I
23 understand that we can't just give him all of that.

24 Q. Right.

25 A. So we're shuffling complexity and operators off, the other

1 ones that Craig had above and beyond Bering Air we're taking them
2 off, obviously we'll have to do something with them. And then,
3 the multitude of other ones off of Chris. And then, so Chris can
4 be detailed so we can try to iron it out and figure out what the,
5 you know, what's at our disposal to actually go for a more
6 permanent solution.

7 And then, some of that extra complexity, rather than heap
8 that on another Ops inspector, we're working with Juneau. They
9 have a return Ops inspector that has bandwidth that doesn't have
10 complexity. Another region that doesn't have operators right now.
11 So we're going to give them operators and let them geographically
12 assist us, just like what I explained earlier, to cover that
13 complexity.

14 Q. To cover Chris's --

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. -- to where he --

17 A. Because I've got to take some off Chris to have him take
18 Craig's.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And I don't want to take Chris's and put him on our other Ops
21 inspector, then I'm just going in a circle.

22 Q. Yeah. So Juneau's going to cover Chris?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. He's going to help the new Ops?

25 A. Yeah. Some of Chris's. He still has some.

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. But a lot of them, I think, 10, 12, 13 other 135s that are
3 smaller are going to come off of Chris.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. And we're going to put them on an Ops inspector in Juneau.
6 He'll, the rest of the CMT team will still be the same ones that
7 are on them here. But for the purposes of that inspector to
8 adequately handle Craig's workload when he leaves, because he
9 leaves this month.

10 Q. Yeah. How many vacancies, job vacancies do you have right
11 now?

12 A. I think we're pretty well staffed. I think we have two, if
13 not three vice positions, but basically that are not filled. But
14 the ones in AST, which is not an inspector. And so we may or may
15 not fill that. Our FAAASTeam operations PM is not filled. But
16 then again, they don't have complexity. The don't work stuff.
17 But as far as inspectors, with the last two new hires we have they
18 were air worthiness, I don't think we have any new vacancies.

19 Q. So I should ask, but are you under the hiring freeze, or can
20 you?

21 A. No. No.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. You know, you have to have a certain amount of complexity to
24 get the slot, you know. I mean, if you don't, there's a certain
25 level. Well, we already have two inspectors in the mill all the

1 time that, you know, that won't have complexity. Because when
2 someone leaves it takes, like, a year to get it filled. So.

3 Q. But under the new administration you're still able to hire?

4 A. Yes, nothing's changed for 1825s that I'm aware of. I know
5 there's been freezes in other arenas, but for the 1825s, we're
6 still hiring. Like I said, we just hired an Ops a guy and just
7 hired an avionics guy.

8 Q. Okay. Since the accident in your conversations with Craig
9 and about surveillance, other than what you've already stated, is
10 there anything in addition in your opinion that should be
11 happening moving forward post-accident?

12 A. Should be happening as far as surveillance or at Bering? No.
13 I don't, not that I'm aware of.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I know a lot of it is we don't know what we don't know. I
16 know you guys have your path to go and then we still have to
17 investigate our path, but, and do what's necessary, but, no, I'm
18 not aware of anything.

19 MS. BLUM: Okay. Thank you. That's my, the end of my
20 questions, Mr. Brown. Tim?

21 MR. SORENSON: Thanks.

22 BY MR. SORENSON:

23 Q. Are you aware of, with respect to the accident airplane and
24 several of the 208s that are operative in Alaska.

25 MS. BLUM: Can you speak up?

1 MR. SORENSON: Yeah.

2 BY MR. SORENSON:

3 Q. It was TKS equipped and it also had the AeroAcoustics
4 extender, STC. Are you aware of any issues, any discussions, any
5 misunderstandings with respect to what the approved max gross
6 takeoff weight for that, those equipped airplanes were?

7 A. Have the only thing I'm aware at all is post-accident, Craig
8 had brought me up to speed with that particular STC and how to
9 interpret the, you know, the flight and the known icing and the,
10 other than him walking me through that, you know, at my level,
11 what I do, I was not aware of --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. -- you know, --

14 (Crosstalk)

15 Q. -- implements? Yeah, sorry. Yeah, before the accident you
16 weren't aware of if anything was going on or wasn't? It just
17 didn't come up to you? Yeah.

18 A. No. I was not.

19 MR. SORENSON: Okay. All right. Really, that was my only
20 question. So.

21 MS. BLUM: Okay. Sabrina?

22 DR. WOODS: I really just have two questions.

23 BY DR. WOODS:

24 Q. And the first is that, we heard a lot about complexity,
25 complexity this, complexity that. Define complexity for me.

1 Complex?

2 A. Well, it's probably not what you think. Complexity for us
3 is, I believe it's a numerical piece that the agency puts on an
4 operator based on how many airplanes they have. How many were,
5 you know, what the scope of they're doing and it gets a numerical
6 value. And for the purposes of promotions in the FAA, you have to
7 have a certain amount of complexity. I think it's 500 points, and
8 then you're a 13 and you can, you're a PI. Below that you're not
9 a principal inspector for anyone identified. You're still in the
10 spectrum, but you're an assistant.

11 So a complexity is that gauge. And then, as the complexity
12 goes up typically with higher operators, the number goes up, then
13 you get either more inspectors if you're on a large airline, or it
14 goes to the next promotion range of over 2,500 points, typically,
15 you're a 14, because you're managing a more complex operator or a
16 more complex set of operators. It's more work to do, more risk.
17 So that, if that makes sense, that's what I mean by complexity.

18 Q. So what makes the operator, one operator more complex than
19 another?

20 A. Well, it could be various things. I mean, you've got one
21 operator with five different make and model series, six different
22 maintenance programs. You know, coupled with somebody else doing,
23 flying jets, RSVM, you know there's a whole bunch of stuff that
24 could determine more complex.

25 Q. So I guess, is it safe to say that for the inspectors their

1 workload and what they are responsible for is managed taking that
2 complexity into consideration? Like I don't lump one inspector
3 who's got five operators that have this high level of complexity
4 and then another inspector has, like, one?

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Does that balance out?

7 A. From a work perspective, yes. I mean, like Craig's
8 complexity, I know he's got Bering Air, they're far more complex
9 than some of the other operators that some of my others Ops
10 inspectors has, so you take that into account when comes to work
11 assignments. And I don't give Craig additional work assignments,
12 a bunch of ad hoc stuff because he's dealing with a bigger
13 operator.

14 So we typically scale the majority of that stuff off. Or I
15 will have another inspector that will have, you know, 30
16 inspectors but they're all 135s, single pilot guys with no
17 manuals. One check ride a year, two inspections. You know, so if
18 that answers your question.

19 Q. It does, actually. Thank you very much.

20 And then the last question is more curiosity. If there was
21 one resource you could obtain for your job and that of your direct
22 reports to be easier, and by resource it could be anything, it
23 could be time, money, manpower, equipment, special tools,
24 whatever, what would that resource be?

25 A. Wow. That's a tough one. I think we've got a lot of stuff.

1 I'm having a hard time coming up with something. I mean,
2 certainly things, we don't have really a limited budget. We were
3 able to travel, we don't get restricted on that. And the only
4 thing that would be a resource that I could think of would be for
5 me up could be a little bit more streamlined.

6 Guidance on behalf of the big picture agency, but that's from
7 my position up. I don't feel like that affects me, you know,
8 doing my job here at the FSDO. I try to focus on the FSDO and
9 here. But that's tough. I think that's the only way I could
10 answer that. You know, we get the resources we need at our level,
11 but it's a little frustrating in some cases with so many different
12 pieces of guidance and everything else. But I think that's just
13 what happens when you work for the government. Bureaucracy.

14 DR. WOODS: All right. Thank you. That's it. That's all I
15 have.

16 MS. BLUM: Kat?

17 DR. WILSON: Thanks. Just a couple of questions.

18 BY DR. WILSON:

19 Q. How do you ensure that your inspectors are doing what they're
20 supposed to be doing?

21 A. I think, like I said before, our SAS piece, you know, with
22 the work programs are deeply involved in that. So even when they
23 have scheduled surveillance like every, even though every year,
24 for a single pilot operator it's only required once a year for you
25 to, for the inspector to go over the work plan. But in this FSDO

1 we do it every quarter. So every quarter every inspector is
2 getting with their manager talking about this is my surveillance
3 plan for the quarter. I've got this, I'm traveling there. I've
4 got to do that. I've got to, and then the inspector sends that to
5 the manager, and the manager validates that and assigns the work.
6 Or changes it.

7 And then, even on the backside, you know, it's kind of like I
8 mentioned earlier, all the work that comes in, whether it be DCTs
9 or manuals, or the manual that Craig just, you know, was working
10 with them guys, it comes to us in the form of an activity and or a
11 task or a volt (ph.). We're also reviewing on the backend. So I
12 feel like that's how we ensure that not only are they, you know,
13 eating the elephant one bite at a time and setting up a
14 comprehensive plan moving forward with their operators but it's
15 also how I stay connected with the fact that they're doing the
16 right stuff.

17 Because since I've got to evaluate it, whether it be data
18 quality review, you know, I know what's supposed to happen. So if
19 they don't do it in accordance with, I return it, I give them
20 feedback, and I tell them why, what they missed. Whether they
21 didn't send the letter and it's required or what. So by that
22 method, I think that's how I ensure that they're looking at what
23 they're supposed to look at and doing what they're supposed to do.
24 Q. And I know I said just one question, I should never say that.
25 Would it raise red flags for you if, you know, surveillance always

1 came back, and it's no findings, or everything is perfect, would
2 that raise a red flag?

3 A. Yeah. That's, especially on the bigger operators, I mean
4 sometimes because there's more happening. But you know, not, you
5 know, you never want someone just consistently year in and year
6 out just to assess it and put green all the time. They have to be
7 looking at something, you know, and if not then I look at that as
8 an opportunity to maybe look from a different angle.

9 If we're looking through the same lens all the time. You
10 know, a lot of times on the smaller operators you have that, but
11 there's two inspections a year. So in that case I try to force
12 them to go do ad hoc stuff or out of cycle stuff and not just
13 follow that plan. I think that's, yeah that's natural.

14 DR. WILSON: Thanks so much.

15 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

16 MS. BLUM: Paul?

17 MR. SUFFERN: Thanks, Scot. I just have a few questions.

18 BY MR. SUFFERN:

19 Q. I know Starr was talking to you earlier about, obviously,
20 the, Craig is retiring soon and then she thought having a meeting
21 and making sure he handed off to the next POI and that would be an
22 acting person to look at. Did any of those discussions involve
23 any weather-related things that we wanted to be making sure the
24 new POI or the acting POI checks up on?

25 A. Yes. I know Chris on, or excuse me, Craig, on at least two

1 different occasions has sat down with some specificity to that to
2 Chris because, you know, when I told him he's going to be
3 inheriting Bering Air because we can't leave it uncovered, he
4 talked to him at length with the weather pieces, the FIKI limits
5 and the event since some of the things he's put forth, in place,
6 and where he's at with Bering now, post-accident.

7 And some of the things about the weights and weather and
8 their risk tools and stuff like that. So yes, he's done a couple
9 of them with that principal.

10 Q. And then, speaking of some of those improvements and/or
11 changes that have happened post-accident, have those been shared
12 as potential weather things that would help other operators? And
13 if so, how are those shared?

14 A. Yeah, we did. On the heels of Craig's conversation with them
15 both of the other two principals have operators who own Caravans.
16 So since we had learned about this, you know, with regard to what
17 you had said, the gross weight modifications and the icing
18 potential, you know, a pitfall for not understanding what the
19 gross weight limit is, Craig shared that with those guys.

20 I believe he's even shared it with Anchorage. He told me he
21 was going to reach out to other PIs down there. But in this
22 office both them other PIs have reached out to their operators and
23 had discussions about Caravans flying into ice. Known ice,
24 specifically with some of the things we've learned here. So yes.

25 Q. And to your knowledge how have those discussions gone with

1 those other operators, or you're not privy to those?

2 A. I don't know in detail, you know. You know, Chris had told
3 me, you know, after talking with those guys over there that it
4 went well. He had good conversations with the DO and the chief
5 pilot. But as far as the real nuts and bolts I wasn't, I'm not
6 sure.

7 MR. SUFFERN: That's all I've got, Scot, thank you.

8 MR. PECK: I've got kind of more just a clarifying thing than
9 anything.

10 BY MR. PECK:

11 Q. And that is, they were talking assignments, assignments for
12 work and stuff. And I think that I would be amiss if I didn't
13 bring up the collective bargaining agreement that we have to abide
14 by. Is that true?

15 A. Sure. Yeah. I mean, if you mean with respect to the work
16 pieces, whether it be ad hoc stuff and accident standby and/or
17 some of the other conditional work.

18 Q. Or even, like, seniority bids and things like that?

19 A. Yeah. For eligibility.

20 Q. And you get involved with HR?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. That is true.

24 MR. PECK: Okay. That's all.

25 MS. BLUM: All right.

1 MR. WECKWERTH: I don't have anything else for you, Scot.

2 THE WITNESS:. Nothing?

3 MR. WECKWERTH: It sounds like you've got a pretty good
4 handle on SAS there, must have been fine tutelage.

5 THE WITNESS:. Because of you and your teaching ability,
6 Brian, I'm far more savvy with it than I wish I was.

7 MR. WECKWERTH: Sure.

8 MS. BLUM: So, I'm sorry. I'm going to ask again.

9 BY MS. BLUM:

10 Q. What were you trying to communicate about the collective
11 bargaining agreement? I'm not understanding.

12 A. I think what it was meaning, you know, I think one of you
13 asked the question about what we're looking at when we're filling
14 positions. You know, he brought up a good point that when we are
15 filling positions if you have more than one person qualified, you
16 know, through the CBA since the workers are BUEs, they're bound to
17 the Union. So we have to make sure that it's a done fair and
18 equitable. So we'll do a bid sometimes. We'll do job interviews,
19 internal interviews, or even have another office to do the
20 interviews, and then based on that, as opposed to just assigning,
21 arbitrarily assigning. A lot of times here we are doing an open
22 vacancy bid because we only have one guy, or girl who is
23 qualified. But I think if I'm right that's what you were getting
24 at.

25 MS. BLUM:. I see. Thank you. That's the end of my

1 questions. Tim?

2 MR. SORENSON: I have nothing further.

3 MS. BLUM:. Sabrina?

4 DR. WOODS: Me neither.

5 MS. BLUM: Kat?

6 DR. WILSON: (No audible response.)

7 MR. SUFFERN: Nothing from me.

8 MS. BLUM: Rob?

9 MR. PECK: No.

10 MS. BLUM: Brian, no?

11 MR. WECKWERTH: Okay.

12 MS. BLUM: Before we shut off, I just want to, before,
13 because we always ask people a couple of questions.

14 BY MS. BLUM:

15 Q. Is there anything that you would like to share with us that
16 you think could aid us in this investigative factual finding part
17 of this accident and the process thereof?

18 A. No. I don't think I know enough about it. Because of my job
19 I, you know, I'm privy to it. I'm involved where I need to be, I
20 think. But I left a lot of the stuff run its course, so I don't
21 have anything to add, that I would take to be of value.

22 MS. BLUM: Okay. Fair enough. Thank you for your time and
23 we will conclude the interview at 2:56.

24 (Whereupon, at 2:56 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

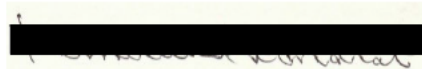
IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL COMMUTER PLANE CRASH NEAR
NOME, ALASKA ON FEBRUARY 6, 2025
Interview of Scot Brown

ACCIDENT NO.: ANC25MA018

PLACE: Nome, Alaska

DATE: May 7, 2025

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.



Kimberlee S. Kondrat
Transcriber