ANC25MA018

OPERATIONAL FACTORS

Attachment 1 – Bering Air Personnel Interview Transcripts

August 4, 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: SOPHIA HOBBS EVANS, Pilot Bering Air

Nome, Alaska

Sunday,
February 16, 2025

APPEARANCES:

STARR BLUM, Aviation Accident 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

ROBERT RICHMOND, Esq.
Richmond & Quinn
(On behalf of Ms. Hobbs Evans)

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INTERVIEW

(9:06 a.m.)

MS. BLUM: -- 2025 and it is 9:06 Alaska Standard Time. My name is Starr Blum and I'm an investigator with the NTSB, we're in the process of investigating the accident on February 6th with Bering Air 445.

First off, we all want to extend our sincere condolences, I'm really sorry that we have to be here, but as you know, our role is safety and we're here to try to find out what happened and prevent this from ever happening and anybody having to go through this again. So I want you to know this is completely normal for us to talk to pilots and management personnel and the FAA, I might not be -- it might unusual for you, but this is completely normal for us. And again, nothing you say in here will be used in any kind of a certificate enforcement. We don't have any regulatory powers and we're not here for liability or blame, we're here to find the probable cause of what happened.

We will be recording this interview so that it can be transcribed. After we receive the transcripts, our group will review it for typos, we'll give them to you and you'll be able to look that over, as well. Let's go around the room so we can introduce everyone.

MR. SUFFERN: Okay. So I'm Paul Suffern, meteorologist with the NTSB. I've been with the NTSB about 15 years, 14 years, before that I worked for the National Weather Service up in Alaska in the Juneau area and I spent some time in Anchorage, too.

MR. PECK: And I want to express my condolences, also, you know, it's a tough time, sorry we're here in that environment, but again, just to restate, I'm here just for that safety aspect, not from a regulatory standpoint, okay?

I'm Robert Peck, go by Rob, I'm with the Anchorage FSDO as a frontline manager down there and previous to that, I flew 135 for about eight years and then previous to that, about 21 years with the military, so -- as a pilot, so that's kind of my background.

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

MR. RICHMOND: You got another intro for Sophia, she knows me. Well, is there anything else that I should say --

MS. BLUM: No, that's fine. And again, as far as Brian goes, too, this is a safe space and safety only.

You are entitled to have a representative of your choosing during this interview, is there someone you'd like to have as your representative?

MS. EVANS: My attorney, Rob Richmond.

MS. BLUM: Okay, thank you. Rob, please refrain from answering any questions on Sophia's behalf. You may direct her not to answer a question or you guys can take a break and confer.

MR. RICHMOND: I tried to give her a donut already and so she didn't accept it, so I'll just sit here and be quiet.

(Laughter.)

MS. BLUM: Okay. And if you need a break at any time, bathroom, just need to get up, please let us know, no problem. So any questions?

(No audible response.)

MS. BLUM: Okay, let's get started.

INTERVIEW OF SOPHIA HOBBS EVANS

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. If you would, can you please say and spell your name?

A. Sure. Sophia Hobbs Evans, S-o-p-h-i-a H-o-b-b-s E-v-a-n-s.
Q. And how old are you?
A. Twenty-four.
Q. And what is your position at Bering Air?
A. I'm a commercial pilot for Bering Air.
Q. Are you a PIC?
A. PIC.
Q. Okay. How long have you been employed here?
A. I've been employed with Bering as a pilot for a year and -- two and a half years.
Q. Okay, great. Are you a full-time employee?
A. I am.
Q. What certificates and ratings do you have?
A. I hold my commercial multi-engine IFR.
Q. Okay. What class medical do you have?
A. First class.
Q. Any limitations?
A. I wear contacts.
Q. Okay. And what's your estimate of your total time?
A. Around 3,000 hours.
Q. And how much of that would you say is PIC?
A. About 2,000.
Q. Okay, great. In the Caravan?
A. Yeah, Caravan.

Q. Okay, great. If you could, can you just give us a brief history of your aviation background, what got you into it and your journey?

A. Sure. I started my flight training in 2019 in McMinnville, Oregon with Trimble Aviation, did all of my ratings, private, instrument, and commercial with them. Upon completion of that, I came back, I ran out of money, so I had to come back and work for a while and then went and got my multi-commercial with Blue River Aviation. And about four months after I wrapped up my multi, I started here with Bering as a copilot, as an SIC.

Q. Was that in the 1900?

A. CASA.

Q. On the CASA, okay, cool. So let's go back to Thursday, the day of the accident, can you walk me, you know, from the beginning of your day throughout, you know, what you were doing and what happened?

A. I came in, in the morning at about 8:30, did my preflight with my plane, acquired my weather, talked to dispatch, did all my prior-to-flight paperwork, got my passengers and then did Flight 870 up to Teller and back.

Q. At what point did you become aware that there had been an accident?

A. I was on my second flight of the day, after my flight to Teller in the morning, I had a long break, I went and grabbed some lunch with my husband, came back and did a trooper (ph.) charter to Kotzebue at about 1:30.

Q. Okay.

A. And it was on my return, on the flight back.

Q. Okay. So were you in the air when you found out about it?

A. I was.

Q. Were you in contact with the pilot?

A. I was.

Q. Can you -- what were you guys talking about on the radio?

A. I initially heard him communicating with Center on 133.3 and realized we would be on the same CTAF since I was coming back from Kotzebue, so on 122.9, just reached out and said hey, that's standard. Chatted briefly and --

Q. Were you discussing the weather at all on these conversations?

A. Popped up briefly. He asked where I was coming from, I told him Kotzebue, asked where he was coming from, he told me that he was coming back from Unalakleet and said yeah, once you get over this way, just a heads up, it's icy over here.

Q. Spicy. How did you interpret that comment?

A. That it was icy.

Q. Okay, got you. Sorry, I thought you said spicy.

A. Oh, yeah. No, icy.

Q. Got you. Have you ever flown with Chad?

A. No. I have been in the same airplane as him while we were copilots, but I've never flown with him nor has he flown with me.

Q. Okay. Were you friends outside of work?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell us a little bit about him, his personality?

A. He was goofy and fun to be around. He would come over to my and my husband's house constantly and eat dinner with us and bum rides off of us. He was really good at that. Yeah.

Q. Did he ever mention to you that he had any concerns or issues going on in his life, whether it was personal, like family or work, was he -- is there anything --

A. No.

Q. No?
A. He was incredibly happy with it.
Q. Okay. Did he ever mention any concerns about flying here at Bering Air?
A. No.
Q. We like to try to establish a 72-hour history prior, were you in contact with him the previous 72 hours before the accident?
A. I do not believe so.
Q. Okay. So there's nothing about his activities that you could share with us during that time?
A. No, no, I don't think so.
Q. Okay, thanks. I'm going to let Paul get more into the weather. Were you talking to anybody else that day about the conditions, because I know you were coming from the north, Chad, of course, is coming -- do you have any other insight about what the pilots were seeing on that flight that you talked to?
A. Not especially, I was coming down, like you said, from the northwest from Kotzebue, Chad -- or correction, northeast, Chad was coming from the east-southeast. There was one other pilot in our local area who was on frequency and in conversation with us, that would've been Yuri (ph.), with the Bering Strait School District plane. He never said anything to me about the weather nor, to my knowledge, Chad, but he was on the frequency, we were chatting.
Q. Okay. Did you hear any PIREPs being given or ATC or Flight Service telling the pilots during the call?
A. No official -- no official PIREPs, the only PIREP that I heard was from Chad, which I don't know that you would consider that a PIREP, but --
Q. Okay.

A. Yeah.

Q. Do you guys ever go on a discrete frequency and just talk to each other and give each other PIREPs?

A. That would've been CTAF --

Q. That's just used --

A. -- it's non-recorded, it's just common traffic frequency.

Q. Okay. So in these challenging conditions Alaska can present, as a pilot, you come to work, you know that there might be icing in the forecast, how do you make your personal go/no-go decision?

A. I look at FSS, all of the available weather sources, chat with other people who may have already been in the air prior to myself, gauge what they saw, what they experienced in the air, talk with our dispatcher. If I have any concerns that go above and beyond what the dispatcher can answer or questions that I may have, I will talk to our OC, operations control, whoever that is on a given day.

Q. What if you're one of the first flights out and there aren't other people that are out giving reports, does that add -- is that -- do you handle that in any different way, is it more pressure?

A. No, not necessarily. I -- yeah, again FSS, all of the available weather information that I can and talk it over and it's a discussion between, yeah, dispatch and myself.

Q. Okay. Have you ever canceled a flight before?

A. Yes.

Q. Yeah. You mean for weather, for what reasons?

A. Yeah.

Q. And you feel comfortable canceling?

A. Yes.

MS. BLUM: Okay. I think this is going to be my questions for now, I'll turn it over to Paul.

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. Yeah. Thanks again for being here, your information is really helpful, just because you're the expert at flying in this area, so it's really, really helpful to understand that. So I know you were chatting with Starr there, talking about the weather resources it sounds like you use, could you step me through a couple of what those would look like for you, as a pilot?

A. I typically will start my morning checking local area weather, kind of just region wide, I like to see what it's doing as a whole. I usually use the aviation weather cameras to help me do so, it's nice to be able to actually lay eyes on what it's doing, and after that I'll check my NOTAMs and whatever and then pop over to the national -- national weather site and look for where the freezing levels may be if there's icing, any SIGMETs, AIRMETs, whatever, what have you.

Q. Okay. Do you have access to any kind of weather while you're in flight or that's just kind of whatever you're hearing from Flight Service or other pilots kind of a thing?

A. Flight Service, other pilots, whatever is available through our G-1000, through ADS-B.

Q. Okay. As far as, again, sorry, going back to what you review there preflight, are you using a computer when you're doing that, are you using a tablet?

A. Computer.

Q. Computer, okay. And that's typically in the dispatch area or --

A. Typically in our break room --

Q. Break room.

A. -- we have a line of computers.

Q. Oh. What, as far as weather, does dispatch provide you before a flight, is it --

A. They'll provide us with runway conditions, typically, as well as the most recent weather that they have been able to get a hold of and if they have any concerns, they will broach them.

Q. Is that typically a text product, do they print out like a graphic or anything like that or --

A. They'll call the weather stations and there's a text graphic, as well.

Q. I believe you all have things -- I'm going to probably mis-do the term, is it village agents and things like that, do they ever provide weather for you or can you --

A. Nothing official.

Q. Okay.

A. Occasionally, we will call and just ask visually what it looks like, obviously, they are not trained in any capacity, so take that with a grain of salt. Really, it's essentially like looking at a weather camera, it's not official, it's just looking at the current conditions, what do you see --

Q. Okay.

A. -- and that's always -- always on the verge of change.

Q. Yeah. Do you ever use resources or apps like ForeFlight or AeroWeather or anything like that or --

A. Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Use both of those frequently, daily.

Q. And is that something that you're doing while in the cockpit or is it all -- I don't know, I assume they need internet access --

A. They need internet --

Q. Okay.

A. -- so that's a ground-based product only.

Q. Okay. Stepping through, I guess, the weather training and things like that when you came to Bering Air, could you kind of step me through what you recall from the types of weather training that you received?

A. Sure. I mean, there's the standard while we go through -- we go through our basic indoc every year and always cover a lot of weather information during that, and then as Caravan pilots there's also the icing course that is assigned to us annually.

Q. Okay, so it's an annual course. Now, is the course specific to the Caravan or specific to Caravan and also flying in Alaska or is it just kind of --

A. Caravan specific.

Q. Specific, okay. So there's no, like, individual modules for hey, you're flying the Caravan in Alaska, it may be more challenging this time as opposed to if you're flying in Kansas or something like that?

A. No.

Q. You had mentioned when you were chatting about the day of the accident, receiving some more on the weather and a weather brief and information from dispatch before you took your first flight of the day, can you recall what the weather was that morning and I know you were headed north in a different direction, but can you recall anything?

A. Yeah. Weather that morning, I believe it was calling marginal VFR here at the field in Nome and about the same kind of bouncing between marginal and IFR up in Teller, we canceled Brevig, typically our 870 flight is Teller and Brevig, but we canceled the Brevig portion due to high winds and so that was part of the conversation with dispatch, they made that call for me before I ever even went to speak with them, just let me know that it was above our wind minimums and told me not to worry about it, we'd just go ahead with the Teller portion of that flight.

Q. Okay. And so it sounds like, maybe -- and I'll mess up the term here again, the dispatcher had some kind of risk assessment criteria, were they already -- before you even got there had looked at the wind and I'll just pick a number out, it was 25 knots and the risk assessment says can't do anything over 20, is that kind of how they do that or you don't know how, necessarily it's done?

A. We don't have a specific risk assessment form that we fill out, we base that risk assessment off of what our crosswind, max crosswind components allowable are, as well as location by location knowledge, Brevig tends to be very strange wind-wise, it's right up against a hill and so the wind tends to swirl where even if it's below what necessarily our max cutoff would be and so you -- if it hits a point, you just -- it's not worth it to try and deal with it.

Q. Understand, yeah.

A. Yeah.

Q. Challenging terrain all over the place, so -- you mentioned earlier about reviewing the Alaska Aviation Weather Unit page and those graphics on there, have you ever -- recall looking at the icing graphics page?

A. Yes.

Q. Yeah. And then as far as reviewing that, is it helpful, is it not so helpful?

A. It's helpful to look at what it says it might be doing. Whether or not that is accurate on a given day is very hit or miss.

Q. Okay. Do you find that on the right side, if I'm looking at the page, that the text in there has the word moderate in every single category there, I think the first light yellow color is isolated moderate and then it's like constant moderate, do you find that confusing at all because every single one of them says moderate even though they're three different colors?

A. Not especially.

MR. SUFFERN: That's all I got for right now. Thank you very much.

MS. BLUM: Rob.

BY MR. PECK:

Q. And again, this is just strictly from safety, right, so -- and again, thanks for trying to help us figure this whole thing out. You talked about your talk with dispatch in the morning, what would that normally look like when you walk up there with dispatch -- and what I'm -- you've probably, I'm assuming some stuff here, that you've kind of looked and you already got a big idea of what the weather is, right? Is that true?

A. Yeah, that's true.

Q. So then when you go to dispatch, what does -- what does that generally consist of?

A. Generally, it will consist of really just going over the weather that either one of us have seen, kind of putting our heads together, looking at the current and what it's forecasted to do and then coming up with the decision between the two of us as to whether to go or not go.

Q. Are they using like a form of some sort at all?

A. No.

Q. No, they're just -- they're just looking at the weather, also?

A. Just looking at the weather.

Q. You talked about or mentioned paperwork, you go up and you have paperwork you do with them, what paperwork --

A. No paperwork with our dispatcher, paperwork refers to doing weight and balance and things before leaving on our flight.

Q. How do you normally do your weight and balance?

A. We use whiz wheels for making sure all of the weights are in specific locations in the aircraft and then we have a weight and balance form that we fill out with like empty weight, takeoff weight, any fuel that we put on board, any passengers' bags, whatever.

Q. Do you take that with you or is it on the iPad?

A. It's on the iPad, so it's -- it's with you, you take it with you on the iPad.

Q. All right, okay. And it's not saved here anywhere?

A. It is.

Q. Oh, it is?

A. Yeah.

Q. It's icy. What does -- what did you -- I guess I'm assuming there, too. That came from Chad, he said that?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. What did you interpret that to mean, as a pilot?

A. That it was icy. I -- it was icy.

Q. So you -- that would be icy not on the ground, but icy in the air, you're flying through it --

A. Correct.

Q. -- and then collect accumulation, potentially?

A. Yes.

Q. Were you having any icy actually happening with your aircraft at all or --

A. At the point that he mentioned it, no, no.

Q. Okay. How about as you got closer to Nome that day?

A. Yes.

Q. As far as your TKS, were you in low or high or -- what do you -- remember any of that?

A. Yeah. I started picking up ice about 40 miles northwest -- or northeast of EMMMO, our initial approach fix for -- RNAV to 2-8 here in Nome, that's where I filed to -- for my IFR coming back from Kotzebue and yeah, about 40 miles out of EMMMO, I started picking up ice, it started light, it was in normal mode.

Q. Did you ever come out of the normal?

A. Yeah, I moved it to high as I got closer to Nome and after Center said that they had lost contact with Flight 445, they told me -- they gave me an EFC time just because they couldn't -- couldn't get a hold of company, they asked 6-0 Delta, the school district plane, to see if they could reach him on the -- on Center frequency and they reached out, I believe, twice on Center frequency. I, at the same time, was reaching out on CTAF, another local CTAF, tried company, tried guard (ph.), tried any frequency I could come up with. And at that point I was about 20 miles out of EMMMO, I don't know exactly for sure, I was getting closer to EMMMO, but they were anticipating that I would need to wait simply because they could not get a hold of 445, so I asked to go to SPYVY, the initial approach fix for RNAV to 1-0, the opposite direction, just to stay out of the area. G-1000s have issues

sometimes, sometimes radios don't work, I just wanted to be clear of the area, just in case.

Q. And I'm guessing you never heard anything back when you were trying to communicate with him, is that -- yeah. So when you finally, I guess, go to 1-0 and land, is that correct?

A. Yeah, I was -- yeah, they cleared me to SPYVY and gave me about a 40-minute EFC time. At that point, my TKS was on high and I was using max airframe, as well, occasionally, and using the defrost windshield heat to attempt to clear ice. And yeah, I think I made three turns in the hold over SPYVY and it cleared up over that way and I had good ground contact and forward visibility in spite of ice, so I believe they cleared me down to 5,000 feet at that point, so I canceled my IFR clearance and came in VFR, the field was calling VFR, so yeah.

Q. If you had to guess, those unprotected surfaces on your Caravan, i.e. the hook where you tie down or the nose cone after you landed, how much ice do you think you might have had?

A. I wish I would've taken a picture for you, unfortunately, I was a little preoccupied at the time. I had incredibly spiky accumulations aft of my protected surfaces and on the front nose (indiscernible) around the air inlets, I pulled off chunks that were about that -- that thick.

Q. So an inch-ish?

A. Inch, inch and a half, maybe.

Q. So would you -- what would you characterize, in your words, that kind of icing event at the worst case?

A. I don't know.

Q. Yeah. Have you seen icing worse than that?

A. No.

Q. No. Have you ever -- well, just in general, TKS system, have you ever had it not protect you any better than that, I guess, for lack of a better term?

A. No.

Q. No. So maybe one of the more significant icing events?

A. Sure, yeah.

Q. Okay. What are your thoughts -- well, let me ask a different question. You talked about runway conditions, right, how -- what's your understanding of how those runway conditions are -- that information is gathered? And I'm assuming it's by your dispatcher, not you, but maybe I'm wrong?

A. Yeah. By us and then, again, that's another thing that we ask other pilots about and again, that would be technically old information from perhaps the day prior. I believe we acquire runway reports through dispatch, they'll call airport managers and airport managers will relay what they are seeing and then also through Flight Service, if Flight Service has any -- any runway reports from airport managers, they will pass those along on taxi out.

Q. I see. There's special procedures when you have icing, right, on the Caravan, did you have any controllability or did you think that the airplane was less controllable at all when you were coming in to land that day?

A. I still had full control of the control surfaces, to my knowledge. I do know that my airspeed was beginning to bleed off during my -- during my hold period over SPYVY and it was down to about 135, 130, in that area, and I adjusted my torque accordingly, had it about as high as it would go, not quite red line, but was maintaining 135 in the hold.

Q. Just that annual icing course, what are your thoughts about that course?

A. It's good information to have, for sure. It definitely plays into your decision making, it certainly played into mine, as I was watching my airspeed and accumulation and what the plane was doing, how much TKS I was using, the icing course says do not go below an airspeed of 120 if you are in cruise and in icing, so I was definitely keeping a hard eye on that to make sure I didn't drop below that.

MR. PECK: Obviously, you did a good job. I'm not here to critique that at all, it's not -- I'm just trying to figure out the icing piece to this. Yeah, I think that I'm good for now. Thank you.

MS. EVANS: Yeah.

MS. BLUM: Brian.

BY MR. WECKWERTH:

Q. Just one question, just for the record. You talked about commercial certificate and your ratings, you mentioned just multi-engine.

A. Um-hum.

Q. You have more than that, right? Multi-engine --

A. Commercial.

Q. Commercial pilot certificate, multi-engine and --

A. Instrument.

Q. Single engine?

A. Single engine, yeah.

MR. WECKWERTH: That's all I wanted to get on the record, that's all.

MS. BLUM: Okay, thanks.

MR. RICHMOND: I don't ask any questions.

MR. WECKWERTH: Thanks, Sophia.

MS. EVANS: Yeah.

MS. BLUM: We do one more round, I don't have that many.

MS. EVANS: Sure.

MS. BLUM: Do you need a break at all, are you okay?

MS. EVANS: I might run to the restroom really quick --

MS. BLUM: Absolutely.

MS. EVANS: -- if that's all right?

MS. BLUM: Sure. We're going to stop the recording at 9:40.

(Off the record at 9:40 a.m.)

(On the record 10:44 a.m.)

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Okay, going back to some of the -- some of Rob's questions, when you heard Chad, did he sound distressed or was -- at that time?

A. He didn't sound distressed, it was just a heads-up for what it was worth in flight, what he was seeing.

Q. Okay. When you called it spiky, on the ice, and you said it was about an inch thick, was it clear, was it mixed, what do you mean by spiky?

A. From what I was seeing on the wings as I was flying, it was just -- I suppose you could call it mixed, it wasn't -- it wasn't all clear, it was opaque in color and accumulating, I suppose you could say differently than I have seen in the past.

Q. Okay. Faster rate?

A. Faster rate, different -- like, it accumulated, yeah, like -- I don't know how to describe it -- just different than what would start out as -- like, it accumulated in a pretty uniform manner initially, but as time went on, it became less uniform in nature.

Q. Okay. Like maybe more isolated in some areas you were flying through or -- it's kind of hard to --

A. No, because it was all on one aircraft, so that's not an especially large occupation of space.

Q. Yeah.

A. It just -- yeah, it was -- it was spiky.

Q. Okay. No, that's fine.

A. Trying to describe it is tough.

Q. Yeah, yeah. When you're -- whether it's talking to the pilots that were flying that day or the dispatcher, do you ever call Flight Service and talk to them or any other -- or National Weather Service, do you contact other weather sources verbally?

A. I spoke with Flight Service during my departures to and from Nome and to and from Kotzebue during the day, I spoke with them -- actually, no, I didn't. Yeah, just to and from Nome throughout the day, would call for my clearances and they would activate my VFR flight plans. I do not believe I acquired any weather information from them that day.

Q. Okay. Do you ever, I mean, is it common?

A. A little. Yeah, yeah, occasionally.

Q. When you're having discussions about icing and whether you're going to take the flight or not, does SLD ever come up in those conversations where you're talking about the super-cooled liquid droplets, is it -- or is it "oh, it's just moderate or it's light," does that ever get talked about?

A. It's typically -- when in contact with dispatch, it's typically quantity based. If it's amongst other pilots, it will be type and accumulation rate.

Q. Okay. What was the training that you were offered here at Bering about icing?

A. Like I said, we always go over -- pull up the weather information and weather that is available to us during our annual basic indoc, I know we do that. I've done mine in -- just in January, (indiscernible) very good since it's our every day and then our Caravan icing course, as well. And then a lot of the training that I received was as an SIC in the CASA, just techniques and how one deals with it, how one watches for it and

-- yeah, a lot of, I would say, on-the-job acquired knowledge.

Q. So do you feel, when you came on board, that it was adequate, that you felt --

A. Definitely.

Q. -- that the training was good? What are some of the techniques that you pilots talk about picking up from experience flying here?

A. A lot of that happens, like specifically for Caravan related, that happens during our IOE and OE with the company, which we do a hundred hours. At the minimum, I think I had closer to three, which was really, really good, you get typically all of the information from people who have been doing it for much longer than you have and so I was lucky enough to fly with people who have flown in this for a great deal longer than I have and how they, yeah, use the TKS, whether it's like -- whether you let out -- wet out your wings before you take off and at what point you turn it on, the flow rate that you use, all of those things.

Q. We heard a little bit about that yesterday, that you got to stay on top of it, stay ahead of it, can you give me your interpretation of that, what that means to you, turning it on, is it when you start seeing a trace?

A. I am of the "wet out your wings before you take off" camp, you turn on your TKS before you ever even get to the runway and it just pumps out enough liquid to wet all of the TKS bleeding surfaces and essentially prime the system and make sure that fluid is on the outside of it and so it doesn't get trapped behind ice that may accumulate that would make it longer for it to burn off, essentially. And then if you wet out, it typically -- a trace won't really accumulate at all, it just kind of sloughs off, I guess. So it -- I always have a topped-off TKS tank, it takes a fair amount of ice for me to have to use it.

Q. Okay. I've never flown with TKS, so this is education for me. When you wet the wings, would you do that on a VFR clear but you're expecting to experience possible icing en route?

A. Yeah.

Q. How long do you -- is there any common knowledge or even guidance on how long the wing would stay -- how long the wing stays wet?

A. It's like glycol based, so it's sticky, it will stay around for a while, it lingers. If you get it on your clothes or your hands, you -- you know it's there for a great length of time.

Q. So it doesn't shear off, okay.

A. It doesn't dry out.

Q. Okay. Let's say when you're flying, it snows and it's not an expected runway closure for snow removal, how are you alerted to that, who alerts you to that?

A. That would be an alert from Center or potentially Flight Service about a runway closure.

Q. Okay. Did you hear about a runway closure on your flight from --

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. And do you recall what ATC, was it Anchorage Center?

(No audible response.)

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. And what did they say on that radio transmission?

A. To my recollection, they alerted Chad, who was significantly closer than I was at that point, that all of the runways here in Nome were closed, specifically that Runway 10-2-8 was closed. Since 3-2-1 had been closed for a few days, since they hadn't been able to keep up with snow removal, 10-2-8 was our only available runway at the time and it was closed, and Center told him to expect about a 30-minute wait and I do not remember the exact verbiage, but asked him to slow down.

Q. When they tell you about a closure that maybe you weren't expecting, do they normally give you a time to expect with that

or --

A. Typically, yes.

Q. Yeah. And is that a common 30 minutes or --

A. Thirty minutes to an hour, typically they're trying to prepare the runway and make it useful for mainliners, Alaska.

Q. Just have a couple of follow-up questions for me and it's more about training, what was your experience -- so when you got hired, did you -- am I correct to say you went to Wichita to Flight Safety?

A. That happened last year, when I was upgraded to the Caravan after doing my SIC time.

Q. Okay.

A. So I actually went in April or May, I can't remember exactly the month that I went, April or May of last year. I was supposed to go in March but ended up adjusting

that time out a little bit, but prior to that, I did in-house training and did a check ride here in December.

Q. In the CASA?

A. No, in the Caravan.

Q. Okay.

A. Yeah. In the Caravan.

Q. So you can do -- either you can do the Bering training and then go to Flight Safety or vice versa.

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. And how long is the training in Wichita?

A. The initial training in Wichita is about two weeks.

Q. Okay. And is that a full-motion sim?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Were you satisfied with the training?

A. Yeah, it was very good.

Q. Was there a check ride at the end of that?

A. There was.

Q. So it's pass/fail.

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. And you said, just to make sure I got it right, the company, the minimum for -- company always a hundred hours?

A. Correct.

Q. But they're happy to give you more if you --

A. Absolutely.

Q. -- need or want.

A. Yes.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Do you have any more?

MR. SUFFERN: Got a couple.

MS. BLUM: Okay.

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. Thank you, again, it's really helpful. Just one of the questions that Starr talked about and you had mentioned not recalling the exact verbiage that Center said, but they said slow down or something --

A. Um-hum.

Q. -- to that effect, have you ever heard that, have you ever had them tell you that before, not on the day of, but another --

A. Yeah, absolutely. That is a common ask from ATC simply for sequencing, generally it's used for sequencing, just in an attempt to not hold you unnecessarily, typically they'll ask you to hold, slow down or give you a slight vector, just for spacing so that they can kind of stack us up and get us all in as quickly as possible. Yeah, very, very common ask.

Q. Okay. And so that would typically come from Center or Flight Service or both or --

A. Only Center.

Q. Only Center, okay. I just got two more questions. The weather resources that you use, if any of them could be improved somehow, which ones would you like to see improved and what would you like to see?

A. Not sure on that one.

Q. Okay.

A. Yeah, I'm not -- I'd have to get back to you on that.

Q. That's fine, you got my card. And then if there's any weather tool out there, just pie in the sky, you thought as a pilot the last, you know, three years, man, it would be really cool if we had this or we had that, what out there would you like to have, as a pilot, as a resource?

A. I mean, it would be cool to have a little bit more access to weather in flight to see what things are doing. Obviously, the flight is your first and foremost priority and the safety thereof, so you don't want big distractions, but it would be nice to be able to see weather trends, especially when things are changing quickly, to see what it's doing as it happens.

MR. SUFFERN: That's all I've got, thank you so much.

BY MR. PECK:

Q. Again, thanks. I'm going to go back a little bit to the areas that you were talking -- you said different areas on the wing ice was forming and just to get a better picture in my own head, is that underneath we're looking, you're seeing it go back on the wing or over the top of the wing, past the TKS panels?

A. Both.

Q. Both. Okay.

A. Yeah.

Q. Do you remember, on that second flight, I forget where you said went now, sorry, when you were coming back, did you start with a full TKS, 21 gallon?

A. Yes.

Q. Yeah. Do you recall, did you look, by any chance, how much you had when you actually landed?

A. I looked at the gauge in the belly pod, which is the only accurate way to see what you have, there is, as you know, the little gauge inside on the G-1000, but

those are incredibly inaccurate. I have a picture of the gauge that I took the day after and the plane hadn't been touched or flown, if that helps. It obviously doesn't tell you the exact quantity, it's just the flow gauge.

Q. Where would you say that was and we might want that picture at some point, but --

A. Fairly close to the bottom, not sitting all the way on the bottom, but pretty close.

Q. And do you recall kind of the -- how many hours you had that day in the air? Just on that flight. Just a guess, close.

A. On the day in total or just that flight?

Q. No, just that flight with that TKS amount used.

A. Yeah. It was about an hour and 10 minutes up to Kotzebue and it took me an hour and 40 minutes coming back and that was with a bit of a headwind and with the vector switch over to 1-0, and my best gauge is that I used TKS for maybe the last 40 or 50 minutes of that flight, it was VFR in Kotzebue that day, it was pristine, it was clear, and so I didn't pick up IFR until I got closer, closer back to Nome, I was about 70 miles out of Nome when I picked up.

Q. Just so I make sure I understand, you don't think you used any TKS on the way to Kotzebue?

A. I did not use any TKS.

Q. Did not. Just on the way home.

A. Yes.

Q. Wow. Okay. I think both of these folks talked about slow down, right, with ATC and Center. Have you, in your experiences just in general up here, has that been a -- more of a directive or is it advisory in nature when they tell you those?

A. I personally hear it as a directive, they are air traffic control. When you are flying IFR, you're doing what they tell you to do unless you are in an urgent situation and you need to deviate from that. Yeah, and -- yeah.

Q. So would that radio call be more like "Call Sign, we need you to slow 20 knots" or is it more where the runway's closed, you're probably going to be, you know, holding for 20 or 30 minutes, we might advise you to slow down or --

A. Um-hum.

Q. -- how does that -- is that normal or either one of those?

A. Either one, depends on the scenario. Yeah, I believe day of it was more the second, like, just kind of as an advisory, however, with ATC, the typical stance is comply then evaluate unless you are already thinking about asking for something different from ATC.

Q. Have you ever been in a scenario where, you know, according to even the book, right, it says we're supposed to be above a hundred and 20 and the icing conditions are an expected type of deal, have you ever asked Center for -- you know, tell them, I guess, hey, minimum I can do is a hundred and 20, have you ever -- had been in a situation like that or -- and I guess more from an ATC --

A. Right, right.

Q. -- are they receptive to that, that type of deal?

A. Absolutely, absolutely, we have a great -- we have a great working relationship with our local ATC. Yeah, if you have any -- any different need or requirement, they're always happy to work with you.

MR. PECK: That's all I got.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Okay, is there anything that you can tell us that we might not have specifically asked that might help us understand the circumstances of this accident or anybody that you think that we should talk to?

A. Not that I can come up with, no.

Q. Okay. And if you think of anything, you know, like the magic wand about wet weather, just get a hold of us and let us know. And do you have any other safety recommendations you'd like to talk about or concerns?

A. No.

MS. BLUM: Okay, well, we really appreciate your time and we will end the interview at ten zero five.

(Whereupon, 10:05 a.m., the interview 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 Sophia Hobbs Evans
ACCIDENT NO.:	ANC25MA018
PLACE:	Nome, Alaska
DATE:	February 16, 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.



Karen D. Martini
Transcriber

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: SOPHIA HOBBS, Pilot

Bering Air

Nome, Alaska
Monday, May 5, 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
(On behalf of Sophia Hobbs)

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INTERVIEW

(2:49 p.m.)

MS. BLUM: Today is May 5th, 2025, and it's 2:49 Alaska Daylight Time. My name is Starr Blum, and I'm on 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.

I just want to remind you that we are an independent agency and that we're not part of DOT or the FAA and we're not, we don't have any regulatory or enforcement powers. We're trying determine the probable cause of the accident and make recommendations if we can do so to prevent this from happening again.

Our mission doesn't involve anything in liability or blame. We will be recording this interview so it can be transcribed. After we get the transcripts, we'll review it for any typos and you will then be, we'll have Bob give you the transcript so you can review it as well.

And let's go around the room so everyone can introduce themselves.

MR. SORENSON: I am Tim Sorenson. I'm an aviation accident investigator. I'm also the investigator in charge for this accident investigation.

MR. SUFFERN: I'm Paul Suffern. I'm the NTSB meteorologist.

MR. PECK: Rob Peck, Anchorage FAA.

MS. BLUM: Brian?

MR. WECKWERTH: Brian Weckwerth for Safety, Bering Air.

DR. WOODS: I'm Sabrina Woods, human performance investigator at the NTSB.

DR. WILSON: Katherine Wilson, human performance investigator for the NTSB.

MS. BLUM: So, again, we'll each go around the room twice with a chance to ask questions. Please answer to the best of your recollection and if you don't recall or you don't know that's a perfectly fine answer. If you need a break at any time please just say so. And I see you have someone here representing you. Who is your representative today?

MS. HOBBS: Robert, can you, can he --

DR. WOODS: Bob, can you please say and spell your name for the recording?

MR. RICHMOND: Yes, Robert L. Richmond, R-I-C-H-M-O-N-D.

DR. WOODS: Okay. Thanks, Bob. Please refrain from answering any questions on Sophia's behalf. If you want to confer, take a short break to talk, that's fine. We'll stop the recording and you guys can step out and discuss. Does anyone have any questions? Okay.

INTERVIEW OF SOPHIA HOBBS

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Okay. Sophia, in light of somethings that we're finding out in the course of this investigation we've come to find out, and we're trying to find out how things were before the accident and we're also trying to find out how things are different after the accident. And so, one of the things we wanted to ask some questions on is about weight and balance. And before the accident what was your understanding what the maximum gross weight of the Caravan was?

A. Max gross weight for takeoff would be 9,062, and 9,062 pounds. That was just kind of the general operating weight. Obviously if icing conditions exist we need to do 8,807 pounds.

Q. Was 8,807 in your, was that prior to the accident that you had used that

number?

A. Not a, not a ton. I use it probably more now as things have changed a little bit with the introduction of using the forecasting icing charts to predict FIKI as opposed to flight into known icing. It's a predictor. It doesn't accurately tell you if there is going to be icing or not. It's simply a predictive measure. We guess that there might be ice but you don't actually know if it is, but at this point we're acting on it as if it is flight into known icing.

Q. And that's based off the forecast or the charts?

A. Yes.

Q. So, you will take off at the lower weight?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. Then let's say the first flight goes out and determines it's severe clear, what happens after that?

A. If it's severe clear, we also make an allowance for PIREPs being used as long as it's within your route of flight, within an hour you can use that or if the icing chart changes, obviously. And that's definitely been happening.

We go out, it's beautiful, there's no ice. Like we'll bombard center and flight service with, hey, there's nothing out here reports and it may or may not change the icing predictive chart so another issue that we've been having now too is it takes if it takes 50 minutes for the PIREP to show up you're already at the end of your hour limit.

And so, you're still kind of bound by the 8,807 even if you came back and it was you who gave the report and you know what it's like out there, you're still kind of a little bit strapped with that because you're now out of your time limit to be able to use a higher weight because you know what it was but it wasn't reported quickly enough to

useful.

Q. So, we learned a little bit about that earlier talking to Brian. You're saying, the amount of time. We were told the amount of time it takes for your PIREP you transmit it to when it's actually being shown by ATC.

A. Yes.

Q. And can you talk me through the hour part again? I'm --

A. So, the, for the PIREP to be viable to use as, hey there's no ice out here, you can use a higher weight. It has to be within an hour of your departure time for that area, or like route of flight. So, obviously you want current information.

PIREPs are only currently for, you know, when they're given. Everybody knows that but within an hour of flight it should still be relatively similar to what the conditions were at the time of the PIREP. But after an hour it's not.

Q. You have to go back?

A. You have to go back.

Q. Okay. Are you aware of what your passenger, well, what your load is going to be ahead of time when you're flying? Not just one of the bases, Kotzebue, or Unalakleet. Let's say you're going to a village, are you aware of what your load is going to be before you land?

A. Before I land in the village?

Q. No. I would take into account fuel burn and stuff to gas burn from a given departure location until I arrive at the destination. So, there's too many variables to be able to calculate that before I even leave base.

Q. Okay. So, then let's say you're going to Unalakleet or Kotzebue when do you become aware of what your load is going to be?

A. Can --

Q. I mean is it when they give you the manifest or --

A. So, loads, so I give a load. I give what my load available is to Cargo, to Dispatch and that load will include all of the passengers and their weights and their bag weights and if any other freight or mail is also added to the flight, that is what that is.

It has to fall within a load that I give which is based off of whatever my takeoff weight is going to be, whether it's going to 9,062 or 8,807. So, I think, I think that I was confused.

Q. Yes, I'm trying --

A. The fluctuation would be like intermediate stops. The load that I give in Nome or Kotzebue or Unalakleet it based off of the fuel that I am intending to take, TKS I'm intending to take all of, all of those things, what equipment I'm going to have, how many seats I'm going to have, all of that plays into it.

But it is a load that I give to Cargo and to Dispatch that they can't go over. Like if they go over the weight that I've given, we'd be out of, out of that max gross take off weight.

Q. So, would you, when do you say, when do you give them what your load is going to be? Is that before you take off --

A. So, --

Q. -- here or when you get there?

A. Yes. So, if I'm doing a flight out of Nome, say I'm going to Shishmaref, I give Cargo and Dispatch that load available after I have checked the weather, after I check my TKS, know what plane I'm in because all the plane weights are different obviously and then total that up and figure out what the load that I'm going to be working with for that flight is going to be. Then I'll let them know what it is. And then

they can have play within that weight range and not above.

Q. So, typically, when you land is that, are all the bags already set out and weighed and ready to go? Is the load built when you land so it can be like a quick turn? Does that make sense? They've got all the passengers --

A. So, like say I'm coming back from a previous flight, is that what you're asking?

Q. Yes, like say you get to Unalakleet, let's say you go from Nome to Unalakleet and you say, okay, I plan on -- well what is your typical load would you say that you carry?

A. To Unalakleet?

Q. Yes.

A. I don't know. It depends again on the weather and what all I'm operating with. And if Unalakleet is my final destination or if I'm doing a round robin and going back to Nome, all of those things are variables.

Q. Okay. So, if you were going to go to Unalakleet and then back and you tell, you look at the weather and you give Dispatch and Cargo the weight that you hope to bring back. When you land in Unalakleet is that already weighed and put together, getting ready to load to the airplane?

A. I see what you're saying. I don't give a load for coming back from Unalakleet.

Q. Okay.

A. No.

Q. Then I'm confused.

A. I would give a load for coming back from Unalakleet when I arrive in Unalakleet.

Q. Okay.

A. I don't give it prior to leaving base.

Q. Okay.

A. I would give it upon arriving in Unalakleet.

Q. Okay.

A. Yes.

DR. WOODS: I want to ask you to show me how you guys do a weight and balance. I haven't seen the EFB (ph.) yet, your iPad. So, is mopping (ph.), that like if I give you this and there's a mini-iPad over there, could you type these in, these numbers in for me and show me what it, what it says?

MR. SORENSON: You can call yourself me.

MS. HOBBS: Okay. I think I might have messed up the numbers I was putting in.

DR. WOODS: Yes, sorry. Not to put you on the spot. Take your time.

MS. HOBBS: No, they're all in. So, I haven't even entered a cargo weight but just after adding bags we're already overweight.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. And how is that shown on your program that you're overweight.

A. So, it pops up in red here if it goes over. I just left it 9,062.

Q. Okay.

A. So, the take off weight now with just passengers and bags and airplane weight, my weight because I added that and aircraft equipment to the airplane empty weight. Between aircraft empty weight, TKS, fuel, passengers, we can't take all of the bags.

Q. Okay. So, my next question is like if you are red and you're overweight,

what's your, what's your next step? Like --

A. Well, first of all I wouldn't take that much going to Unalakleet. 1,800 is 900 pounds a side, that's a lot for a Nome to Unalakleet flight even on a yucky day.

Q. This is actually a flight from Nome to St. Michaels and then going to Unalakleet.

A. Okay. Yes, I mean standard is, or has been, you have to get fuel in Unalakleet and fuel in Unalakleet can kind of be a pain sometimes between Raven and Ryan Air down there it can get like difficult to find space in the fuel get but anyway. So, sometimes it has been done.

People will tinker, take a little bit of extra fuel so that maybe you can sneak another flight in before you have to get fuel in, you know, before your next flight. Yes.

Q. So, once you are overweight where do you, where do you go from there? Explain to us what your procedure is to get into under max gross?

A. At that point you start bumping bags.

Q. Do you have --

A. Dumping bags is the easiest way.

Q. Do you have to have company approval to offload weight?

A. No.

Q. So, you can just --

A. I mean it's obviously something that we would discuss with Counter and Dispatch so that they know because obviously people are rather irate when you bump their bags. So, they need the heads up to be able to deal with it when you get there and people are like where are my bags at?

Well one, I did tell you before we left that we're going to be bumping bags, but two, you can call my, call Dispatch. They'll tell you what I told you which is it

will be out when we can send it out.

Q. Okay. Well, as you know we've found the accident flight was about 1,000 pounds over gross, same with the flight before. Have you heard of this being a common practice? And have you ever heard or have you been aware of anybody speaking about reducing the fuel load in that program to make it under gross weight?

A. No.

Q. Okay. How do you know that what is being put on your plane weighs what it says? They tell you its weight?

A. That is a great question. I trust what the sticker on the bag says and what it says in the computer because obviously I do not have the capacity to accept all of the cargo in the back office, to accept all of the passengers in the front, and their bags and their weight. That is not my job.

Q. Okay. So, --

A. It is clearly a group effort to, for them to accurately put down what they're intaking and then to accurately put into the computer when they build the flight what is going on that plane.

Q. Okay. I think we talked about this before your last conversation, but prior to the accident did you ever get TKS fluid or need it in Unalakleet?

A. I never needed it out of Unalakleet, so I never, I've never put TKS on in Unalakleet.

Q. Okay. How do you know -- we've talked about the Garmin 1000 and that it's not the best for monitoring the TKS level. Is that correct?

A. (No verbal response.)

Q. How do you monitor the amount you're using in flight if you don't necessarily trust that gauge? Do you start a timer? I mean can you walk us through

how you keep track of that?

A. I haven't ever started a timer but I do take note of the time that I will start using it and when it becomes unnecessary to use it any more. And I keep a general tabulation of how long it's been running and at what power it's been running at if I've been using a normal amount or if I've been using max flow. Yes.

Q. Okay. Since the accident what changes have affected the pilot group? What changes have been disseminated to you?

A. Our SMS program, we're following safety that's been finished and Jeff (ph.) taken emails and dissemination of information from that. We also have a new flight release program and yes. We're now bound by the forecasted icing, the little pictorial so that's fun. Yes.

Q. What about in the SOP, like in certain regards to, I saw something about speed. What are all the SOPs at or a change that you can recall?

A. I know one of them was the recommending icing speed was changed from just a flat 120, which is what is recommended by Cessna to a range of 120 to 140 for icing speed. So, if you do encountering icing to maybe not slow it down as much as you could and keep a little bit quicker. Better to hold and get slow.

Q. And with this flight release tool that has just been launched how do you, what do you see the benefits of that being? How is that helping?

A. I don't know. I appreciate it as a tool. It's nice to be able to see all of the like, say I'm switching from one plane to another. It's nice to be able to see what the airplane empty weight is listed in that as opposed to having to go dig through the airplane or go grab the TIN for that number.

It's just already listed there and I can do my calculations quick without having to do a whole of running around before I can acquire that number and it's got a

pretty cool function you can load like TKS and all your fuel weights and everything in there and it'll spit out a calculated load available for you.

And that's just what you give to Cargo and to the front counter and be like, hey, this is my load and all of the numbers are already listed in there for you. Yes. It's been an adjustment trying to move from just, I'm done with everything, ready to go, walking out to be like, okay, wait, did I check the box, did I sign the thing, whatever. So, that's been an adjustment but --

Q. Is that what you mean by the new flight release?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you explain exactly what that, like what are the process for a flight to be released with this new tool?

A. So, for a flight to be released if the weather is good our dispatcher can sign off that flight as well as the pilot. It has to be signed off by both parties.

But if the weather isn't good, if FIKI is in the forecast, whatever, it has to be signed off by whoever is in charge on that day. OC as to signoff that flight. So, sometimes that causes a little bit more chaos and running around and attempting to find, you know, OC and make sure all the boxes are checked and T's crossed and I's dotted but yes.

DR. WOODS: Okay. Thanks. That's all my questions this round. Sabrina?

BY DR. WOODS:

Q. This will be it -- Starr had asked what were changes that have been made since the accident, how do you feel about the changes that have been made since the accident in your professional opinion?

A. I believe they are good. They are an end to -- they are a means to an end. I will say the rate of change while understandable has been rather fast paced.

Q. Are you, by you I mean for this question just like the pilot crew, are you guys being made aware of what's going into the decision making process and why each change, for what reason each change has been made?

A. I cannot speak for the pilot population in general, only myself. But it's a job. I don't make decisions. I'm not part of decision making. It is really on me to do my job, do it well and follow the instruction given to me.

Q. I'm not necessarily asking if you're part of the decision making. I'm asking if you were being told why the decision was made?

A. I don't really see how that would affect me. In the end I just simply have to deal with the decision that has been made. Why may or may not really have any play in the matter?

Q. Has feedback ever been solicited from you as to like I'm asking you now? What do you think? How's this been working for you? Because you are the end user therefore you are part of the process.

A. Sure.

Q. So, has feedback been solicited from you?

A. For somethings, yes. The flight release tool as changes have been made. Like somethings just simply don't work well. Like there was a change that was made a while back and it just added a great deal of bulk to what was going on and we call kind of got together and we're like, hey, can we maybe roll this back?

There's simply too much information that is not pertinent to what we are doing and it's really just, it clutters, it's cluttering the screen essentially. It is not important for the end goal and what we're trying to get done, which is go do our flight, go do it safely. And so, yes, they pulled it back.

We've, like I don't know if Andy's (ph.) a wizard with the computer and he

went in and fixed it and where it is now it clearly has had a lot of, a lot of input. It wasn't just one person doing one thing because that's not how you make something that is user friendly. And that is the end goal is to make all of these changes user friendly, like they're not trying to make our lives harder.

Q. Do you have any opinions on what could be done better from your perspective as a user?

A. With regard to anything in particular?

Q. Let's keep it to the changes that have been made since the accident. What could be done better in your opinion? Or what needed not to have been done at all?

A. I don't know that I believe that anything has been done in error. Clearly it was all with good intent. Again, it has been a learning curve to figure out how to use new stuff, what that means for me in my flight, figure it out, and adjust to what the new standard is. But I feel like that's just kind of a part of, a part of life in general. Stuff changes.

Q. So now going back prior to the accident. What were your general impressions of the company's level of safety or approach to safety?

A. Very high. We have a very excellent safety standard and safety record. Yes. It's been a pleasure to work at this company. I have lots of friends who work for other companies whose stories I've heard and I am very grateful that I did not have to work my way through the dregs of Alaska aviation to kick start my career. I got to do it here.

Q. If you were to have a concern, let's keep it to prior to the accident, how would you go about getting that addressed?

A. I would go upstairs and talk to whoever was DO or OS at the time or

Russell. Like I don't have any issue approaching Russell if there's something wrong or something that I what could be wrong. There's at no point have I felt like if I had a genuine concern that it would be ignored or glossed over.

Q. Do you talk amongst the other pilots about issues that you might be having or concerns that you might have? Is there like a water cooler session that you guys partake in?

A. Well, everyone has rough days occasionally so yes, we get together and where occasionally, you know, somebody needs to rant about, you know, what Cargo person upset them on a given day and then you're done. That's the end.

Q. You said you had no problem, you would have no problem bringing a concern forward, have you done that in the past?

A. I haven't had any concerns to bring forward, so no.

Q. Going back to those water cooler sessions, have there been any concerns that you've been made aware of from your counterpart, your fellow pilots?

A. No.

Q. Have you ever been a witness to any sort of reprisal or actions taken against a person because they raised a concern?

A. No. No.

Q. And then post-accident, how has the EVAC system changed if at all?

A. I think it is as good as it was prior to the accident. If people have issues the company would prefer them to be voiced. They want to have a happy and well structured workplace. That is their goal. So, if someone has an issue they want to know about it. They want to fix it. They want to make it the best possible work environment for everyone.

Q. How do you know that?

A. It's been stated. It is a feeling if you will. It is common practice. It is the standard at this company.

DR. WOODS: All right. Starr, that's all the question I have for now for this round.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Tim, do you have any questions?

BY MR. SORENSON:

Q. Well, first of all thanks for your help and for being here. With respect to weight balance do you guys use a basic operating weight for each airplane or is it calculated?

A. So, operating weight is based off of what the airplane's empty weight is, then you add on to that your pilot weight and bag weight and equipment weight. So, that would include nets, straps, the tail stand, stuff like that.

Q. Okay. Is that a standard weight for all the airplanes or --

A. No, because all of the aircrafts empty weights will be different.

Q. Right. Though, I'm sorry. I apologize. Let me rephrase. What I common call like a flight kit, that's the tail stand and the scraps. Is that -- that's a standard?

A. That is a standard weight.

Q. Where there's a standard amount of equipment?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay.

A. Yes.

Q. All right. So, then that's built up. Okay. All right. You mentioned in that example that that fuel load seems high. What is a -- this might not be a fair question. So, feel free to, you know, ask me to limit it. But what are the fuel loads that you depart Nome?

A. I mean I feel like if you want a very generalized fuel load just kind of a really hard average for anything that I could possibly be doing I'd say about 1,200 pounds, 600 pounds a side.

Q. Okay. So, 1,800 that's a fair amount above what you would expect --

A. Sure.

Q. -- to be. I understand that's not total weight. If I remember correctly you had stated that you had never gotten TKS at Unalakleet. What about other out stations?

A. Other places, no. The only places that I have ever gotten TKS would be Nome and Kotzebue.

Q. Okay. It's my understanding that standard practice is to depart Nome with TKS full in the winter. Is that, is that --

A. That is accurate.

Q. That's an accurate understanding?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. In that situation have you run out of TKS midflight or mid-route?

A. No. I never have. The closest that I came was February 7th.

Q. Oh, the day of the accident. Okay. As far as holding speeds, I know the standard procedure, you know, the SOP's been updated since the accident. Before that was there any guidance to the pilot community outside of the POH as far as speeds?

A. 120 is the standard speed for icing so that was just, that's the hard bottom FAR. I personally like to try to keep it a little bit quicker than that just personally. But 120 is what is the minimum recommended by Cessna so obviously that's the minimum that would be --

Q. Right. So, that was --

A. -- recommended by the company.

Q. I'm sorry. Go ahead. I didn't --

A. I --

Q. -- mean to cut you off. Okay. So, 120 was kind of the hard limit when you're flying as far as that.

A. Yes.

Q. Before the accident and after, what was your personal practice when you're flying in ice? So, you're out, you're actually accumulating ice, the TKS presumably is on. As far as autopilot usage what was kind of the standard if you will or was there one?

A. The standard for myself I mean if I'm in hard IMC and attempting to deal with the icing and deal with center and whatever else maybe going on, the autopilot is there for a reason, to operate, to my understanding to operate part 135, single pilot in IFR you have to have an autopilot.

It's there for a reason and it's there to help alleviate some of that workload so that you're not losing things, you're not missing things overlooking important things. And so, I personally, I might kick it off occasionally if I'm concerned about the amount of icing that I'm picking up but again up until February 6th, there hadn't ever been a point where I'd picked up so much ice that I was concerned about control surfaces.

Q. Okay. Okay. Thank you. This is kind of a general questions but the changes that have come by at Bering Air after the accident generally do you think they've been positive or --

A. Yes. Yes, absolutely. Again, they're not intended to make our lives more

difficult. They're intended to help increase the safety with regard to like how we've already been operating. It's just there as an added element to help increase awareness and make sure that we're again checking all the boxes and just getting all our ducks in a row.

MR. SORENSON: Okay. That's all I have for now.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Paul?

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. I could feel or see your frustration about the icing forecast chart there.

A. Sometime.

Q. And for you as a pilot what would be the most helpful thing for knowing about flying into known icing?

A. Having PIREPs be more quickly available would be huge. Again, you're not, if you're already in the air that is something you may or may not hear on center. And so, unless it is being specifically relayed to UN centers going, hey, did you, did you copy that PIREP? You may or may not get that.

But if I'm on the ground preparing for a flight I like to have PIREPs. I like to know what somebody else has seen within, you know, a recent time to kind of gauge what I can expect to see in flight.

Q. So, speaking of the experience you've been describing here to some of the folks, is that mainly with center or is that with flight service, is that both?

A. Both.

Q. Both.

A. And honestly I don't know, I don't know which one is better to give it to. That's something that we've been trying determine who's better to give PIREPs to? How's it going to get out quickly? So, it can actually be helpful to the other people who

want to use that information.

And also, to like how they're appearing I suppose, because you really see them like two places, one sometimes they'll pop up on the weather camera site, they'll popup on there or they'll pop up on the Alaska Aviation Weather Unit.

But sometimes they'll pop up on one but not the other. They won't, they won't cross over and so that's kind of frustrating too.

Q. Yes, I can understand that. So, flying around, and I know this is all in the FAA verbiage of things like that about flying in known icing. But what is visible moisture to you as a pilot and what would that kind of fall under?

A. You know, they say clouds but yes, clouds I think is probably what they're getting after so visible moisture. Whether or not it's going to do anything or cause any accumulation who knows. Like and you don't really know until you're in it.

Q. Yes. So, I know people have been asking pre-accident and post-accident, has there been anything differently you've done as a pilot weather-wise post accident or --

A. Well, I mean yes, like I said I'm kind of bound by the FIKI forecast, you know, again, whether or not there's anything in it. So, if that's, it's been tough because like obviously like this is, this is my job, you know. I want to be a productive employee and so when I'm bound to use a lower number even though there's no icing, it's beautiful, it's severe clear but that forecast says, uh-oh, you know, 2,000 to 14,000 we're going to predict occasional, moderate, light or whatever, I'm bound to a lower number even though I'm never going to even touch a cloud, like but because it says I'm bound to something else, so that can be kind of frustrating. Yes.

Q. So, it sounds like, I mean it sounds like from your perspective as a pilot clearly the PIREPs are helpful --

A. Yes.

Q. -- tools for icing?

A. Absolutely.

Q. So, would it be fair to say that outside of having PIREPs or other planes up there it would be very difficult to determine flight into known icing from the ground?

A. Absolutely.

MR. SUFFERN: Okay. I think that's all the questions I've got. Thanks Sophia.

MS. BLUM: Rob?

BY MR. PECK:

Q. Hello again. I'm going to go back to weight and balance, that were asked of you initially, type stuff. Is there anything you do when you first show up here in the morning and you go I'm going from here to A, and then I'm going to B, and then I'm going to C, and then I'm coming back here today. Right?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q. So, and you'll have, I'm guessing you'll have all those manifests that are predicted at B and C down the road, right? Is that true?

A. Can you explain to me a little bit more what you mean as far as predictive manifests.

Q. Yes. The manifest is as the front desk here knows, that the schedulers know.

A. Oh, I see. So, yes, so the predictive manifests from our front counter as to who we're going to be picking up in later stops. Yes, yes. And generalized weights, guest weights for them, yes.

There's not really a whole lot of weight listed I guess you could say in the

manifests that I receive from Counter for later stops because once I arrive in a village that's where I pick up the actual manifest for who all is getting onto my flight, which maybe the same as what I got from the front counter or may not.

Somebody might have cancelled. Somebody might have cancelled at a later stop so they added another person to this stop. So, it will have all of that information as well as the weights of the passengers who are getting on and the weights of the bags and anything else that they might want to put on the be it freight or mail.

Q. Is that a take (ph.) flight type of document that you would be getting at those --

A. No. Those are hand written ISMs from our village agents.

Q. Okay. Okay. So, you don't ever, when you're here in the morning and you're doing a flight like I said, A, B, C, back type of thing, you're never trying to before you get to B, right, you're in flight, you're never looking at, or before you even leave here, I've got a problem on the ground, you know, here because of they're putting nine and they're all big people on the airplane.

A. Sure. It is definitely something that you would, it's something that I look at personally. Again, I'm not, going into I'm not going to know the weights of those passengers until I get there.

But I will look at passenger loads, how many people are getting on and off not only for like seat configuration if I can take more out of Nome. Like say I need to, I get here in the morning, all nine seats are up but we have freight for my first stop.

I'm going to need to knock two seats down so that I can load the freight onto the deck, strap it down and then off load it again when I get to my first stop. I'll look at that just to kind of be aware and go, okay, so I can take down those two seats so

now I only have seven seats up.

But when I get to my first stop I'm picking up two and I've dropped off zero people at this point I'm going to need those other two seats to be put back up. So, as far as just general trip planning I do look at that. I am very curious about that to kind of know how, know how the flow of passengers is going to go for a given flight.

Q. So, if you had a situation where you did that and you looked at it and you go, this ain't going to work, how are you going to deal with that?

A. I'd go talk to Dispatch. I'd be like, hey, these numbers aren't working out. This isn't, this isn't a viable option. Sometimes things can be fixed really quickly by just going okay, well if we swap these two stops, then we're good. Everybody fits on, everybody's happy, it all works out. Other times it just, it doesn't work out that way and, you, you know, you can't take all of the people that you wanted to or you can't take freight. But I'll deal.

Q. Do you have a personal technique, process of loading passengers on? And what I mean by that is by weight, by looking at them and going, do I need to put this person where in the airplane? Do you have any kind of --

A. Yes, absolutely. Knowing what weight goes where is an inherent part of weight and balance. And so, knowing that gets loaded into my pods and where and how that affects my weight and balance and then how that in turn affects where my passengers sit is absolutely something that I take into account.

Q. And so, do you do that all once you get to B and C, or I mean in general or are you trying to come up with that plan prior to that?

A. If I can plan prior to that I will. But typically, when I'm leaving here on a flight I'm concerned about that leg of the flight. Whoever I'm picking up, whatever I'm picking up at the next stop I'll deal with that when I get to it. And there's definitely

been many times where I'll get somewhere and somebody's like oh hey, I have five totes that I'm trying to take with me. I'm like --

Q. No.

A. -- no, you're not. We don't have room for that. I mean we could leave you and take your totes but they usually don't go for that option. So, yes.

Q. Okay. What is the standard weight that you guys are now using for that extra equipment if you will, the tail stand, straps, and the skins?

A. Sixty pounds.

Q. Sixty? In your experience, I think you said you're about 1,000 hours or something last time, is that -- ish?

A. About 2,000 in cargo.

Q. Oh, 2,000, I'm sorry. How would you assess the G-1000's TKS level, you know, it's number and with that and what's really in the tank in general?

A. In generally I just, I don't trust the gauge in the airplane at all. They all function very differently plane to plane. There's a couple of planes that I've flown more than others maybe and so looking at it I can go, oh, I've flown this plane enough to have a general idea of like if it says 17.8, 17.8 on the gauge in the cockpit, it means 20.8 down on the sight gauge.

And then you can kind of base all of your TKS burn off of that number. Again, very loosely. I don't, I don't trust those gauges. Yes.=

Q. From a technical aspect are you aware of the reason or the justification as to the fact that they're requiring you to use 8,807, that lower weight when you have that forecast icing out there?

A. Yes. I understand why.

Q. And what is that?

A. So, basically, our aircrafts have the payload extender STC. That however does not apply to flight into known icing. And so, we're down by that lower number if there's forecasted flight into known icing.

Q. With the icing charts you, I sense the frustration, how often do you think they're wrong?

A. Oh, I'd say 50 percent of the time, conservatively. I would say that number is probably closer to 75 percent. It is, I understand why we use it. I's a predictor. We like predictors in this line of work. Like, we like to have an idea or a sense of what we might be going into. However, that specific tool is incredibly inaccurate and it feels essentially worthless. I'll check it but it doesn't mean anything to me really.

Q. If you were, had the ability to be Russell for a day, right, what would you do differently here?

A. I don't have a great answer for you for that honestly. I don't, I don't know what Russell does. I don't know what his day looks like. I only know what my day looks like.

Q. Okay. Well, let me rephrase. If you were in his shoes and you could change anything in Bering Air from a pilot perspective what would you have him change, or what would you change for the pilots? Anything?

A. I think I would try to work with our POI and add a revision that states that because PIREPs take so long to show up online, that a PIREP given to company over company radio could be used in lieu of a, in lieu of one give to flight service or to center.

MR. PECK: That's all I've got.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Brian?

MR. WECKWERTH: No. I've got no clarifying questions or anything.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Kat?

DR. WILSON: We've been going about hour. I need to take a break.

MS. HOBBS: I might take a quick break too.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Yes. No problem. Let's stop the recording, pause it at 3:46.

(Off the record.)

(On the record.)

MS. BLUM: Recording is back on at 3:52. Okay. Kat, you were going to pick up.

DR. WILSON: Thanks, Sophia.

BY DR. WILSON:

Q. I have some questions based on some things we've talked about today but also going through your previous interview, that just questions that popped up. I know that we've asked you a couple of times about the new icing forecast but I guess, help me understand, how as a pilot does that affect you?

Like where is the frustration coming from? Are you saying you can't take as much load? But like help me understand really like what that means. Are you still able to fly? Like I guess I'm --

A. Yes.

Q. I mean just where does that -- how does that impact you?

A. Yes. So, we're still able to fly, but, yes, it has an impact on the loads that we are able to take, whether or not that icing forecast is accurate. I guess that's where the frustration stems from because like I said earlier, it is typically very inaccurate.

And so, I don't know how to put this in terms as a woman I suppose you

could say. I would say if I was a dude, I would say it would feel emasculating to have to take a load lower than what I know that I can take given the conditions. But I don't know how you would say that in lady speak.

Q. Yes. Okay. Which I can appreciate that. But I guess I mean does that translate into something like lower pay? Like or is it just --

A. No.

Q. -- that you want to take more, you want to be able to serve the community, and you want to be able to --

A. Yes. No.

Q. -- bring this stuff, you know, to the next town --

A. It really --

Q. -- the next village?

A. It really has no impact on me as a person. Like I'm not getting docked for taking less. Like no one is yelling at me for taking low loads. I just like to feel like I'm being productive, really.

And I mean obviously there are very good times and very good reasons to take less. A prime example of that would be when you're flying HRs, human remains, and we're taking someone home to their final resting place, you can't take as many seats, you can't take as much weight, you're not, you're obviously not going to be stacking someone's eggs on top of their grandma. You're not doing that.

And so, there's things like that that obviously will change your load. But if you don't have one of those extenuating circumstances beyond the icing forecast says that there could be ice but there isn't, that's where the frustration comes in.

Q. Okay. Thanks. That's helpful. I think it was, it was at the beginning of this interview Starr was asking you some questions but I just wanted to clarify that you, so

you calculate weight and balance before each leg?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. And then I was a little bit confused from your previous interview, you, there was a conversation about the weight and balance and it gets saved on the iPad. Does that get sent to anybody or it just stays on your local iPad?

A. So, at the end of every flight when you get back you print a copy. You print a copy for company records, you print one accounting, and then you print one for yourself as well and that goes on your flight and duty clipboard for the month.

And then at the end of every month you finish filling out your flight and duty page and walk all your paperwork upstairs and then somebody else deals with it. I see half of it come back to my locker in a year but beyond that I don't.

Q. Okay. Also, going through your previous interview you mentioned that it was marginal VFR in Nome on the day of the accident?

A. That's correct.

Q. And you mentioned a lot that you talked with the dispatcher about weather. Are you also talking to operational control, whoever's on duty for that or are you just mostly dealing with Dispatch?

A. Depending on the severity of the weather, yes. I will, I will go talk to OC if I feel the need to. Generally speaking, between Dispatch and myself we can come up with a plan of action so to speak and get in and get it done without having to bother whoever OC.

There are definitely situations where you're like, this is kind above my pay grade and yours so we're going to go ask someone else what we should do about this and then we do that.

Q. Okay. Has there ever been a time where you and Dispatch and OC

potentially disagreed on whether you should depart on a flight or not or you didn't feel comfortable and they felt like the weather was good enough --

A. No.

Q. -- for you to go?

A. I have never ever been pressured into a flight. If I have reservations about it, that is always taken into account, and I am not going to go do something that I'm not confident that I can come back from. There is a self-preservation instinct.

Q. Prior to the accident did you know, Brian?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Is -- I'm putting you a little bit on the spot now because Brian's in the room but is, and I think you said you've never reported any safety concerns. But do you feel that between Brian and the previous director of safety, did you feel comfortable, would you feel comfortable going to them to report a concern that you might have?

A. And to clarify who was the previous director of safety?

DR. WILSON: I don't know her name, but it was a female.

MR. WECKWERTH: Deb Farmer (ph.).

MS. HOBBS: Oh, I was, I never worked with Deb.

DR. WILSON: Oh, okay.

MS. HOBBS: Brian has been my only experience with a director of safety. So, yes. No, I have no issue telling Brian if I think something's weird.

Q. Okay.

A. Or who looks funny, for the record.

MR. WECKWERTH: It's a personal thing.

MS. HOBBS: We've got it right there on the recording though.

BY DR. WILSON:

Q. When you're calculating the fuel needed how much fuel do you calculate for a possible diversion?

A. So, if, I don't typically calculate for a diversion if the weather is severe clear. And I'm not anticipating anything to be wonky. If I am required to have an alternate I will take all, everything that I need for my route of flight, what it would take to get to my alternate and then I believe it says they want another 30 or 40 minutes after that.

I might take more if I'm, you know, feeling confident that I might actually have to go somewhere else. I don't, I don't trust the weather around here. I've flown in it enough to know that it could look like this and then the ice fog decides that it wants to come in because the ice just broke up and it goes to a quarter mile.

And then, you know, I would, having more mail onboard is not going to help me if I run out of fuel. I would rather have a little bit more fuel and a little less mail if I'm at all concerned about being able to make it to where I had to go, to make it to an actual runway ideally.

Q. TKS fluid, I think you said you've only gotten it at two locations. Have you ever asked for it and it's not been available?

A. No. It has always been readily available.

Q. Okay. You talked in the previous interview about the training for, the annual training that you get for weather and it reinforces maintaining the airspeed of 120 knots.

A. Yes.

Q. Is there anything else that the training says that you should do or not do when you're in icing conditions?

A. That's a great question. You're going to test my memory from a couple months ago. There's icing climb out speeds as well, so like if you're climbing into icing, which I'm straight up drawing a blank on apparently.

I believe it talks a little bit about how it wants you to use TKS which all well and good. Everybody has a slightly different technique for how they're going to use their TKS. Yes.

Q. And if you don't know that's fine. I don't know the answer to it, but is there anything about like maneuvering, like do you now bank at such a great angle or is there anything about that urge to adjust airspeed in terms of the non-controllability of the aircraft?

A. Not that I recall. Not that I recall about any changes in maneuvering because again it's the icing course is teaching you how to I suppose deal with the icing in a way that shouldn't have to make you change how you're maneuvering.

Q. And I think I recall you went to Flight Safety for your training. Did that include any scenarios with severe, moderate to severe icing?

A. Yes. We didn't really go over it on the ground but in my SIM sessions there were a couple of heavy icing SIM sessions and those were really great. I really appreciated those.

Q. If you recall like what type of scenarios do they put you in and what was the expectation?

A. I believe one of them was they had set me on a departure out of Willow, Alaska maybe climbing into severe icing and then gave me like an engine failure and I'm like, you're IMC, you're packing on ice, you've lost your engine, like what's, what are you going to do with it? And just kind of different scenarios like that.

Q. In times when you've gotten into icing conditions in the Caravan has it

ever been difficult to maintain 120 knots or higher?

A. Again, not up until February 6th.

Q. So, to clarify were you having a hard time maintaining airspeed?

A. Maintaining airspeed, yes. I was never, I never dropped down to 120, but I was in a holding pattern for I believe three turns. If I can look at the transcripts from my last interview as my memory was a little bit more fresh then.

But during that hold as I was picking up ice and unable to shed it with TKS as I recall my airspeed dropped down to about 130, 135 and I continued adding power in an attempt to maintain it until I was able to break out and come on in to Nome.

Q. Okay. Did you notice, and I believe you said no. But I think there was no challenges in handling of the aircraft now, correct?

A. (No verbal response.)

Q. All right. How often do you use the TKS system in winter operations?

A. I don't know. It's incredibly dependent on the kind of kind of winter that you have. I feel like early winter this year was really nice. We had a lot of nice days. We didn't have a lot of overcast or ice or anything but around mid to end of January it definitely took a turn and was not as friendly and so I definitely used more ice as we moved towards spring and late winter than I did early mid-winter.

Q. So, I haven't seen the switch for how you turn the system on. But is it a switch where it's on and off or like when you turn off the aircraft does it reset off? How does it turn off I guess is my question?

A. So, it's a three position switch so there's off, normal, and then max flow. And basically, it's off of normal setting and then a really, really high setting where it pumps a really huge quantity or normal high, and then a secondary switch actually, sorry. So, two switches off, normal, high.

To use max flow, max flow runs for two minutes and then it shuts off. And that is a rocker switch. You just bump it and it will run for two minutes but you have to have your switch in normal or high for it to run max flow.

Q. When do you turn that switch off?

A. I would turn that switch off if I'm no longer IMC if I have cleared all of my ice. I'm not picking anything up any more. It's, I call base solution. It's pretty sticky. I don't, I don't really know how to describe it. But if you have a good flow and you've cleared all of the ice, I feel pretty confident turning it to off and waiting to see if I need to turn it back on again because obviously I believe the recommendation is once you turn it on you don't turn it back off.

But if I blow through all my TKS and then later on I need it, I'd rather have it and so if I'm confident that I've cleared all of the ice I'll turn it back off. I will conserve for who know what make happen down the road.

Q. Have you ever gotten into an airplane and it's been left on when you've done like a start up?

A. No.

Q. Okay. And I believe in your previous interview you flew a couple of different aircraft in addition to the Caravan? Or do you --

A. I was a SIC in the Casa. Yes.

Q. Okay.

A. Prior to my time in the caravan.

Q. Okay. And do you fly the 1900?

A. I was not in 1900.

Q. Okay. Do you think it's -- do you think all pilots know the minimum airspeed for flying in icing conditions?

A. Again, I can't speak for the all pilots but I would heavily assume so. We all take the same training. So, I figure on that one if I hear it, they hear it.

Q. Do you get paid a base salary and then per flight that you take?

A. It's a daily rate and then if you fly more than five hours in a given day you receive overtime on those hours following black hours.

Q. Is your schedule the same? So, I believe Chad would come for two weeks, anywhere from 8 days to 14 days? Is that the way it is for all pilots? Do you have that on/off?

A. No. No. For the Nome base at least, there are a few people who are on a rotational schedule. My husband, my husband and myself are on more of a like month by month figuring out what we need for a given month so.

As an example, we worked basically straight through all of November because we knew that in December we were planning to go to Switzerland for two weeks. And so, in that time off we knew we weren't going to be paid because we weren't planning to take vacation days or anything so let's work through in anticipation of time off later.

So, yes, it's kind of pilot by pilot dependent on what their schedule is. I know a couple of people have like set in fee schedules but for the most part it's figuring out what works for you for the next month and then rolling with it.

DR. WILSON: Okay. Thank you, Sophia. I think that's all the questions I have for now.

MS. HOBBS: Okay.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Good. We just want to clarify because we're looking into this air acoustics, the FAA, Textron, about the maximum gross weight and what the definition

flight into known icing. Prior to the accident when you were flying in icing conditions did you reduce your max gross weight? Was that what you were taught to do?

A. (No verbal response.)

Q. Okay. So, it's post-accident?

A. (No verbal response.)

MS. BLUM: Okay. Thank you for that. Sabrina, do you have any questions?

DR. WOODS: I just have one.

BY DR. WOODS:

Q Well, I'm going to say one question but I guess it depends on how you answer it. Would you please walk me through your personal like I.M.S.A.F.E., go/no go process? Like you have a day, you have your flights, Sophia's showing up for work, now what?

A. So, I mean obviously if we're following the I.M.S.A.F.E. checklist before I ever even come into work, if I'm throwing up all night I'm not going to come into work. That doesn't sound fun to me.

And then obviously medication, stress, alcohol, have I been drinking? I have not. Fatigue, if I, you know, didn't sleep great the night before like probably not a wise idea and then emotions, whatever, that doesn't typically play a whole lot of a role in my day to day life. It certainly did after the accident. I didn't work. I didn't work for a couple of weeks.

But as far as that checklist, it's an ongoing flow, you know. Something you're constantly reevaluating and figuring out because you might start the day ready to go and then half way through the day you find that you are barfing and you should probably go home. It's a fluid thing.

As far as the safety of the flight that is, that is really dependent on weather and wind and all of the, all of the outside factors beyond myself, double checking to making sure that my aircraft is good and ready to go, making sure that there's not any outstanding MELs that need to be addressed before I go fly.

Q. For the first half of the more personal stuff and not necessarily safety flight stuff, have you ever, I guess how is that met? Have you ever received any sort of criticism or push back for saying, hey, I've got to knock it off because I wasn't feeling good all night long or I'm fatigued or whatever?

A. No.

Q. No?

A. Never had any push back for not showing up for a legitimate reason.

DR. WOODS: That's it for me. Thank you very much.

MS. BLUM: Okay.

MR. SORENSON: Just one question.

MS. BLUM: Yes. It's good.

BY MR. SORENSON:

Q. Going back to the TKS system, you said, you know, maybe your icing, you're using some TKS, obviously when you get out of the ice you turn it off, obviously you want to conserve it. Then if you have another icing encounter after that 15, 20 minutes later, whatever it is, you turn that system back on, is there any appreciable lag from when you turn that on after the system's been running for some point and then turn it off, turn it back on until you get a positive flow across the, it's --

A. It's pretty instantaneous.

Q. -- pretty instantaneous. Okay.

A. Yes. Especially if you had been running it before.

Q. Right.

A. Honestly, I'm of the camp that likes to test the system on the ground and make sure that it is flowing properly. It's something we call letting out our wings and making sure that those, the poorest panels have had the fluid pushed through them so that if you do encounter icing it doesn't impact the holes and make it more difficult for the TKS to flow. And so, if I had been using it, turned it off and then needed to turn it back on again, it's probably going to flow even more quickly than if, than it would have on the first time.

Q. Okay. So, don't let me put words in your mouth. If, but my perception of what you're saying is that, you know, the system doesn't then drain back into the TKS tanks. You have to reprime it?

A. No.

Q. You're --

A. If anything, it is more likely to weep from the wings, from the panel itself. It's not going to drain back down to a tank.

Q. Okay.

A. It's going to probably keep leaking from the leaking edge.

Q. Even if the pump is off?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay.

A. Yes.

MR. SORENSON: Okay. Okay. Thank you. That's all the questions I have.

MS. BLUM: Okay.

MR. SUFFERN: I don't have any more questions. Thanks Sophia.

MS. BLUM: Rob?

MR. PECK: Oh, my gosh, they're putting all the pressure on me.

BY MR. PECK:

Q. Have you seen any change with your OC engagement since their revisions that have happened post-accident obviously because the way I think it was explained that there's some red, or something and not it takes OC engagement. Have you experienced that and is that working?

A. So, would you be referring to like our flight release tool?

Q. Mm-hmm.

A. Okay. Yes. So, yes, if the weather is below any certain minimum it would move from a concurrence of myself and Dispatch to a concurrence of myself and OC for that signoff before I am released for my flight. So, there has been I supposed you could say more involvement.

Again, I don't really know how much I can speak to that because Dispatch prior to all of these changes handled all of or for the most part a great deal of the communicating with OC if there was a question.

If there was something really big I would go talk to them about it. But typically, it was a concurrence of OC and Dispatch before I ever even came into the equation. So, if Dispatch was ready to release me and I was ready to release me, OC probably already knew about it.

And so, the difference in this would be now we have to make sure that a little box gets checked because there's a little snowflake on the flight that says, flight into known icing forecasted, you need a special signoff.

Now it can take a little bit more running around to find OC and make sure that the box gets checked and all of the people have signed off and gotten everything in order for that flight to be able to walk out the door.

Q. All right. Do you think that that -- well let me rephrase. Maybe you haven't had one of these so you can't even comment on it and that's fine. But is there any talk, if you were to go a red or whatever it is, we have to bring OC into it. Right. It could be ice and it could be, you know, a poor forecast for a location or something like, or maybe it's poor weather right now with a better forecast in the future, a time when you're going to be there type of thing.

But is there any -- when you don't talk to that OC, is there a mitigations type strategy that you guys discuss to kind of mitigate that red if you will, that hazard?

A. Between myself and OC?

Q. Yes.

A. Yes. I mean we'll definitely talk through mitigation options if there are any available. Sometimes there simply aren't. But yes, I'd say that the weather is bad where you're supposed to be going but predicted to get better.

Honestly, typically a mitigation for that is we wait. We're not going to launch until we are confident that it's worth sending a flight. It's easier to just let a plane to sit on the ground burn fuel both there and back without ever arriving at your destination.

Q. So, if that answer would be to wait then it could be feasible that mitigation is always available, right?

A. Sure.

Q. So, I know there's, the FAA legal answer is not what I'm looking for here about alternates, right? What is your technique or what have you been taught here in the Norton Sound, and I don't know, I haven't flown in this country like you have, for determining what might be a suitable alternate?

A. So, I mean, yes, the legal answer always applies because we are bound by

legalities in this line of work. But I think specifically for us one of the things that we would take into account is is there a base there? Is there somewhere to be able to keep the planes potentially overnight that is secure.

And so, if Unalakleet is not an option and if Kotzebue is not an option, and I believe Bethel and Galena (ph.) are couple of the other options listed, even though we don't have basis there, they're viable diversion options.

But even if say Galena is good, if Kotzebue and Unalakleet aren't good, there's a good chance we're just not going to go because Galena doesn't have a base. The plane would just kind of be at the airport and then the question of where does the pilot go and when do you think you'd actually, reasonably be able to come back to based?

And of course there's outlying scenarios where sometimes you're, you've already taken off and everything seems to crumble around you, people get stuck in villages sometimes. Like that is just, that is just a reality. Like I think for me I try one as close to Nome as possible.

If I, you know, got caught unaware, I'd probably pick White Mountain or Teller and it's with the knowledge that I mean Teller's on the road, so if it's the summer time, they could drive a fuel truck out there if they really, really felt like it and needed to. Or White Mountain is just a little ways down the coast. I have friends there. I'd have a couch to crash on. Yes.

Q. One more. What was it? Oh, you talked about being out of work and just a question popped into my mind when I said, work, kind of continuous days. Is there any kind of company policy or SOP that has any kind of number of, the number of days, other than FAA regulations of how many days in a row you can work? Is there anything like that that do you know?

A. Not to my knowledge, no. We abide by the FAA standards of 13 days, 12 or 13 days, whatever it is per quarter. And not exceeding your flight hours for the year. But yes, that hasn't ever been an issue for anyone that I'm aware of as far as, you know, I mean occasionally.

I think my father-in-law kind of has to get forced to take vacation days as our night medevac guy he just works almost constantly but other than that, no. Like we're still people. We still have lives, you know, and as much as I love Nome, it's really nice to get out sometimes.

Q. I get it.

A. Yeah.

Q. My last question is, in any of your time here or with any of the other pilots, have you ever heard of anyone in the Caravan having throttle control type problems every, throttle quadrant problems?

A. Never in flight I suppose. In the throttle quadrant there is the tension. I don't know how to describe it. Essentially it's a little wheel that allows you to change how much tension there are on your throttle and prop lever and whatever else.

They have been know to get loose and kind of come apart. I've heard that happening twice and yes. But typically, that's caught on the ground. That's something that you mess with before to go fly so it's something that you're always checking on and readjusting to make sure that it is tight enough and but not so tight that you're having a hard time moving your throttle.

Q. So, is that talked about during your OE or IOE or that kind of stuff?

A. Yes, absolutely. Yes, yes. And it is something that we're, that we're taught, you tighten it all the way up, and then you back it off. There is a standard procedure that is taught to make sure that your not missing it and to make sure that it is

adequately tight.

MR. PECK: All right. Cool. I'm done. Thank you.

MS. BLUM: Brian?

MR. WECKWERTH: No, I don't have any questions.

MS. BLUM: Kat?

DR. WILSON: I just have one.

BY DR. WILSON:

Q. Have you been in a situation where weather's been coming in and you asked if you could depart early?

A. Yes. Yes. I have done that. Typically, not if it is quick moving or predicted to be making landfall before I'm supposed to be back. Because again I don't really feel like getting stuck in a village. That doesn't sound fun to me.

But yes, let's say the weather is supposed to start going bad at 7:00. I mean reasonably speaking it wouldn't be out of the ordinary to have it hit earlier than that. And so, I will do my best to, if I can I'll try to adjust a little bit earlier within reason.

I mean obviously it is a schedule. We have scheduled flights and I don't want to be leaving people because hey were anticipating a time and it was way to earlier. But, yes, if it's possible and everyone is aware and amenable, yes, I will attempt to adjust that flight to be able to make it out and back before weather.

Q. And you've successfully been able to do that?

A. Yes.

DR. WILSON: Okay. Thank you.

MS. BLUM: Okay. I'll ask you one more time, is there anything that you'd like to add to help us or anything we didn't ask that you wish we would have?

MS. HOBBS: No, I don't think so.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Well, we really appreciate you being here, Sophia and we'll end the interview at 4:27.

(Whereupon, at 4:27 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

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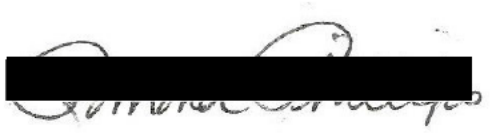
CERTIFICATE

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 Sophia Hobbs
ACCIDENT NO.:	ANC25MA018
PLACE:	Nome, Alaska
DATE:	May 5, 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.



Romona Phillips
Transcriber

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: LUKE MURKOWSKI, Caravan Pilot in Command Bering Air

Nome, Alaska

Friday,
February 14, 2025

APPEARANCES:

STARR BLUM, Aviation Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

PAUL SUFFERN, Meteorologist
National Transportation Safety Board

ROBERT PECK, Flight Standards District Office
Federal Aviation Administration

ROBERT RICHMOND, Representative
Richmond & Quinn
(On behalf of Mr. Murkowski)

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INTERVIEW

(6:06 p.m.)

MS. BLUM: Okay, today is February 14th, 2025, it's about 6:06 Alaska Standard Time. My name is Starr Blum and I'm an investigator with the NTSB and I'm in the process of investigating the accident that occurred on February 6th involving Bering Air Flight 445.

First off, I want to express our condolences to you and the Bering family, I'm really sorry that we're here, but as you know, our role is safety and the whole point of us being here is to find out what happened and try to prevent this from happening again and anybody having to go through this, so -- talking to pilots and management of operators is a totally normal process, we do this for all of our investigations, so I want you to know it's not unusual, it's just a part of us in our fact finding phase of the investigation. So please share with us what you know because anything you can say can help us along that way.

And as we discussed, the FAA in here with us today and along with us has absolutely nothing to do with enforcement, we don't have anything to do with liability or blame, we're strictly safety. We will be recording this interview so that it can be transcribed. After we receive the transcript, you'll have an opportunity to review it and afterwards, it will be included in the public docket. Let's go around the room and have everyone introduce themselves.

MR. SUFFERN: So I'm Paul Suffern, I'm a meteorologist investigator with the NTSB, I've been there about 14 years or so and before that I worked for the National Weather Service up in Juneau, Alaska.

MR. PECK: And I'm Robert Peck, Rob is what I go by, with the Anchorage FSDO. I was, like I was saying earlier, I was a pilot for Alaska Air Transit, prior to that I was an Air Force pilot, so I've been doing that for quite a few years and again, I'm here just strictly for the safety aspect of this, not punitive in any way, shape, or form.

MS. BLUM: So we just ask that you please answer the questions to the best of your recollection. I'm not familiar with flying up here, so if there's something that I ask and you don't understand, just ask me to clarify. Also, if you don't know the answer to a question, "I don't know" is a perfectly acceptable answer. I might take notes once in a while here, don't mind me, that's just normal. And you're also entitled to have a representative of your choosing present during this interview, who would you like to have as your representative today?

MR. RICHMOND: Bob Richmond.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Thank you, Bob. We please ask you to refrain from answering any questions on Luke's behalf. You may direct him not to answer a question or you can request a short break to confer with him, if needed. Does anybody have any questions?

(No audible response.)

MS. BLUM: Okay, let's get started.

INTERVIEW OF LUKE MURKOWSKI

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Can you please state and spell your name?

A. Brian or just first and last?

Q. First and last is fine.

A. Luke Murkowski, L-u-k-e M-u-r-k-o-w-s-k-i.

Q. How long have you been flying for Bering Air?
A. Since May 2002.
Q. Okay. And what's your title?
A. PIC, Caravan PIC.
Q. Okay. Do you hold any management role here?
A. No.
Q. Okay. Are you a full-time employee?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. And what certificates do you have?
A. Air pilot, commercial, multi-commercial, single-engine and seaplane rating, instrument rating. Yeah.
Q. Any ratings?
A. I have SIC type rating in Beech 1900, instrument rating.
Q. Okay. And your medical, do you have -- what medical class do you have?
A. First class.
Q. Any limitations?
A. No.
Q. And can you give me a ballpark of your total flying time?
A. Probably 2700 hours.
Q. Okay. PIC?
A. Eighteen hundred.
Q. How much of that is in the Caravan?
A. I flew almost a thousand hours in the Caravan last year, maybe 1200 in the Caravan, roughly.

Q. Okay, great. Can you give us just a brief history of your aviation background?

A. I (indiscernible) some flight training and my private rating out of Miami Executive Airport in Miami, Florida, I did instrument commercial single in ATP Flight School in Jacksonville, Florida, multi-engine in Angel Aviation in Anchorage Merrill Field and then time back, I flew planes in Minnesota and Alaska, and I was hired with Bering Air in May of 2002.

Q. Okay, thanks. If you can recall back then, when you first came to Bering, can you talk me through the hiring process, what was that like?

A. It consisted of -- I sent in -- sending in an application and applying a lot, sending an -- doing an application online, sending in a resume, sending in a logbook, kind of getting to talk to the chief pilot here, coming up and visiting for a couple days and doing ride-alongs and at the end of each day just doing some interviews here and there with the director of operations and the chief pilot.

Q. Okay. So you applied or do they recruit, do you know?

A. I don't remember.

Q. Okay. And do you recall about the training, when you did get hired on, what was the training process when you on-boarded?

A. They sent me down to ATS in Denver to get a type rating for the SIC in the Beechcraft 1900 and then I came back up here and did some pretty thorough ground, did some training with my group check airman in that and then got released and started flying the line.

Q. Was there OE, like IOE or whatever Bering Air calls it after you get out of ground school and before you start flying the lines, you fly with an instructor?

A. Yes.
Q. Do you recall for about how long?
A. I don't recall.
Q. Okay. Were you working the day of the accident?
A. No.
Q. Were you in town, were you here in Nome?
A. I had just -- I think I landed on the jet Thursday at about 5:00 p.m., got there.
Q. Tell me about the airplane, 3-2-1 Bravo Alpha, have you flown it?
A. Yes. We have a lot of Caravans, I don't think I could point out anything specific about that one.
Q. Okay. Have you flown the route from Unalakleet to Nome quite a bit?
A. Yes.
Q. Anything unusual or challenging about that route?
A. No.
Q. And when you're flying those flights, what do you typically do, do you fly over the water, do you fly over the shoreline?
A. We try to stay in gliding range, so depending on how high we are, we can go a little further from the coastline, we try to stay within the glide range.
Q. What would make you stay over shoreline, does that ever happen? Just curious.
A. Don't understand the question.
Q. Do you ever just hug the shoreline the whole route or do you normally cut over the water?

A. Typically, we go high enough, once we reach Moses Point or (indiscernible) Point, where we can go high enough and still be within gliding range.

Q. Okay. What is the glide for the Caravan ratio?

A. It's two miles for every 1,000 feet.

Q. Okay. Have you flown with Chad before?

A. I don't recall, I don't think so.

Q. And what's your relationship to him, is it just coworkers, you live together, is that correct?

A. Coworkers, friends, roomies.

Q. Tell me, what was he like?

A. He was fun, fun person to be around and outgoing and funny, he made a lot of people laugh.

Q. Yeah. Did he ever mention any concerns or distractions lately? Let me ask this first, when's the last time you saw him and spoke with him?

A. In person, probably -- it had probably been a couple weeks, sometimes we're on different shifts, sort of, so I think -- I left for a couple days, the day before he got back, so probably two, two or three weeks, maybe.

Q. Okay. Has he mentioned anything to you that could've been distracting or concerns, whether it's home life or family life or financial or --

A. No.

Q. -- nothing like that? Has he ever mentioned any concerns about flying here at Bering Air?

A. No.

Q. Did you talk to him at all on the phone while you were out of town?

A. I would chat with Chad on social media a little bit.

Q. Okay. So you don't -- we try to find out the 72 hours prior to something that's happening, are you aware of any of his activities --

A. No.

Q. -- three days prior? When you were both, you know, staying together, did you find that he slept well, was he a morning person, was he --

A. Went to bed early -- or went to bed early, he woke up early, drank his coffee in the morning.

Q. So are you aware of any health problems?

A. No.

Q. Okay. Any history of substance abuse, alcohol use, anything like that?

(No audible response.)

MS. BLUM: Okay, I think that for now that will be my questions.

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. Thanks, Luke, for being here and as Starr said, we appreciate and we do send our condolences and things like that. I'm going to steer more towards you as a pilot and kind of what you use as far as weather and things like that and things along that, not necessarily towards Chad, but just you, as a flying Caravan pilot. What kind of weather resources do you like to use as a pilot?

A. Typically check weather cams for visibility, I mean, before I get to work, I'm checking ForeFlight and checking surface observations and winds aloft, radars and PIREPs, NOTAMs, kind of whatever we can get our hands on.

Q. Okay. And you mentioned ForeFlight, do you have -- I know there are lots of different applications on ForeFlight and things like that, what kind of, I guess, just weather related things on ForeFlight do you like to look at?

A. Typically METARs and TAFs.

Q. Okay. And so that kind of -- I think you mentioned you -- you get up, you look at -- that's kind of preflight and things like that is what you use those for?

A. Um-hum.

Q. What about in flight, do you have any access to any weather while you're in flight or anything?

A. As far as AWOSs go and ATISs and then PIREPs and so it's (indiscernible).

Q. Okay. So you mean PIREPs, is that PIREPs that you're hearing from Flight Service or from Center or does the company have, like -- every company's different, so is there like an internal company radio frequency where you may have a plane in front of you or something like that, that hey, I had this coming in and they pass that back to you or something like that?

A. Both, yeah.

Q. Okay, okay. So there's no -- again, I know every company's different and every access is different and so there's no, like, weather charts or anything like that, that you have access to while in flight on, like, your electronic flight pack or anything?

A. In a few of the -- a few of the Caravans you can Bluetooth your iPads to them and you sometimes you get those.

Q. Okay. And so you pull up, I assume, like ForeFlight or something like that if your Bluetooth didn't have internet access, you can --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- do that? Okay, okay. I think Starr asked you, one of her questions was related to, like, your onboard training and she stepped through some of those, do you recall what kind of weather-related training you had when you on-boarded?

A. I did Cessna's cold weather training online, then we do -- every six months we do training to some weather pertaining to the Caravan and indoc -- just talks about IOE and stuff, debrief.

Q. Okay. And so you mentioned the six-month training, is that seasonal and so maybe in the fall you're doing "this is the type of weather we see here as we're flying around from winter into early spring" and then in spring you have like "hey, this is what we're going to see potentially this summer," is that kind of what it runs through or --

A. It's kind of recurrent training, so it sort of just covers everything.

Q. Okay. As far -- I think we were looking through a couple of the Bering documents and it seems like there's a risk assessment, is that something that you, as PIC, fill out?

A. Sometimes, yeah.

Q. Okay. Is that something that is done, like, at the start of the day, you know you're going to do these three routes today and so you're just checking that or is it something that you do before every flight or I don't know how that works here.

A. I guess it would it depend on the weather, if it's --

Q. Okay.

A. -- nice, just once a day, if it's pretty bad, probably every flight.

Q. Okay. And I know certain companies are different, does it give you like a -- some companies have like a scoring system where you add up things, not only

weather related but, you know, all different kinds of things, maybe, with the flight or anything like that, is it score related or is it just a checklist?

A. It's a form and checklist.

Q. Okay, okay. And if it -- I don't know, is there a line on there where if it gets to be so many issues, for example, maybe there's just really, really bad weather, things like that, does that need a different kind of release, I'm probably using the pilot terms wrong, like the dispatcher can't release you because it's a little bit more challenging or something like that, and so I don't know, the chief pilot or something like that would have to release you for that?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. And then we understand that Bering Air has, I think, dispatchers or flight followers or whatever the term is, do they provide you any weather or anything like that?

A. They do, as well, yes.

Q. Okay. What kind of weather are they typically providing you?

A. I mean, on top of what we're getting first in the day, usually get most of that, as well as calling village representatives, too, and getting their idea of what it actually looks like out there, sometimes the camps. (Indiscernible).

Q. Yeah. Okay. And just with your experience here in flying in Unalakleet, what kind of access to weather do you have there if you're flying in there and going to do -- not necessarily back here to Nome, but going to another village or something like that, what weather resources do you have there as far as to be able to view ForeFlight?

A. They have internet there so we can have all the same resources we have here.

Q. Oh, okay. Can you step me through how the process is for you, as a pilot, reporting a PIREP for any kind of conditions that you have, how do you report that, do you give that to Flight Service or Center or here within the company or it depends or --

A. Yeah, it depends, I mean, if we're on an instrument flight plan, we'll give it to Center or it passes on to Flight Service which, typically in-coming to Nome, we'll give it to Flight Service and then if we know we have the company going to the same location or flying through the same area, we'll try to pass it on to them, as well.

Q. So if there's impactful weather in the airport that you're going into, typically, and if you know another company aircraft is coming in, you're going to pass that along, typically.

A. Yeah.

MR. SUFFERN: Okay. That's all I got for right now. Thank you, Luke, that's really helpful.

BY MR. PECK:

Q. So Luke, again, I'm not here, I'm just here for the safety, I want to make sure you understand that and from a comfort-ability standpoint, that's all I'm here for. These guys ask a lot of good questions, I don't know if have a whole lot left. I have a couple little things. Just, from a TKS perspective, right --

A. Um-hum.

Q. -- what is your thought process and what is your procedures, I guess, in the morning here, like if you were going from here to Unalakleet, for instance, how would you deal with -- think about TKS, is it going to be full, whatever, half full, you know, that type of thing.

A. Yeah, it's on your -- I mean, if it's a clear day, I like to always -- that's the first thing we do, we'll come in, during our preflight, we check the gauge and (indiscernible) and usually even if it's showing full, just give it a couple extra cranks. And after we do that, just turn the battery, turn the avionics on, just turn the system, let it run for 30 seconds and then that's kind of how we deal with it in the morning.

Q. And you let it run for 30 seconds in the hangar?

A. No, we --

Q. Outside.

A. Outside, yeah.

Q. Okay. Is there any time you wouldn't have it completely topped or is there any time, even, when you show up in the morning when it's not topped off or is that the case and you have to top it off?

A. We're the ones who top it off.

Q. Okay. How about like, Unalakleet, let's say you got to Unalakleet, is there a readable (ph.) or available, I guess, better word, source of TKS that you guys can actually get and fill that tank up --

A. There is, yeah.

Q. Yeah. Is that always available?

A. Yes.

Q. Where do they keep that, do you know?

A. I believe it's in their cargo hangar back there, I don't know exactly where they keep it, I just ask them for it and the cargo guys, they will bring it out.

Q. So you ask like the village agent or something?

A. No, we have -- we sort of share an operation base there with -- it's called West Coast Aviation, so --

Q. Okay.

A. -- they'll bring -- bring it out to us.

Q. Okay. And it's like a hand pump or something you pump it in, that type of deal, is that --

(No audible response.)

BY MR. PECK:

Q. Do you guys go to any locations that don't have TKS?

A. Yeah, villages do not, our three hubs do, Kotzebue, Unalakleet, and Nome do, but the others don't.

Q. Okay. All right. And then, like, if there was -- let's say you flew down to Unalakleet and you picked up a little bit of ice, right, how do you or what have your experiences been with the TKS airplanes in dealing with ice?

A. Seems to work pretty good, if you get ahead of it, you know, immediately catch it building on or you're just going into the cloud and it's, you know, cold up there, it seems to work really well.

Q. Yeah. Have you ever had it land and see ice and you're like wow, when you were using it?

A. A little bit, yeah.

Q. Where at?

A. Some leading edges, a little bit on the strap wing, just the straps do.

Q. Just right at the very front of the leading edge or is it kind of going over it or --

A. A little bit of a C shape --

Q. C shape.

A. -- around a little bit.

Q. How about with your windshield, how does -- does that work out pretty well, generally, for you, TKS?

A. Yeah, it works out pretty well, same thing, you just don't want to let it build up too much, if you stay ahead of it, that works really well, too.

Q. I guess if you were in Unalakleet, what -- and you've been through icing going down a few hours early or something, what kind of things would you be looking for, I guess, and from who in Unalakleet before you made a trip back here? Particular to icing.

A. Um-hum. Trying to see if there's a different route I could possibly take, talking to -- talking to other pilots, tons of pilots flying all over that area, too, so just talking to other pilots, make sure my TKS is filled up, if I still got some ice on that plane, spray it down before I go there.

Q. How about weather sources or anything, would you look at any of those?

A. Yeah.

Q. And who would you get that from?

A. We would concur with base here, but yeah, I mean going and just access the resources we got online, as well, and our iPads work out there, too, so we have all the resources that ForeFlight has.

Q. So you have internet access there at the -- Unalakleet?

A. Yeah.

Q. Yeah. Okay. Is there any kind of a company policy, for instance, where you -- you're going to call back before you kind of release from down in Unalakleet, is there something, maybe severe icing or something like that, that you --

A. I'm not aware of a policy, but I have been told to hold off because it was bad in Nome.

Q. Oh, so you would get word, like, in Unalakleet from here or something, saying don't come back type of deal?

A. Um-hum.

Q. And that would be -- guessing here, but that would be like the flight follower would be passing that word along or something?

A. Just on the phone.

Q. Oh.

A. That's before launching, we usually get that word.

Q. And who would be calling, I guess, from here?

A. It just depends on who's operational control that day.

Q. Okay, yeah. Okay. Do you have any kind of text messaging, like, to the iPad or anything? I know there's -- can't think of the name of it, but there are text messaging things that come through to your iPad in flight, Spider is the one I was trying to think of.

A. Like the Spider tracker?

Q. Yeah. But --

A. I'm not aware, I'm not aware of that doing any texting on my iPad, but --

Q. Okay.

A. -- we do have those in the airplane if we're talking about the same thing, I think it's a tracker.

Q. Yeah, I honestly don't know what tracker --

A. We don't have any text, we have satellite phones built into the panel, so you can't text on anything.

Q. Oh, but you can, from the panel, actually get on the sat phone?

A. Yeah, we can call Nome dispatch, Kotzebue, we can call Nome, we can call Kotzebue, we can call Center, we can call Flight Service, there's built-in (indiscernible), yeah.

Q. That's awesome, that's awesome. You mentioned the Cessna training, right, that annual requirement.

A. Um-hum.

Q. What are your thoughts about that Cessna training?

A. It's informative.

Q. Do you think it covers, from your experiences, things that you need to know as far as the Caravan, operating the Caravan in icing conditions?

A. I think it does.

Q. Yeah. Just curious, I was looking at training records and stuff, do you guys normally do your check rides down at Flight Safety in Wichita, everything but the 299, or is that done locally or --

A. I just did my recurrent in October, so we've been -- yeah, we -- I don't know if we've been -- how long, how far back we've been doing that, but I just went back for my second time in October.

Q. To Wichita?

A. To Wichita, yes.

Q. Okay. And then you come back and do your 299 check here?

A. Yes.

Q. So you get your 293 A and B and 297 on them?

A. Um-hum.

Q. On a normal day, you get here, right, you show up, what kind of interaction do you normally have -- let's say it is, you know, skosh (ph.) weather, right, weather's a concern, put it that way. What kind of interaction are you going to have with your, I think it's called flight follower? What would you say would typically be that interaction?

A. Are you referring to dispatch when you say flight -- okay. I'd go in, talk to them about the weather, you know, if we have any concerns or feel uncomfortable, I'll go talk to the chief pilot or director of operations and voice those concerns.

Q. You guys go directly -- go to the chief pilot most of the time?

A. There's times where if it's pretty nasty, there's a lot of times where dispatch is like yeah, we're going to cancel that flight or check the weather again in a couple hours and there's other times when it's not as bad, but there's concerns about we have strong crosswind, as well, we'll go upstairs and talk to management about it.

Q. What is your -- I guess your experience has been -- let's say you do go to management and you have concerns with ice or winds or whatever, are they pretty receptive to that or how does that normally go?

A. Yeah, I don't feel like I've ever been pressured to do anything I didn't want to do and I've told them I don't feel comfortable and --

Q. They take that answer?

A. Yeah.

Q. Awesome. I guess, what is your general expectation -- or maybe that's not phrased correctly, but -- of the village agent that's down in Unalakleet, what do they provide for you, as a pilot, in general?

A. Unalakleet's definitely an outlier, I think it's really different than the rest of the villages because Unalakleet, again, is a hub, we have cargo service guys there and we can get fuel there and TKS and -- whereas, most villages, it's just one agent comes out and helps us unload the planes and get us the passenger manifest, so Unalakleet's more of an outlier compared to that.

Q. An outlier, you mean better or --

A. Yeah, we have lots of services in Unalakleet that we don't have access to in any of the other villages that we actually fly to.

Q. Right, right. So, I guess, let's just say you were in a different village, I don't know, White Mountain, I guess all you have is a person that comes out at White Mountain, your village agent, is that --

A. Yes.

Q. Would they normally bring any kind of messages from, let's say, base here saying hey, call us before you come home or --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- or that kind of a thing? Yeah. Do they give you any other weather updates, the village agents themselves, at times or not?

A. Not typically, unless it's something that was a phone call that they had in advance with dispatch or somebody, but we don't typically get weather from them on the ground. I'd say never.

Q. And they provide, you said, the manifest, right?
A. Yeah, passenger manifest, bring -- handle all the passengers who's getting on and the names and any mail or freight that's going back.
Q. And do they get, then, the weights and stuff with all the passengers?
A. Yes.
Q. That how that -- and the bags, too?
A. Um-hum. Yeah, the weights of the passengers, the weights of the bags, the weights of the mail.
Q. Do you know how they do that?
A. I don't.
Q. Unalakleet, you said, has internet and stuff, but I'm guessing White Mountain and places like that, it's probably nonexistent, is that --
A. Correct.
MR. PECK: That's all I have.
MS. BLUM: Okay.
BY MS. BLUM:
Q. Just a couple more from me. Have you ever canceled a flight?
A. Cancel, as --
Q. Your decision.
A. -- saying I'm not going to go?
Q. Yeah.
A. Yeah.
Q. Can you give me an example of when you did that?

A. Yeah, so I did a couple of weeks ago in Teller, because it was gusting 35 straight across and I said I don't want anything to do with that and Ben said good go.

Q. And when -- you know, with the icing up here and whether it's forecasted or you suspect it, walk me through, like, how you make the decision to go or not go based on how the weather changes here so quickly.

A. Yeah.

Q. How do you approach that?

A. Typically, if there's any -- any freezing rain or freezing drizzle in the forecast, that's definitely a no-go, if it's -- we've kind of seen a repeating pattern in the last couple days, too, which is just building up real intensely, you know, and it's bad visibility, cold up there, a lot of clouds, we'll just try to avoid. If it's out to the east, we'll just try to avoid going out that way or whatever.

Q. Do you ever take off to get a feel and then -- knowing you might turn back around or do you take a peek sometimes going out there?

A. I have turned around because it was building up pretty fast. Typically, we wouldn't send somebody out to go be a test dummy to see if the ice is building up, but definitely turned around.

Q. I know you guys are such a big operation around here, are there any other companies or people flying around where you might get a pilot report, you know, and the morning ops starts --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- there are other planes out and about?

A. Yeah, Ryanair, talk to those guys quite a bit and then we have the pilot who flies all around the region for the school board, too, Bering Strait school board

district, he's always out there flying, too, so we all know him on a first name basis and always give PIREPs back and forth with them, too.

Q. Okay. Do you guys communicate that, like, on a frequency pilot-to-pilot or who do you normally report the PIREP to?

A. We'll typically report it to Flight Service, base, and if there's anyone else flying in the area on the same frequency, we'll -- even if we don't know the (indiscernible) hey, it's icy over there or it's pretty muddy down there and whatever.

Q. Okay. Anchorage Center, too?

A. Yeah, if we're -- if we're flying, if we're on an IFR plan, we'll give it to Center, if we're VFR, we'll give it to Flight Service.

Q. Okay. My last question, a couple. Do you know, does Bering Air have an SMS program? Are you aware of one?

A. I'm not sure what that is.

Q. Okay. Do they have CRM --

A. Yes.

Q. -- crew resource management? Have you been trained in that?

A. Yes.

Q. Is that ground school, is it online, how do they train CRM?

A. Ground school.

Q. Okay. And fatigue, do they have a fatigue -- do they talk about fatigue in that CRM program?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you guys have any fatigue policies?

A. Unsafe checklist, really, it's kind of a self-assessment.

Q. Okay.

A. I've called in because I was either tired or sick or -- no questions asked and didn't go to work that day.

MS. BLUM: Yeah, it's no penalty if you feel (indiscernible).

Okay, do you have any more questions?

MR. SUFFERN: Just a couple.

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. Do you recall, during any of your weather checks or anything like that, using the Alaska Aviation Weather Unit page and their graphics and the icing page on that one?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you find it useful at all?

A. Yeah, it's useful.

Q. Are there any weather tools out there that you, as a pilot flying around here, wish that you had, a weather tool, whether -- access to anything, what could help you do your job better as a pilot weather-wise, whether it's equipment or a "gee, whiz" thing, a website or anything like that?

A. I can't think of anything else that would assist any more, I'm not aware of what else is out there that we don't use a lot.

MR. SUFFERN: That's all I've got. Thank you very much, Luke.

BY MR. PECK:

Q. I had one over here, I can't even remember. So let's -- if you have multiple days, right, we get three or four days when you guys can't get into a village type of thing, is there ever mounting pressure because we haven't got there two or three days?

I mean, you know, day one it may be -- let's just make up a number, you know, it's 25 knots of wind, you're like I ain't going, but now three days later, we still haven't made it in, does that ever build up, that pressure to go from management-type people at all?

A. No.

Q. From just Luke, right, what does CRM mean to you, as a single pilot? PIC, just real brief, you don't have to go into lots of detail, but --

A. Well, I don't fly in a crew, so just being able to handle that workload and do as much as I can on the ground and to prepare for the flight and on flight, have my frequencies tuned up and do kind of everything I can do to stay ahead of the plane.

Q. Okay. Do you have any resources, like, on the ground that you could use here?

A. For?

Q. For CRM-type stuff.

A. Resources for what, exactly?

Q. All right, maybe even read a checklist or something, let's say you're --

A. Sure.

Q. And who do you think -- how would that work, in your mind, I know you haven't done it, but how would you think that would work?

A. I don't understand the question.

Q. So I guess you maybe call on the radio, do you think chief pilot's probably going to come or somebody or another check airman or something and help you get through, let's say, an emergency of some sort --

A. Okay.

Q. -- is that how you might see that happening or some other way?

A. I see it happening like that, true.

Q. He asked a question about the icing page --

A. Um-hum.

Q. -- there, from the Alaska weather center, do you think it's accurate?

A. I'm not sure.

MR. PECK: I don't have anything else, that's good, yeah.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Is there anything that we didn't ask you that you wish we would have or anything else you'd like to share with us, safety related?

A. Uh-uh.

MS. BLUM: Well, we really appreciate your time and thank you for being here. And we'll end this interview at 6:49.

(Whereupon, at 6:49 p.m., the interview 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 Luke Murkowski
ACCIDENT NO.:	ANC25MA018
PLACE:	Nome, Alaska
DATE:	February 14, 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.



Karen D. Martini
Transcriber

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: LUKE MURKOWSKI, PILOT

Bering Air

Nome, Alaska

Tuesday,
May 6, 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

ROBERT L. RICHMOND, ESQ.
Law Offices Richmond & Quinn
(On behalf of Luke Murkowski)

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INTERVIEW

(11:18 a.m.)

MS. BLUM: Okay. Today is May 6, 2025, and it's 11:18 Alaska Daylight Time. My name's Starr Blum. I'm an Operational Factors Investigator with the NTSB, and we're here to talk to you again about the accident involving Bering Air Flight 445 on February 6th.

Just to remind you that we're an independent agency, we don't have anything to do with DOT or the FAA, and we don't decide liability or blame. Our sole purpose is safety and to help find the probable cause of an accident and make changes, if there can be, to prevent this from happening again.

We will be recording this interview, which will be transcribed. We will correct typos, and then Bob will give you the transcript for your review as well before it goes into the public docket.

Let me go around the room so everyone can introduce themselves.

MR. SORENSEN: My name is Tim Sorensen. I'm an Aviation Accident Investigator. I'm also the investigator in charge for this particular accident.

MR. SUFFERN: Paul Suffern, Meteorologist with the NTSB.

MR. PECK: And Rob Peck, out of Anchorage FSDO, out of Kerrin Maritime (ph.), and not here for enforcement of any sort.

MR. WECKWERTH: Brian Weckwerth, Director of Safety, Bering Air.

DR. WOODS: Sabrina Woods, NTSB Human Performance Investigator.

DR. WILSON: Katherine Wilson. I'm also a Human Performance Investigator with the NTSB.

MS. BLUM: So, just like last time, everybody will have a chance. We'll do two rounds of questioning. You are entitled to have a representative of your choice. I

see you brought somebody here who is your representative?

MR. MURKOWSKI: Yes, Bob.

MS. BLUM: Okay, Bob, can you please introduce yourself and spell your name?

MR. RICHMOND: I didn't hear what you said. Did you want me to say my name and who I voted for, for senator?

MS. BLUM: Please --

MR. RICHMOND: Oh, no? Okay.

MS. BLUM: -- spell your name.

MR. RICHMOND: Robert L. Richmond, R-I-C-H-M-O-N-D.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Thank you, Bob. Please refrain from answering questions for Luke. If you guys need to confer, we'll stop the recording, and you guys can go outside and talk.

Just like last time, please answer the questions to the best of your recollection. If you don't know, that's a perfectly acceptable answer. And if at any time you want to take a break, just let us know, and we'll take a break.

MR. MURKOWSKI: Okay.

MS. BLUM: Does anyone have any questions before we get going? Okay.

INTERVIEW OF LUKE MURKOWSKI

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. So, Luke, we're back because, you know, we want to talk about things that we've discovered throughout the investigation so far and just talk about things prior and also after the accident. And in the investigation, we found that, you know, the accident flight was overweight, and so was another one. And I want to talk to you about that one area.

We know that there's been confusion about the max gross takeoff weight.

Can you talk to us about what has happened, but what it was before the accident and what things are like now after the accident regarding the max gross takeoff weight?

A. Sure. The max great -- max gross weight hasn't changed unless we have icing in the area where we've used -- started to use flight into known icing numbers, which was 8807, as opposed to 9062 pounds.

Q. And that's since the accident, correct?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. When you have been in situations where you pick up the manifest and the load is showing overweight, what is your procedure for taking off weight to be below whatever gross weight should be?

A. If it's out of Nome, tell the people working at the counter, we're going to have to go bump something, you know. You know, maybe there is a passenger who brought -- let's say we're 50 pounds overweight, and there's a passenger who brought 100 pounds, or maybe -- well, first we'll look for some freight, and we'll keep the passenger bags as the last things we're going to bump unless we need to.

If there's any freight or whatever, we tell her, I'm going to bump this, go over to cargo, and say, hey, guys, we need to bump this amount of weight. And they know what everything weighs, particularly the freight because it's got the weights on it. And we'll take that off the plane, take it off the manifest, and go fly.

Q. How about at a village, what would you do then?

A. In a village? It's pretty rare we're overweight at a village, but, yeah, if we're starting to look like we're going to be pretty overweight, typically it's because people are flying tons of heavy totes with equipment. So, you know, take off as many of those as needed to move the weight.

Q. Okay. Have you -- are you aware, you heard of any practices where the

fuel load is reduced in your iPad, in the weight and balance program, to make the weight under gross weight?

A. No.

Q. Okay. Last time, in our last interview, I believe you told me that you had taken TKS fluid in Unalakleet.

A. Mm-hmm.

Q. And I believe you were referring to West Coast did it for you. Is that correct?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q. So, do you recall how many times you've had to request TKS fluid in Unalakleet?

A. I personally haven't had to. I've never used enough where I'm Unalakleet where I don't have the minimum to dispatch to get back, which is 11.3 gallons. So, I've personally never had to use it in Unalakleet, but I know that they do have it there if you do need to use it.

Q. Okay. Can you tell us about your technique? We're -- I'm trying to -- we've learned that the -- we understand the differences between the sight gauge and the Garmin's gauge?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q. Do you have any personal techniques that you use to monitor the amount of TKS fluid? Let's say it's like a day in February 6th --

A. Mm-hmm.

Q. -- where it was really bad icing, maybe. How do -- do you have a personal technique, what you do to monitor what amount that you're using in flight?

A. Sure. Yeah. If I know it's going to be bad, I like to fill it up all the way,

which I don't even know what the full sight gauge. All the way at the top, there's still a little bit of room in there. So, I'll just keep pumping it in there until a little bit spits out and I know the tank is full and I know what weight I'm going to have for my initial weight.

And then, yeah, from there on out, we don't have an exact way of measuring how much we used in flight. I'd like to think that the gauge on the G1000 is our best bet for calculating those numbers after that. So, if I use a couple of gallons in flight, for my next flight I'll use, if I'm not filling it up, I'll use what's on the gauge, on the G1000 electronic gauge.

Q. Okay. If the weather's coming down, have you ever departed early because of the weather? Do you have to request approval to do that?

A. Yes.

Q. And have you done that where you've been granted permission to depart earlier?

A. Yes.

Q. Has there ever been a situation where passengers weren't there or hadn't checked in?

A. I don't recall.

Q. Okay. Since the accident, what changes have been made or discussed with you from management -- have been made since then that affect the pilot group?

A. Needing to get --

Q. Just any lessons learned --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- or discussion about since that day?

A. I think the major changes are just that any flight into known icing, we need

to get a sign-off from operating management instead of dispatch. So, that consists of either, we're here, going upstairs, and we'll sit down and look at the weather together, or if we're at a base in Kotzebue, they call them on the phone, and we'll go over it together. That's the biggest change.

Q. Okay. Thank you. Those are my questions for you.

MS. BLUM: Tim?

BY MR. SORENSEN:

Q. As far as -- this is going to be kind of a broad question, so if you want to narrow it or if you have a question -- but your techniques, procedures for flying the 2A before the accident versus after, have those changed at all?

A. I don't think anything's changed technique wise. I think I've been maybe more cautious in the pre-flight procedure of just, you know, really making sure we're way above that minimum TKS for dispatch. You know, if I know I'm going to ice, maybe I'd have, you know, 16, 17 gallons prior, like now, I pretty much can always top it off every time.

Q. Okay. Any other -- anything else that's changed or --

A. Yeah. I'd say if Anchorage Center ever asked if I'd rather slow down to avoid a holding pattern or keep my speed up and go during the holding pattern, I'm always taking the holding pattern now.

Q. Wait, I'm sorry, say that one more time. You're taking -- you're declining a hold?

A. No.

Q. Oh, okay. I'm sorry.

A. No. Often they'll give pilots the option, if there's a lot of traffic coming in on an IFR day, you can either go and join the holding pattern, or they'll say you can, if

you'd rather slow down or --

Q. To hold?

A. -- avoid having to hold, so I -- since the accident, I take the holding pattern every time --

Q. Got it.

A. -- so I don't have to slow down.

Q. Got it. Okay. I'm sorry. I misunderstood. At what air speeds then, you know, are you flying? What air speeds don't you want to get into?

A. Yeah, I mean, if we're taking on ice, I'd like to just keep our normal cruise speed to go as fast as possible, really.

Q. Okay. Which is? I'm not familiar what the capability (ph.) is.

A. Yeah. I normally cruise at about 145 knots, indicated knots, (indiscernible).

Q. Okay, so that's the speed? You just maintain that and just --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- flying hold. Fair enough. As far as your approach to icing, has that changed at all?

A. I think -- I don't think it's changed. I've always tried to avoid it, much as possible, get on top as soon as I can, and --

Q. Okay.

A. Yeah.

Q. As far as handling by ATC, requests for deviations, altitude, do you ever get any pushback from that?

A. No.

Q. Okay. Have you ever had to basically say unable to a clearance that they've provided to you?

A. No.

Q. Okay. All right. As far as auto-pilot use, has that changed at all?

A. No.

Q. Okay. You're aware of hand flight requirements that are contained in the POH periodically with flight in basic conditions?

A. Yes.

Q. Great. When you've been flying, has there been anything that's occurred with respect to handling the aircraft that's been unusual, or why they do that, anything like that? And when you're clicking the auto-pilot off, do you get a slight deviation, how to trim condition, anything that comes to mind?

A. No. If you have everything in the correct flight mode, it seems to act as you plan, as you set it to, so.

Q. Okay. We've become aware of some past issues with the friction control, power quadrant. Have you personally experienced any issues with those?

A. No major issues. I have noticed that throughout the day, without even adjusting the friction at all, it can start to come looser. I've never had anything completely come apart.

Q. Okay. Have you ever been in a situation where you couldn't adjust the power as you needed to?

A. No.

Q. Okay. All right. Okay. As far as going to TKS, you said normally you top it off. When you're at intermediate stops, have you ever needed to get TKS?

A. No.

Q. Okay. Okay. As far as weight and balance goes, Starr was asking you about your process for, you know, for gross weight, adjusting for that, whatnot. Have you ever had any issues maintaining center of gravity requirements in your plane?

A. No.

Q. Okay. As far as --

MR. SORENSEN: Well, I'll tell you what. For now, I'm done, so, go ahead.

MS. BLUM: Paul?

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. I'm going to ask just a couple of just weather questions, specifically about flying in the known icing conditions. And I know there was a policy change since the accident. Has that changed anything about how you've gone about, you know, flying for a particular day, with the changes in the -- in your operating manual or anything?

A. I think the major thing that's changed is just becoming way more reliant on PIREPs.

Q. Okay. Reliant as in, other people are passing them on to you, and they're hopefully more available? Also you, you know, giving them to either flight service or Anchorage Center or anything like that too?

A. Yeah, both. I think the big one is, if there is quite a bit of ice in the forecast on a route of flight, we've been a little more hesitant to launch until we can get word from maybe one of our multi-engine aircraft or Ryanair or somebody else flying in the area who's ideally given a report, and kind of waiting for that to launch.

Q. Okay. Have you seen, when you've been given PIREPs, have you seen -- or others that you know of, you've heard on the radio or something like that, have you seen delays in any issues getting those PIREPs into the system or see them show up on the iPad or see them show in your pre-flight or anything like that?

A. Yeah. It seems like they can take almost up to an hour to come out, and they expire after an hour, so it's kind of not the best way to flight plan, unfortunately.

Q. Has there been any particular either flight service or Anchorage Center that's been -- that you've seen or experienced that have been kind of more time challenged location, or is it pretty similar between both?

A. I think it's pretty similar between both. Flight service here does seem to do a pretty good job, but I don't know.

Q. I know in the flying into known icing, it talks about visible moisture, and that's kind of one of their criteria that they list. What is visible moisture to you as a pilot?

A. The first thing that comes to mind is a cloud, but precipitation as well. But, yeah, cloud seems to be where you get the most icing when it's below freezing.

Q. Okay. And has there been any changes for you as far as weather since the accident, whether changes in how you check or do anything weather wise pre-flight or during your flight or either post-flight?

A. Yeah. I spend a lot more time looking at icing forecasts and reports in the area. Just looking over that with management is something that we've kind of changed to. So, it takes a little longer to get prepared for a flight into known icing, but that's for a good reason.

Q. How do you -- since you mentioned the icing forecast, how has their reliability been for you when you're flying out there? Do you find them accurate, somewhat accurate, not very accurate at all, accurate over this area but not here, you know, further north?

A. Yeah. I'd say not very accurate --

Q. Okay.

A. -- on a lot of reports in kind of the whole region, and it's -- it'll be pretty much 10 (ph.) and clear up there.

MR. SUFFERN: Okay. I think that's all I got. Thanks, Luke.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Rob?

BY MR. PECK:

Q. You mentioned known icing, right? So, what is, in your definition, what's the difference between known and forecast icing?

A. Known is where it's been reported, and forecast is where they believe it will be at a certain time and date.

Q. Okay. So, if there's a PIREP out that there was icing, that's good for an hour in your mind, or is that good for ten minutes, or what's your just -- I mean, it's -- there's no right answer.

A. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, and the PIREP is good for an hour.

Q. Okay. It's our understanding that the new flight release process is out there. It's been released post-accident. What are your thoughts on that? And do you understand what's driving it?

A. I think it's good because there's multiple people looking at each individual flight that's going out, and if there are any factors that maybe the pilot didn't take into account, you know, there's other people looking at it as well.

Q. Do you, or are you aware of why there's this difference between the two different max takeoff weights, what's driving those?

A. What's driving the numbers?

Q. Yeah.

A. Yeah. Stall speed can increase during icing and --

Q. Okay.

A. -- just better to be light if you're flying in ice.

MR. PECK: That's all I've got.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Brian?

MR. WECKWERTH: No. I don't have any questions. Thanks, Luke.

MS. BLUM: Sabrina?

DR. WOODS: Yeah. Thank you.

BY DR. WOODS:

Q. Luke, prior to that accident occurring, what were your impressions of the company's approach to safety?

A. I think they're pretty well known as one of the best safety records in Alaska, and I believe that as well and still believe that.

Q. What do you feel like the company has shown, or what do you think -- what are the requirements for you to feel like a place is safe?

A. I think a really good maintenance crew, somebody who's taking care of the aircraft, pilots who communicate with each other when, oh, hey, maybe don't go back here, it's extremely gusty, or, I got a lot of ice going in here. So, yeah, communication, a really good maintenance team who is on the ball, and open communication from all aspects, from management down to cargo and pilots and maintenance as well.

Q. And do you feel that it's still that way after the accident?

A. It's probably even more so that way now.

Q. Prior to the accident, I guess and even since then, have there been any concerns that you've had that you've voiced?

A. No.

Q. No major concerns? You've never had any issues that you've had to bring

forth?

A. No.

Q. If you did have an issue, would you bring it forth?

A. Yes. I'm very comfortable talking to David, or Fen, our chief pilot, or even Russell or Ben. Brian's not a bad guy either, so.

Q. Do you feel like they would listen to you or entertain your concerns?

A. I do, yeah. I mean, I've had minor concerns if I don't feel comfortable going here with the weather. I wouldn't call that a major concern, but, I mean, I've been heard out and --

Q. Mm-hmm.

A. -- I'm, like, we'll cancel this flight, and, you know, no problems whatsoever with that.

Q. It's actually a great segway. Have you ever -- have you ever cancelled a flight? Who did you make that decision with? Who did you engage in that decision making process?

A. Yeah. It depends. We have -- on different days, we'll have -- you know, typically, on weekends operational control will be either Brian or find our chief pilot, and usually during the week it's director of operations, Dave Olson, so, kind of whoever.

Typically, on a day-to-day, it's going to be either Fen or David who we're going to talk to about that. And I've never had anyone try to pressure me or change my mind or, oh, I heard it's not too bad. My decision has always been final in that question, which is really nice for me as a pilot.

Q. Have you ever seen anyone get beef or grief for having a concern or voicing a concern, or canceling a flight within the organization?

A. No.

Q. Are you aware of a formal feedback process here at Bering Air?

A. I'm not sure what that is.

Q. So, you said you had no problems, if you had any concern, to go just talk to somebody?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q. But is there a formal process that you're aware of, more formal than just knocking on somebody's door, and saying, hey?

A. I mean, in terms of a safety report, or --

Q. Mm-hmm.

A. Yeah, I mean, we have a whole program to file safety reports.

Q. Have you used it before?

A. I have. Yeah.

Q. And did you feel that your -- whatever you reported on, that that was looked at in a timely manner and that the issue was addressed?

A. I do. Yeah.

Q. If you would, please, walk me through your personal, so this is you, your approach to the day, your approach to taking a flight, all the way from, like, an IM SA.FE checklist, to the things that you check in with yourself to prepping for the actual flight?

A. Okay. Wake up, go to the bathroom, check the weather, usually the first thing I do in the morning, look at how many passengers I'm going to have on my flight, how much weight we're looking at, go into work.

First thing I do is check the weather, check the -- check forecasts, check tasks, check to see if there's any icing in the area. Then go into dispatch and see if anything's

changed as far as the routing goes or how many people I'm going to be flying out, talk to dispatch for a bit.

Then go back to calculate my load and what I can bring today, if there's going to be icing or no, depending on what weather we're going to have, and go out and talk to the fueler after I do my number calculations, tell him how much fuel I want to bring.

Go to cargo, give them my load available for that flight, and then final flight plan. Cargo will bring out the load to my plane. We'll load the bags and freight and what else and go call passengers, add the passenger weights and finish the weight and balance, and go fly out.

Q. What things do you consider about yourself personally?

A. Oh, in terms of if I'm fit to fly that day or what? Yeah, that's kind of something I do every morning. I just check in with myself and see how we're feeling, and, I mean, it takes a couple minutes in the morning to just take a shower and hydrate and see if I'm maybe mentally feeling not all there, or feeling sick, or really congested, or whatever.

Those are all things I look at before a flight. And I'd say I'm pretty good at kind of compartmentalizing anything I've got going on in life too. If it's something that's seriously going to bother me, I wouldn't fly that day, but --

Q. Have you canceled a flight before for not feeling well or anything else personal?

A. For being sick, I have.

Q. And were there any issues with that?

A. No.

Q. I'm going to move to learn a little bit more about Chad through you.

A. Okay.

Q. Okay? So, how long did you know him?
A. I'd say just under three years.
Q. And, touching on your previous interview, you were roommates, correct?
A. Mm-hmm.
Q. Was that for the whole three years?
A. No. For about two years we were.
Q. What was your first perceptions of him in terms of personality?
A. He seemed like a fun guy to hang out with and pretty happy, positive, outgoing. You know, oh, hey, let's go check out the beach, or, let's go hunting, or, like, somebody who liked to go out and just do activities and --
Q. Did you do those sorts of activities with him?
A. Yes.
Q. What about behaviors with regards to working here? What was his approach to flying?
A. Could you explain the question a little more?
Q. Did he have any tendencies or traits that you noted when he would get ready to go fly? Like you walked me through yours.
A. Mm-hmm.
Q. For him, is there anything that you noticed in his general approach to flying?
A. I'd say the only major difference is where he would go to bed really early, like, 8:00 p.m., and wake up at 5:00, and kind of start his -- get an earlier start on the day.
Q. Was that his typical sleeping routine --
A. Yes.

Q. -- for when he was at work?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q. You mentioned a couple of the things you did. Were there any other hobbies outside of, I guess, hiking or hunting, that he engaged in regularly?

A. Yeah. We're both real into music, and kind of listen to the same kind of music and play guitar together, and we liked video games.

Q. How did, if at all, your schedules overlap?

A. In terms of our work schedules --

Q. Mm-hmm.

A. -- overlap?

Q. Yes.

A. Kind of -- kind of just depending on month by month. There's some months where it wasn't really planned but maybe I'd be gone for the first ten days of the month, and he'd be gone for the second. Or sometimes we'd be here with each other the whole time. And it's kind of all over the place.

Q. So, given that the -- let's go with the accident happened earlier in the year, let's say the month of January, did you overlap schedules to where you were both flying at the -- during the week?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know what Chad's views and approach towards aviation safety were?

A. I know he was very -- I'm a -- definitely on the conservative side, in, kind of, taking lighter loads available than a lot of other guys. And I'd say he had higher personal minimums than a lot of other guys too, and would maybe cancel a flight that was still a legal IFR flight to make, that he didn't feel comfortable with, that -- I mean, I

don't think a -- some guys like myself probably would've still taken that flight.

Q. Did he ever get grief for that?

A. Occasionally, just kind of jokingly, but not really at any time from management, just kind of guys goofing around a little bit.

Q. By guys, do you mean fellow pilots?

A. Yes.

Q. Did he ever talk with you about concerns he had flying, or the operation, or maybe not taking a flight for cause?

A. No.

Q. Do you know what he liked about flying here?

A. The money.

Q. Specifically for Bering Air?

A. Yeah, I think that he just liked -- I think the work schedule was a big thing. He had kids in Minnesota, so would kind of come up and do his two weeks and go home and still be able to spend a lot of time with them and --

Q. Do you know what he disliked about flying for Bering Air and being here?

A. No.

Q. Have you ever flown with him?

A. No.

Q. Going specifically to the day of the accident, February 6th, what interactions did you have with him in the week prior to the accident occurring?

A. Yeah, so, I was out of town. I was -- I believe I was in Anchorage, and we had briefly chatted over social media, not really full, in-depth conversations --

Q. Mm-hmm.

A. -- just sending a couple Snapchats back and forth.

Q. Yeah.
A. That was mostly it.
Q. Was that a common form of communication for you?
A. Mm-hmm.
Q. Did you -- other than Snapchat, did you use SMS -- SNS, whatever messaging is, or telephone at all?
A. That particular week?
Q. Yes.
A. I don't believe so.
Q. In those interactions via Snapchat, I guess, were you able to make a determination as to what his mood was, what was going on? How did things seem?
A. I couldn't tell from our conversation. It was just, oh, sweet, you cleaned the bathroom, and I was like, yeah, okay, man, and that's pretty much it.
Q. Division of labor among roommates?
A. Mm-hmm.
Q. What was the last time you did face-to-face interaction prior to the accident occurring?
A. Yeah, I don't quite remember how long I was out of town for prior to the accident, but I'd say maybe ten days prior to the accident was the last time we talked face to face.
Q. And, I guess, how did he seem?
A. He seemed --
Q. I know it was a while ago, but --
A. Yeah, he seemed totally fine, and talking about a concert he was planning on going to with his girlfriend.

DR. WOODS: Okay. Thank you so much. I think that's all I have for the moment.

MS. BLUM: Kat?

BY DR. WILSON:

Q. How are you doing? Do you need a break or anything?

A. I'm good.

Q. Okay. Thanks for answering the questions. I know it's hard to come back in here and talk to us again. And also really sorry for the loss of your friend.

We talked to Paige (ph.), and, you know, so, she gave us some information. She mentioned a friend, Mikey (ph.), that he may have hung out with the day before the accident. Do you know Mikey?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Is he a pilot here?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q. Okay. Awesome. Oh, I wanted to clarify. Sorry. I'm switching gears because this just popped into my head. I read your transcript from the first interview --

A. Mm-hmm.

Q. -- and you were asked when you were hired by Bering Air.

A. Yeah, there was a typo there.

Q. Okay.

A. Yeah.

Q. All right.

A. I think it said, like, 20 years or something.

Q. It said May of 2002, yeah.

A. It was 2022.

Q. 2022?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. Thanks for clarifying that. I was thinking, wow, I want to know all of the different positions you've had here if you've been here since 2002.

So, going back to just Chad, did he ever mention anything about being called to the carpet for pushing back on loads or anything like that? I think Sabrina asked you, but he was never called in to talk to chief pilot or director of ops that you're aware of?

A. No.

Q. Okay. Have you heard of other pilots, that happening to?

A. No.

Q. All right. Switching gears, back to your training. In the last interview, I know we asked you about new training that you received for icing conditions. As you've had some time kind of to think about it and, you know, since the accident, is there anything that you've looked back on and said, like, wow, I really wish I had more training on this aspect related to icing, more information, more Sim time, anything like that?

A. I don't think there's anything I --

Q. No? Okay.

A. -- regret or -- no.

Q. And do you feel that -- well, I guess I'll ask you for yourself but also the pilot group here. Do you think everybody has a really good understanding of, you know, the risk of icing, flying in this region, and what it can do to the aircraft when you do get into icing conditions?

A. Yeah, I'd say so.

Q. Yeah? Okay. The dispatchers that you have, do they also do flight following?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Do you have any interaction with them while you're in flight?

A. Yeah. We can talk to them for probably about -- depending on which direction of flight, probably about 15 to 20 minutes after we depart and then about 15 to 20 minutes prior to when we get back, we're within radio range of them.

Q. Mm-hmm. Okay. Have you ever reached out to them and asked them for, I don't know --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- updated weather or --

A. Mm-hmm. And we do have sat phones too.

Q. Mm-hmm.

A. So, we can call them pretty much from anywhere as well, but, yeah, I've contacted them mid route, and say, oh --

Q. Okay.

A. -- the weather just went down, it's looking pretty nasty out there --

Q. Mm-hmm.

A. -- okay, I'll just come back, and -- kind of stuff.

Q. Okay. Do you feel that they have a good understanding of the weather when they give you weather information? Are they just, like, regurgitating weather that they find, or do you think they understand what it means when they give you weather?

A. Yeah, I think they can pretty confidently decode them into our TAFs (ph.), so they actually know what they're --

Q. Okay.

A. -- looking at.

Q. Yeah. All right. And then when you get to a village, do you have to check

in and let them know that you've landed, or is there any communication back to base?

A. No. They can typically tell based on the flight log --

Q. Okay.

A. -- and where we --

Q. You don't have to do a ping or anything?

A. No.

Q. Do they use Spidertracks?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know? Okay. Does that have texting capability or anything if you needed to reach out to them or anything?

A. No.

Q. No? You mentioned that you checked weather when you first get up in the morning. Do you know what your flights are going to be for that day, so you're --

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. You're checking for specific routes where you're going to be flying?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q. How often -- or how far in advance rather, do you get your schedule?

A. It's usually around 4:00 p.m. the -- like, tonight I'll find out at 4:00 p.m. what my flights tomorrow will be.

Q. Okay.

A. It's pretty standard.

Q. All right. And I apologize. I can't remember if we asked you in the last interview. What do you use to check weather?

A. All kinds of resources, but if I'm just at home, I'll just look before a flight,

and then go into work, and aviation weather cams and icing charts and prep charts and winds aloft forecasts.

Q. And then, when you're in flight, can you get updated weather in flight also?

A. In -- I mean, besides the latest, if some of the newer caravans, we can, and some of the NXi Caravans, we typically can.

Q. Mm-hmm.

A. And some of the older ones, we can until we have the latest.

Q. Okay. Do you think it's helpful to have that real time weather?

A. Yeah. It's nice that you can kind of watch it develop --

Q. Mm-hmm.

A. -- on the route of flight.

Q. Mm-hmm. If I said to you that pilots were fudging the numbers on their weight and balance so that it looked like they were flying at the right weight, what would you -- what would your reaction to that be?

A. First time I'm hearing it.

Q. Okay. Do you fly any other airplanes?

A. Not currently.

DR. WILSON: Okay. Thanks, Luke. I think that's all I have for now.

MR. MURKOWSKI: Okay.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. I would like to just rephrase the question Kat asked. She asked when -- had you -- had Chad ever been called out on the carpet, you know, for having to take higher loads. Has he -- regardless of anybody else getting involved, did Chad ever express frustration to you for having loads that were overweight, or he had to deny and

take stuff, and a level of frustration about having to do that?

A. No.

MS. BLUM: Okay. That's all my questions.

MR. MURKOWSKI: Okay. Is it all right if I use the bathroom real quick?

MS. BLUM: Yeah, of course. Pausing the recording at 12:01.

(Off the record.)

(On the record.)

MS. BLUM: Okay. Recording starting at 12:04. And, Tim?

MR. SORENSEN: Just a few more, quick.

BY MR. SORENSEN:

Q. How does Bering Air disseminate urgent or new safety information to the pilots?

A. How do they give that information to us?

Q. Yeah. How do you hear about that as a pilot for Bering Air if something's changed, if there's, you know, maybe a problem with an airplane that all the pilots would need to know, safety information that comes up that needs to be disseminated?

A. Usually we'll hear it face to face kind of coupled with an email.

Q. Okay. Can you describe the -- what do you mean exactly by face to face?

A. I mean, it depends what it is, if it's something with a particular airplane, you know, whoever's scheduled to fly the airplane, like, hey, something wrong with this airplane, you're not going to fly this airplane today.

Q. What about changes to standard operating procedures or protocols?

A. Yeah. That'll be --

MS. BLUM: Could you speak up? Sorry.

MR. SORENSEN: Oh. I'm sorry.

MS. BLUM: It's just kind of quiet.

MS. SORENSEN: Oh. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

MR. MURKOWSKI: Yeah, usually with -- we'll have a kind of meeting with all the pilots in the morning, and if somebody was scheduled to fly later, they'll tell that person directly. It's usually the chief pilot will come down, and if it's a change or some new sheet that we're doing on our iPad -- like we just had another one today, and then Fen came down and talked to me and walked me through it and showed me how we're doing this now, and then that will go on with it. There's always going to be an email too. If anyone's out of town, they'll see that as well and be briefed on it when they get back.

BY MR. SORENSEN:

Q. Okay. Are there any routine safety meetings?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. And how often do those occur?

A. I think those are kind of just dependent on, again if we have changes to procedure, whatever. I don't think there's -- we don't -- we don't do one every month or something. It's just kind of dependent on what's going on, but --

Q. When was the last one?

A. Probably, I want to say last month maybe.

Q. Okay. All right. Just one more question on PIREPs. Has there been any difference in air traffic control soliciting pilot reports?

A. No.

Q. Okay. Before and after the accident, do they routinely solicit pilot reports or they --

A. Pretty normal, yeah.

Q. Okay. And they did that before the accident as well?

A. Mm-hmm.

MR. SORENSEN: All right. Okay. Thank you. That's all I have.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Paul?

MR. SUFFERN: I don't have any more questions, Luke, but thank you.

MS. BLUM: Brian?

MR. WECKWERTH: I've got just a couple.

BY MR. WECKWERTH:

Q. Have you ever been turned around in flight going from here to a village by operation control, one phase of it or somehow because weather went down --

A. Yes.

Q. How do they do that?

A. They'll, if they can't contact me directly, which they usually will over a company radio, then it'll -- another pilot flying in the area, they'll -- hey, pass this along to Luke, and we'll usually be able to get it. And then, worst case scenario, we always call our village agents prior to landing, you know, ten minutes out or however far, and they'll relay that to as well. So we can always get a hold of them on the phone.

Q. How do you ensure that you're within glide distance of land?

A. Yeah. I like to use 300 feet per nautical mile, so I typically like to be at 3 miles out. I'd like to be at about 1900 feet, and use the VASIs or PAPIs as well or -- I'm sorry -- glide distance of land?

Q. Yes.

A. Yeah, I mean, the standard 2 miles per 1000 feet. And we recently had a change to our routes of flight. We'll use certain points that will -- certain points with certain altitudes that will guarantee -- keep us within that glide range as well.

Q. Do you use any electronic means to help ensure that, or --

A. Yeah. With those -- with those new points in route of flights we use, we use, we don't have to do the math ourselves, which is kind of nice, but, yeah, you can, on ForeFlight, you know, you can use the ruler function on there and see how far. And then we have, on our G1000s too, we can tell how far we're going to be off -- away from land as well.

Q. Okay. What is your -- just your definition of operational control?

A. In charge of day-to-day operations.

Q. Is that it, pretty much?

A. Yeah.

MS. WECKWERTH: Okay.

MS. BLUM: Thank you Luke. Okay. Brian?

MR. WECKWERTH: No.

MS. BLUM: Sabrina?

DR. WOODS: I'm good. Thank you.

MS. BLUM: Kat?

DR. WILSON: One question just to follow up on what Rob asked in terms of operational control.

MR. MURKOWSKI: Mm-hmm.

BY DR. WILSON:

Q. Do they also -- does the person acting in the OC position, do they also have responsibility for safety of flight?

A. Yes.

DR. WILSON: Okay. All right. Thanks. Appreciate it.

MS. BLUM: Is there anything else you'd like to add before we conclude?

MR. MURKOWSKI: No.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Well, again, thank you, Luke. And we'll end at 12:09.

(Whereupon, at 12:09 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

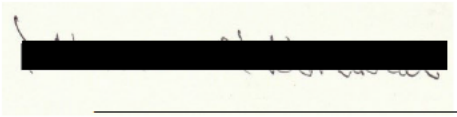
CERTIFICATE

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 Luke Murkowski
ACCIDENT NO.:	ANC25MA018
PLACE:	Nome, Alaska
DATE:	May 6, 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

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: JUSTIN LAWS, Pilot Bering Air

Nome, Alaska

Monday,
February 17, 2025

APPEARANCES:

STARR BLUM, Aviation Accident 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

ROBERT RICHMOND, Representative
Richmond & Quinn
(On behalf of Mr. Laws)

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INTERVIEW

(1:32 p.m.)

MS. BLUM: Okay. Today is February 17th, 2025, and it's 1:32 p.m., Alaska Standard Time.

My name is Starr Blum, and I'm an investigator with the NTSB. We are in the process of investigating the accident that occurred on February 6th involving Bering Air Flight 445.

First off, again, we want to express our condolences. We're sorry you're having to go through this, and we're sorry that we got to be here.

But, as you know, the whole point of us being here is safety, finding the probable cause of the accident and, hopefully, preventing this from happening again.

I just want to assure that us talking to pilots and management pilots and instructors, this is a completely normal part of our process. We do this all the time.

Let's go around the room, and I'll have everybody introduce themselves.

MR. SUFFERN: Yeah. I'm Paul Suffern. I'm a meteorologist with the NTSB. I've been there about 14, 15 years or so.

Before that, I worked up in Alaska for the National Weather Service, mainly in the Juno area, but I spent some time in south central too.

MR. PECK: And I'm Rob Peck. Robert, to be official. I'm with the Anchorage FSDO. I'm an FLM, Front Line Manager, with them. I was an inspector prior to that.

Again, I am here strictly for the safety mission here with the NTSB, not any enforcement or any of that kind of stuff so feel free, I'm not -- it's not going to be this -- other than this.

Prior to that, I did 135 at Alaska Air Transit out of Merrill near Anchorage,

flying Caravans, PC-12s for about 8 years, chief pilot type thing, check airman.

And, then, previous to that, I was a military C-130 guy. Been in Alaska since '05.

MR. WECKWERTH: Brian Weckwerth, the director safety for Bering Air.

MS. BLUM: Okay. So we will be recording this interview so it can be transcribed. After we receive it back, we'll make corrections and as we spoke about, Bob, we'll supply you a copy of that so you can take a look at it as well.

We ask that you just answer the questions to the best of your recollection. Again, if there's an answer you don't know, I don't know is a perfectly fine answer. And also, if I -- if you don't understand a question, just please ask us to clarify.

We might scribble some notes down. Don't be concerned about that; that's normal too. It's just little thoughts we're having as we go.

You are entitled to have a representative here of your choosing present. Is there someone you'd like to have as your representative?

MR. LAWS: Yes. Bob Richmond.

MS. BLUM: Okay, thank you. Bob, please refrain from answering any questions for Justin. You may tell him not to answer a questions, or you guys can go outside and confer.

But other than that, if you need a break, let us know.

Does anyone have any questions?

(No audible response.)

MS. BLUM: Okay. Well let's get started.

INTERVIEW OF JUSTIN LAWS

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Could you start out by just saying your name and spelling it, please?

A. Justin Laws, J-u-s-t-iA-n, L-a-w-s.
Q. How old are you, Justin?
A. Twenty-five.
Q. What is your position here at Bering Air?
A. Pilot
Q. Are you a full-time employee?
A. Yes.
Q. What certificates and ratings do you hold?
A. Commercial and, then, I have a 1900 SIC-type rating.
Q. Great.
A. I guess instrument and all those, multi-engine.
Q. Okay. What class medical do you have?
A. First class.
Q. Any limitations?
A. No. Oh, actually, I need to wear contacts.
Q. Okay. What would you say your total flying time is?
A. Probably about 1,500 hours now.
Q. And how much of that is PIC?
A. Three to 400, I'm not quite sure.
Q. Okay. And you're currently in the Caravan, correct?
A. Yes.
Q. How much time do you have in the Caravan?
A. I want to say, yeah, 250 to 300 hours, somewhere in there.
Q. Recent upgrade, that's great. Congratulations.
Can you give us just a brief history of your aviation background?

A. I went to flight school in Moses Lake, Big Ben Community College, down in Washington state. Did that for 2 years.

I got my first flying job with Hageland in 2020. I got laid off or furloughed indefinitely 2 weeks later due to the -- they went bankrupt.

Q. Yeah.

A. And, then, I think it was about 6 months to a year later, I got hired here.

Q. When you did get hired here at Bering Air, can you tell us what the process of onboarding and hiring was like for you and the training you received?

A. Yeah, I can. It was a weird time because of COVID. That was in 2020 so I had to quarantine for a bit and all that.

And then I spent 2 weeks basically here (indiscernible) riding along, getting to know people before they hired me. And, then, after that, I did all the required training for the right seat position, SIC in the CASA.

And, then, about a month after that, I went down to ATS, I believe it's called, in Denver for training in the 1900 to get an SIC type.

Q. So about how many months ago did you upgrade to the Caravan?

A. I went to FlightSafety in, I believe that was early September.

Q. Can you walk us through the process of transitioning and the training going into the Caravan that you've received?

A. Yeah. I started IOE in, I believe it was early November, right around the first of November or, I guess, yeah, IOE, did a couple days of IOE and then after that, after you meet the

10 hours, then OE begins, and I did that until last month is when they released me, so 3 months of IOE.

Q. Okay. So just to back it up, we understand FlightSafety was a couple

weeks, is that correct, at Wichita?

A. Yes.

Q. When you came here, how long was the ground school portion here at Bering?

A. A couple days, I believe. Just the -- just going over differences.

Q. Okay. Was weather included in that ground school?

A. I can't recall. Yeah, I can't remember.

Q. No problem. So I understand Bering gives a minimum of a hundred hours, how much COE time did you receive or, Company Operating Experience, I guess it's called?

A. I had 166 hours of IOE plus FlightSafety and the 10 hours of OE or -- correction. I have 10 hours of IOE, 166 hours of OE.

Q. Okay, great.

A. Plus FlightSafety sim time, and I don't know what that was.

Q. Did you like the sim training? Did you find it beneficial?

A. The emergency stuff is good in the sim training, quite good at that.

Q. Did they talk to you about weather when you were down in Wichita?

A. We did have, I mean, as far as -- they had some specific days in there. I know they had a specific day for icing conditions. I think they -- I can't recall if they touched on weather specifically in our training.

Q. But you do recall some training in icing, do you remember what that was?

A. Just departing with a lot of ice on the plane, and then they failed the engine and, you know, how it reacts to that and, then, more normal operations enroute.

Q. Okay. Honestly, I have no idea, do they have boots or TKS in the sim, can

they simulate that?

A. It was TKS, but it's a, what is it, 675. It's a different carrier.

Q. Engine?

A. Yeah. So a little bit different.

Q. Okay. Let's talk about the flight into known icing. How do you make your decisions -- wait, let me back that up.

What is the training you received about flight into known icing conditions?

A. A lot of it's just what the guys tell me in IOE so that's the vast majority of it, but looking for PIREPs in the morning, you know, PIREPs, the charts. The charts usually indicate the whole region so you're not sure whether you'll get into it.

From what I've been told, you know, before I enter a cloud, turn it on high, get the wings wet in the morning. I also turn on the backup pump to make sure everything's running.

And then if it's, I guess -- what else is there? Keeping your speed up's a big one I've been told a lot. Yeah. If it's too much, turn around and head back.

I don't really know any specific things that have been --

Q. Yeah. Just anything that you've been taught, whether it was in ground school or on the job while you're flying, you know, just procedures or even techniques that you've been taught is -- if you can think of anything else.

A. Yeah, mostly it's just, you know, I run the pump on high, that's what I've been taught. You wait 'til it begins to decay or shed off then you shut it off to conserve your TKS.

But in certain situations, you know, if you get into icing, that's a lot. I haven't really had to do that but, you know, leave it on and use the max flow if you

need to.

Q. Yeah, I was just going to ask if you've been in a situation yet where -- how do you feel about the system, does it work well?

A. It seems to work great most of the time, yeah. I haven't really had any problems with it.

Q. Great. So you said that you didn't fly at Hageland because they went under, right?

A. No.

Q. Okay. Is this your first Alaska flying job?

A. Yeah, and the second job I've had.

Q. Being new up here, how do you deal with your own personal pressures about weather? Do you have your own personal minimums ever? How do you deal with, when you're new, the kind of changing weather environment that you're flying in?

A. Well, the company has, you know, set limitations. They also have -- it has newly released pilot I was on, the 15, they called it 15 Rule for a while.

When I was flying in IOE, I would do things, you know, I might not be as comfortable as being brand new, but you have a captain or a safety pilot watching, and they can kind of tell you, you know, what to do in certain situations.

And so I do more with them than I do now. Now it's -- I guess I do have numbers in head, like, I'm not going to go into detail on what those are.

Q. Sure.

A. But I have numbers in my head for what I'm willing -- what I've done before, what I've seen and what I'm comfortable with doing as far as the weather goes.

Q. Okay. Have you ever cancelled a flight when it was legal, but it was not -- you weren't quite ready yet with your own personal limitations?

A. What do you mean by cancelling, not launched or turned around?

Q. I guess either, like, maybe you decided not to get off the ground, or you went but then you got out there and said, no, I'm coming back.

A. Yes.

Q. And that was solely your decision?

A. I usually talk to, you know, Dispatch or Operational Control as well, but yeah, I mean, I am part of that.

Q. Okay. Have you ever felt pressured by the company to fly?

A. No.

Q. Have you heard of anybody in the company being pressured to fly?

A. No.

Q. Let's talk about the airframe, 321. Have you flown that airplane recently?

A. I don't believe I ever flew it.

Q. Okay. In your opinion, do you feel like the aircraft are well maintained?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay, great. Going back to the day of the accident, can you just kind of walk us through -- were you flying -- you were flying that day, correct?

A. (No audible response.)

Q. Can you tell us from beginning to end what that day -- what happened during that day for you?

A. Yeah, it was a normal day, normal morning. I can't remember the exact routing, but I did the 8:20 flight, and I flew over to, I believe it was Golovin, White Mountain, Elim return that morning, you know, ordinary flight.

And then I was just hanging around and hope that the last flight that I did, they had nothing else for me.

You want me to talk about --

Q. Yeah. You know, so you did that initial flight -- sorry, I was distracted. That was in the morning, correct?

A. Yes.

Q. So then once you got back, what happened then, did you take another flight?

A. Not right away. I was just hanging out around here. I don't like to leave work until I'm finished with the day, but just hanging out, talking people until that last flight.

Q. Okay. So tell me about that flight.

A. Bella's (ph.) reporting -- I believe when I launched, she was reporting good VFR. I launched for White Mountain return. They split up the afternoon flight so I'd just go White Mountain and dropping some people off, probably picked people up. And just headed right back to Nome.

When I left Dispatch, that was right about the time that they first found out that Chad wasn't answering Center, at least.

I didn't anticipate getting into any icing. There was no icing forecast as far as I'm aware. No icing in the METAR at the time. There were at least three PIREPs that I checked before I launched that said negative ice, negative turbulence, one from a Caravan, two from, I think they were 737s.

I took off out of Nome heading east, and they told me -- I couldn't quite make out what they talking about, but they told me there were would no IFR traffic for a while, I believe, and they wouldn't accept clearances.

So I departed VFR, was heading out east at a thousand feet and started getting into some icing fairly quickly, but it wasn't severe I'd say. I think it was, I had

about 3 to 5 miles the whole way out. I got to about, I think it was right around top Topkok heading out east, and it was getting worse.

At that point, I had heard the company calling people back in because they -- I don't think they were reporting it, but they were aware that it seemed like freezing drizzle or freezing rain here in Nome.

And so I -- I've never flown in that before, but I was starting to think that's what I was experiencing out there as it was getting worse.

So I called in the company, told them what was, what I was experiencing out there and, you know, told them I wanted to come back. David agreed, he told me to come on back so I turned around and came back to Nome.

Q. Were you aware of Chad missing while you were flight, or was it when you got on the ground?

A. I was aware, and they told me, I believe the company told me and Nome radio that they were still not able to get ahold of him, and so to look for anything. My route of flight toward White Mountain, you know, was kind of along the way so I was looking for anything.

It got pretty hard to see out of my airplane because my windshield was coating up pretty good. Yeah.

I was -- about the time I turned around too, I figured that he had crashed, you know, so also uncomfortable being out there with that in my mind, and just wanted to get back on the ground.

Q. Yeah, I don't blame you.

Separately related, it seems like everybody seems to really like the TKS but if there's one part that, you know, is a little harder, is the windscreen.

A. Yeah.

Q. Were you on high when your window was starting to glaze over?

A. Well, the -- I guess high will, it'll get it a little bit, but I was running, I began running the windshield de-ice pretty frequently.

Q. Oh, I forget, that's a separate --

A. Yeah, it's a separate thing. You'll get a little bit of spray from your prop getting on there, but not enough to clear it. I also had the defrost maxed out on my windshield, and it was coating it pretty good. I think I had a good half inch, and I couldn't clear it from the windshield.

And when I turned around, I had -- I could see ice on the top and bottom of my unprotected surfaces, on my wings, and that's what really concerned me.

So I turned it on, I believe I turned it on high at that point and just left it on until I got back, and I was checking them again.

It began -- when I flew back, I flew back on a more, like, inland route, and I actually was able to clear most of the ice off the wings at that point.

Q. Oh, understood. Tons of questions, but I'll let Paul handle the weather stuff.

So once you got back, what did you do after that?

A. Unloaded my plane, you know, returned the bags to the passengers I had on my flight and then I -- I stayed at Bering Air until probably 10:30, 11:00 just hoping to get some kind of update.

Q. Did you talk to Chad that day?

A. I talked to him on the radio that morning. I can't recall talking to him in person.

Q. Okay. Did you have any communications with him or any other planes while you were up on that second flight?

A. I believe I talked to Sophia, and I asked her what she knew. I can't remember that conversation in any detail, but I believe that I talked to her.

Q. Any talk about weather?

A. I may have asked her what kind of ice she was getting up higher at some point. I can't really remember.

Q. We like to try to figure out a 72-hour history for the pilot. Were you in contact with Chad the previous three days at all? Do you know what he was doing or any discussions with him?

A. Yeah. He was a friend of mine so I talked to him but, you know, nothing -- I don't know, just music and he was showing me pictures of -- yeah, just normal personal things that we were just discussing.

I can't remember all the details.

Q. Did he share anything, you don't have to say what specifically, but did he ever tell you about any distractions or stresses he had in his life on a personal, family, work, financial level? Were you aware of anything that could be bothering him?

A. No. He seemed to be in a great mood.

Q. Okay. And he's in good health?

A. Yeah. I would say so. I don't now his personal health, but yeah.

MS. BLUM: That's going to be all my questions for now. Thank you, Justin.

MR. LAWS: Okay.

MR. SUFFERN: Thanks, Justin. Appreciate your detail there, it's really helpful.

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. Just stepping back to your flight out of here as you're heading for White

Mountain, forgive me, I don't know all the pilot terms or procedures or things like that, but do you recall if you had the autopilot on when you -- after you took off?

A. I did not.

Q. So you were hand flying the whole time?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. And could you, like, feel the plane and things like that more because you were off autopilot?

A. I mean, yes, you can feel it more. I like to hand fly a lot. That's just kind of my thing so, yeah.

Q. Going back to, I think, one of the questions Starr had mentioned when you were talking about the flight and the known icing training I think that you received down in Wichita, things like that, do they have any -- do you recall if they had any training or suggestions on how to handle the autopilot or anything like in icing?

A. I don't remember them touching on that. It was a pretty brief, I think it was, you know, a 2-hour sim session, but I was in the left seat for an hour and then observing somebody else for an hour in the right seat.

Q. How about, just talking about weather in general that morning, do you recall what you looked at the morning of the accident specifically of, you know, do you use your iPad, do you use the computer or anything, if you recall?

A. I look at the -- I use the computers for the most part and also AeroWeather on my phone for more minute by minute, you know, and try to get updates on there.

And then also, you know, the AWOSs and the information they give you departing here in Nome.

Q. Okay. And do you recall looking at any graphical things or mainly just

kind of Text Products, like TAFS and METARs and what those were showing?

A. Usually Text Products, but I also look at the -- I can't -- I think it's the Alaska Aviation Weather Unit page, and it'll give you, you know, the PIREPs are on there.

I like to look at those and get an idea of where the tops are at, the base is, and if anybody's reporting turbulence or ice, you know, those are useful in the morning.

Look at the Icing chart too but like I said, a lot of times it's just kind of a blanket, mod ice it'll say potentially, or white ice, or whatever it says. So that one's not as useful, in my opinion.

Q. If you're out flying around, not necessarily on the accident day, but just you flying around, what is the, when you say updated on weather conditions and things like that?

A. However I can get my hands on it. I call the RCOs a lot. Some of the newer Caravans, you know, they can fill out the flags and you can look at those.

And so I, you know, you're sitting there in cruise, kind of bored, I'll look at all the weather all around. If somewhere goes IFR, just curious what's going on down there, I look at that.

Obviously before I leave Nome, you know, I'm checking all the computers.

I listen -- a lot of times I just listen to every weather station I can get ahold of as you're flying around just to get a picture of what's going on.

Q. When you're discussing whether, I guess, just on company frequency or things like that, do you know if that weather's ever passed on as a PIREP to Flight Service or Anchorage Center or anything like that?

A. I don't know. I don't think it would be, but I don't know if they ever make it that far.

Q. As far as, like, I think Starr had the question about maybe cancelling a flight or something like that, and it sounds like you had experience doing that, due to weather, what kind of guidance did you have or do you have as far as making that no-go decision before you took off?

A. On that day?

Q. On the day that you -- you said you've at least cancelled, well, you and/or the dispatcher and the CO made the decision to cancel the flight that day, do you recall kind of what you were looking at weather wise when you were doing that to make that decision?

A. Well, that flight specifically, I was uncomfortable with the amount of ice I was getting, and I started -- I don't know. I kind of thought it might have been freezing drizzle or freezing rain at that point because I'm in VMC at three to five miles of visibility, but I'm still picking up quite a bit of ice.

On other days it's, you know, usually company limitations which we have prescribed in the GOM and even, I guess, the SOPs and all that.

And, then, also, you know, what each individual pilot's comfortable with which varies from person to person.

And, then, some of those limitations -- I'm not going to go into all of them but, you know, let's say you're talking about a crosswind and it's reporting, you know, 20 knots or so, but you know the runway's really slick, that's below the company limitation, but we might not go, you know, hold off on that flight or wait for the winds to change just because of additional factors so it's not always cut and dry with just numbers that we have.

Q. Is there ever a kind of no-go decision for a forecast of icing or anything like that?

A. If it's reporting freezing rain, freezing drizzle, we do not launch, you know, any type of severe ice, we're not launching, probably even moderate ice, you know, we think twice about doing that flight especially if the tops are hard to reach.

MR. SUFFERN: Thanks. That's really, really helpful, Justin. That's all I got for right now.

MR. PECK: Again, Justin, I can sympathize where you're at and out there flying having that whole deal, it's a terrible thing. I'm sorry we're asking these questions but, hopefully, it's going to help us try to figure out the conditions that day better, right?

MR. LAWS: Yeah.

MR. PECK: So I'm going to ask some more questions specifically about the day that you got that icing, that incident, or the accident day, right, second flight, I guess, for you more particularly.

BY MR. PECK:

Q. Your windshield, you said you had your -- were having a hard time with that, right, keeping it clear. At what point did you get it clear, or did you, even?

A. I didn't really get it clear. When I landed, I had maybe about that much to look through.

Q. Between the TKS and the --

A. I was running both.

Q. -- or the defroster and (indiscernible)?

A. Yeah, the entire flight.

Q. Have you ever seen icing like that before?

A. No.

Q. First time. And, you mentioned you had ice kind of coming back underneath and over the top from what you could see. Obviously, it's hard to see on top of the wing, but underneath the wing, how far back do you think that icing might have been extended past the TKS panel?

A. It looked like it was, and I don't know how it was getting there, but it looked like it was going pretty much all the way back. It was just coating the wing.

Q. Really?

A. Yeah.

Q. And you did say you were on max, using max at times in there, or not?

A. I don't think I ever turned it off max. When I saw that, it hadn't been doing that for most of the flight when I saw that. That's when I was uncomfortable with it.

For most of the flight, I was actually -- it was just the windshield that was the big problem.

And, then, the wings were doing all right. I was able to run high for a while, clear it off, at least get it rodded out, you know, and then shut it back off again.

But when I saw that, I didn't run max full ever. When I turned around, turned it on high, left it on high, and the next time I checked it, it was getting rid of that stuff on the unprotected surfaces.

Q. Okay. So at that point, it was actually keeping up with it, you were thinking?

A. Yeah.

Q. And this isn't a check ride so don't consider that's what I'm questioning like, right, exact numbers or anything here, but what kind of numbers in your head were you using for your speeds when you were seeing that kind of icing, you know,

especially when you saw it under the wing and stuff like that?

A. No lower than 120, but no lower than, you know, I've -- I looked at my speed on the way out to get a feel for where it was at because I wanted to know if it was decreasing.

I can't recall the numbers. I believe the lowest I saw was 142, and usually we're cruising at around 150 or so. So not a significant drop in air speed.

Q. That was at the same torque setting then, is that correct?

A. Yeah. I -- yes, the same torque setting.

Q. Okay. You said you were hand flying, did you notice during that, especially the icing event when it started to accumulate on the wings and stuff before you went to high, did you notice any decay in control effectiveness or any of those types of things?

A. I did.

Q. You did. And, then, I guess when you got back here based on what you said, basically the wings were wet again, clear of ice pretty much?

A. Yeah. The wings looked pretty good. Yeah, I took a look at them when I landed.

Q. Right. So you didn't have any issues actually in the landing phase, controllability or any of that kind of stuff?

A. No, I landed just fine.

Q. All right. I would guess take off land is where you landed as far as flap setting?

A. I put them on land.

Q. Oh, did you?

A. Yeah. I was pretty confident, and those wings looked pretty clear at that

point.

Q. At that point, right. So when you got on the ground and you were able to walk around the airplane, what'd you find at that point?

A. I looked at my windshield a little more, you know, like I said, it had a good chunk still left on there I wasn't able to clear.

I believe the front of my cargo pod had also, you know, a fair amount on there and, then, the nose strut sometimes will keep ice on it, you know, same thing, it had a fair amount.

But the rest of the airplane looked pretty well cleared.

Q. Okay. And you had mentioned half an inch earlier, is that still kind of what you saw on the ground when you got out? Was it more or less?

A. I don't know what the -- the measurement. I didn't look at it too in depth as far as anything other than my windshield. But, yeah, about half an inch on the windshield there.

Q. I would assume that, like, your tie-down rings and, normally, they gather ice pretty well, did they have ice on them too?

A. I don't recall. I didn't look at them.

Q. How about the back of the horizontal at the very top, up where the light is, the rotating gauge, you didn't --

A. I did not look at that either.

Q. I guess, more for the record than anything, you said flags. I'm assuming that that's the ADS-B flags that pop up, ADS-B and that are showing up for weather on the G1000, correct?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. I was writing notes, they weren't bad notes, they were questions.

Have you experienced anything in your time in the Caravan, whether it be in the IOE or COE or whatever we're going to call it, that the supervision-type period, or since you've been on, on your own, you even came close to that as far as icing, or is that, by far, the worst or normal?

A. I've had experience of the -- experiences that have come close but, usually, I thought easier to get out of it.

And I guess I did kind of get out of it going more inland coming back.

Had some times where it's hard to clear the windshield when you're picking up a lot of ice. But, then, you can get a different altitude from Center or, you know, change something about where you're at, you can clear it pretty easily.

I don't know that I've ever seen ice accumulating like that on the unprotected surfaces rapidly, you know, like, one second I checked it, the next, it was there all of a sudden, you know.

I don't know what the timeframe was in between how often I was looking at it, but I was looking all over on that flight.

That was different, though, because usually you see it building up on the leading edge, and maybe even more significant, like, building up on your leading edges, but not growing it back like the way it was on that flight.

Q. What kind of icing would you have categorized it as?

A. I reported to -- I reported it to Dispatch and to Nome radio that it was moderate rime. I would say it was more, it looked more mixed, I mean, there was -- it wasn't like a clear coating, but, yeah, probably a mixed type of icing.

Q. Maybe opaque or something --

A. It was --

Q. -- whiteish or --

A. Yeah. There was some white in there, especially the stuff that was -- from what I can remember, I didn't take a picture or anything, but the stuff that I saw on the leading edges or the unprotected surfaces, it had little white dots in it or speckles or something like that. And that's how I was able to see it easily, you know, it caught my attention versus if it was just a sheet, maybe it would have been a lot harder to see.

Q. Did you happen to take a look at your TKS fluid quantity, like, in Pod B there once you were done with that flight?

A. Yeah. I believe it was about, hard to tell on the sight gauge, I believe I launched with 17 or 18 gallons and landed with six-ish.

Q. And do you remember how long that flight was, approximately?

A. About 30 minutes. Maybe -- give or take, five. Maybe on the long -- maybe 35 minutes total.

Q. Is there, in your OE-type experience, we'll consider all of it, a hundred and plus hours, right?

A. Yeah.

Q. What, in general, was taught or word of mouth, I guess, as far as where to be with that TKS departing, especially in the winter time, full, minimum, 11.7, is there, was there?

A. Full. A lot of the ice, yeah, top it off. If you're suspecting any ice, definitely top it off. Every morning I top it off.

Q. Okay. In general and, again, I'm not really putting you on the spot, but just in general, how close do you think your weight estimates are specifically -- they're probably pretty close here coming out, but in a village, even such as Unalakleet, as far as your being, you know, within weight limits, do you think you're pretty close most of the time with the way you guys do stuff?

A. Yeah. They should be pretty close.

Q. Okay. And, then, for CG, how do you figure that out?

A. We have, you know, the whizz wheel there to go through it, and I've done that.

I also like to look at my nose strut. The distance it's off is another good indicator. And also the tail stand, you know, obviously, if you load it and you're sitting on your tail stand, that's not reloading the whole plane and redo the calculations, figure out where it needs to be.

Q. Do you have any kind of a preference, I guess, when you're nine-seat type of configuration, where you load bigger or smaller people, in general, when you're loading them?

A. I'm light except for heavy stuff up front.

MR. PECK: Heavy stuff up front. I don't think I got anything else right now.

MS. BLUM: Brian.

BY MR. WECKWERTH:

Q. Just for clarification and, then, not knowing after coming back from FlightSafety, Starr asked about whether training after you come back from FlightSafety, the clarifier, our weather training is not necessarily based on that, it's based on our basic indoc, you recall that, correct?

A. Yeah.

Q. It's not --

A. Yeah, that was --

Q. It's not on contingent on coming back from FlightSafety?

A. That was Differences training, but I've done basic indocs, recurrence and

all that, we covered it there, yeah.

Not necessarily -- well, I guess it -- the Caravan ground would be specific to that.

But that training I did immediately after coming back from FlightSafety was, I can't remember what he called, but it was Differences because we train in a eight -- or they train in a 675 with different flap settings.

They didn't always follow the company SOPs down there, you know, or they're reluctant to adhere to what we want to train sometimes.

MS. BLUM: But you add more weather when you came back up here is essentially what you're trying to clarify?

MR. LAWS: Yeah.

MR. WECKWERTH: Yeah, it's at the basic indoc time. It could have been months before he went to FlightSafety, it could be months after. It's a different base month for weather and basic indoctrination training.

Not contingent on getting checked out in a particular aircraft is what I'm -- he's had his weather training and doesn't, it's not contingent on, as a result of aircraft training because they're all separate, different, being all different places.

Just to make sure he's got that but, yeah, there's weather specific to the Caravan like we've been discussing all this time.

MS. BLUM: Yeah, okay. Thanks. Do you have anything else, Brian?

MR. WECKWERTH: No. That was it.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. We haven't talked yet about the exit strategies you guys are taught, whether it's here or at FlightSafety or in your past.

So let's say you get into unexpected or unknown forecasts, it's a bad icing

situation, we know -- I think you already talked about, hey, turn around, you came back where you came from.

What about altitude? How do you -- what goes into your decision making if you do have the power?

A. If you can climb out and get above it, get in the clear, that's, obviously, your best option.

If you're heading out, you know, you can't always do that.

In that situation, I didn't -- Dispatch actually told me, or David Olson, he mentioned that if I need to, I could climb, but I did not want to do that because I was in clearer air down there, and I was afraid I'd get more ice trying to climb up, you know.

Q. Yeah.

A. And I didn't know where the tops were at, if they're even -- I think I had heard from, actually, Mike and Chad that morning that they were pretty high, the tops. So, I wanted to stay out of that, you know.

A lot of times you get even more ice if you find that top layer, but, then, if you can't quite escape it, you're stuck there or then you got to go back down.

Q. Do you recall that day, like, was it -- could you see the sky at all, was it, like, would you call it overcast?

A. I never went up, up above any layers. I stayed below it all that morning and then on that flight.

MS. BLUM: Okay. I don't have any more questions.

MR. SUFFERN: I just got two.

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. Are there any weather resources, whether they're equipment or forecast or anything like that, that could be improved for you as a pilot, and help you do your

job better?

A. Yeah, you know, a lot of our AWOSs go down all the time. It'd be nice if they worked.

It'd also be nice if they reported freezing rain or freezing drizzle. The only place you can get that is, you know, the major stations. None of them out here do.

So, it's hard to determine where that stuff is at and, maybe, you know, if that system was moving in from the east out there, we could have had some forewarning of that from stations around Golovin, White Mountain, Elim, you know.

That's about all I -- but, yeah, you know, if they worked and if they reported that, it would be awesome.

Q. Okay. Now, what about, pie in the sky, weather things that you've ever thought about, man, I wish I had this as a pilot, you know, 3-D view of this, more weather radars, equipment on my plane that'll automatically do that?

A. I've never had those dreams because I, you know, figure what we had up here is about all we're going to get. So, I never had any huge aspirations for new and improved stuff, but, yeah, I mean, more weather, it doesn't hurt.

MR. SUFFERN: Thanks, Justin. That's all I got.

MR. PECK: I got a couple more I thought of. You say, dang it.

BY MR. PECK:

Q. Where did you do your, the Cessna TKS training, that mandatory training that we're here -- do you remember where was that at? Was it here or Wichita?

A. The TKS course?

Q. Yeah.

A. That's an online course.

Q. Right, but did you do it here or while you were down in --

A. No, I did it right after I left FlightSafety at home.

Q. Okay. You kind of mentioned you went north, I believe, on the way home, more towards the shoreline.

So do you think there was any kind of a correlation there with kind of being over the ice/water in ground with or dirt, if you will, with that amount of icing that you were seeing? Was there any kind of a correlation there?

A. The thought crossed my mind. It's hard to say where it comes from.

Q. But it kind of seemed like it might have been in that zone?

A. It did seem like it might have been in that zone.

Q. Interesting.

A. And I can't recall what direction the wind was blowing or anything, like, during that flight. I know the next morning it was blowing out of the north. I have no recollection what it was doing at that time.

Q. It wasn't a strong wind though, or you probably would have noted it?

A. Yeah. If it was blowing significantly, I probably would have felt it or noticed it.

Q. What kind of glide distant considerations do you give out over the water?

A. Well, in that case, I didn't go out over the water. I was right on the shore for along that flight because --

Q. Right, but not -- I'm just saying in general.

A. Oh, in general.

Q. I should have prefaced it with that.

A. Two to one and, then, also, I look at the, you know, I don't know how accurate it is, but my -- the little wind indicator on those G1000s and so sometimes they'll stay up higher for a little bit longer or stay closer to a certain land, you know, to

try to make that glide.

If I'm going, you know, let's say I'm going -- usually I do, like, a Stebbins Unalakleet from here, I go out towards Darby, and I turn at 11,000 and 12,000 feet, somewhere in that range, and then a steeper rate of descent to maintain that glide than you normally would.

Q. In any of your training, it doesn't matter whether it was here or anywhere else, have you ever heard any rules of thumb for getting out of, like, severe icing, altitude wise, specifically, or you had any --

A. I know -- I can't remember the exact number, but what is it, negative, you know, I think it's negative 20 C, something like that, or maybe -- it might be higher than that, avoiding those areas where it's real close to the freezing level.

As far as altitude goes, I can't recall any specific training on what altitude to reach, you know.

Q. Yeah. It's not necessarily, at least what I've been exposed to, it's not necessarily an altitude. You're very right. Temperature's got something to do with it, but, then, there's -- I think NASA did some studies.

A. Not hang out in the top layer. I guess, I was talking about that earlier. Don't hang out in that very top layer of, you know, cloud system. You could get above it or get below it.

MR. PECK: Okay.

MS. BLUM: We always ask this question. Is there anything that I -- oh, shoot, sorry Brian.

MR. WECKWERTH: No. No, nothing else.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Is there anything that we didn't ask you that you wish we would have that you really like to tell us in order to help us with this investigation?

MR. LAWS: I'm not a very (indiscernible) person.

MR. PECK: Okay.

MS. BLUM: I'll stop the recording at 2:25.

(Whereupon, at 2:25 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

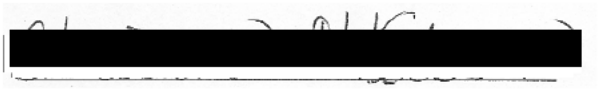
CERTIFICATE

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 Justin Laws
ACCIDENT NO.:	ANC25MA018
PLACE:	Nome, Alaska
DATE:	February 17, 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

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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: JUSTIN LAWS, Pilot

Bering Air

Nome, Alaska

Tuesday,
May 6, 2025

APPEARANCES:

STARR BLUM, Operational Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

TIM SORENSON, Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

PAUL SUFFERN, Meteorologist
National Transportation Safety Board

ROB BECK, Aviation Safety Inspector
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Richmond & Quinn
(On behalf of Justin Laws)

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INTERVIEW

(9:02 a.m.)

MS. BLUM: Okay. Today is May 6th, 2025, and it's 9:02 Alaska Daylight Time. My name is Starr Blum, and I'm an operational factors investigator with the NTSB. And we're here again to talk to you about the crash that occurred on February 6th involving Bering Air Flight 445.

Just to remind you, we're an independent agency. We don't have anything to do with DOT or the FAA. We don't have anything to do with liability or blame. Our sole purpose is safety, to find the probable cause of an accident, and see if there's things that we can do to prevent it from happening again.

We will be recording this interview. It'll be transcribed. We'll go over it to make any corrections, and then Bob will provide you the transcript so you can too as well. Let's go around the room and have everyone introduce themselves.

MR. SORENSEN: Hi. I'm Tim Sorensen. I am an accident investigator with the Central Region, and I've been assigned as the investigator in charge for the accident -- for this accident.

MR. SUFFERN: I'm Paul Suffern. I'm a meteorologist with the NTSB.

MR. BECK: Rob Beck, Anchorage FAA. I'm just here from an NTSB perspective looking at non-enforcement type stuff.

MR. WECKWERTH: I'm Brian Weckwerth, director of Safety, Bering Air.

DR. WOODS: Sabrina Woods with the NTSB. I'm a human performance investigator.

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

MS. BLUM: And we see -- you are entitled to a representative, and you have one here today who is with you.

MR. LAWS: Yeah. Bob Richmond.

MS. BLUM: Bob, can you please introduce yourself, and spell your name for the transcript?

MR. RICHMOND: Robert L. Richmond, R-I-C-H-M-O-N-D.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Thanks, Bob. Please refrain from answering for Justin. If you guys would like to confer, we'll stop the recording, and you can go outside and talk.

And just like last time, Justin, please just answer the questions to the best of your recollection. And if you don't know, that's a perfectly fine answer. If you need a break, please speak up, like bathroom, whatever, and we'll stop the recording and pick up when you're ready. Sound good?

MR. LAWS: Yep. Bring it on.

MS. BLUM: Do you have any questions?

MR. LAWS: No questions.

INTERVIEW OF JUSTIN LAWS

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Okay. So what was your -- what is the maximum gross weight of the Caravan?

MR. LAWS: 9,062 with no ice.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Okay. And with ice?

A. 8,807.

Q. Okay. What was your understanding before the accident?

A. 9,062.

Q. So were you using the lower weight before then?

A. No.

Q. Okay. Will you explain to us the process of how you handle a weight and balance, let's say we're going from Nome to St. Michael's, and then we're going to go to Unalakleet, how do you handle the weight and balance going out of St. Michael's? You take off here with the manifest, can you walk us through from there what you would do with two flights?

A. I mean the only difference would be the amount of fuel you burn, so you get a load available out of Nome, and then a load available. You calculate that in the village, and that's what you can take from there.

Q. So you would get another load in St. Michael's?

A. What do you mean another load?

Q. Or do you take off -- do you take off with two manifests for both flights from Nome?

A. No. There's one manifest for what's on the plane, and then there's another manifest down there with what's getting on the plane.

Q. Okay. So what do the -- when you call to -- when you're coming into St. Michael's, do you let them know how much load you can take?

A. Not always.

Q. Okay.

A. I mean if it's -- I can see how many passengers I'm picking up, generally, and they usually tell you. And if it's going to be one or two people, there's no -- it's usually not going to ever be a factor, so you don't need to tell them what your load available is.

Q. Okay.

A. I've only ever seen that be a factor in like Shishmaref picking up a lot of

people. And then I might give them a load in route, let them know what I can take.

Q. Okay. So when you show up in Shishmaref, do they have all the bags there, or cargo and the people, they're ready to go, and you offload whoever's getting off, or whatever cargo or bags?

A. Yeah.

Q. And then how do you know what's going on? So is it already pre-ready -- pre-made for you to just put on your airplane and go?

A. Yeah. It's all weighed and ready to go. They have numbers for you. And, you know, I look at that, and I look at what I've burned off in fuel, and I know what I can put on the plane. If I need to bump stuff, I'll bump it.

Q. Okay. When would you -- how would you know if you need to bump stuff?

A. If it's over the load that I calculated going into Shishmaref or on the ground there after I've looked at my fuel burn.

Q. Okay. So if you told them, for instance, I can take 2,000 pounds, you're saying that the difference would be like maybe you didn't burn as much fuel? Is that where you'd have to redo and think, like, I've got to kick stuff off? I'm just trying to understand.

A. Can you ask that question again? I'm confused in what you're asking what --

Q. So like if you gave them your load.

A. Yeah.

Q. And so they know that you can only take so much. When would you -- how would you know that it's too much, and you need to take stuff off? What would be an indictor to you?

A. I just look at the manifest. If it's over what I told them --

Q. Okay.

A. -- then I'll bump stuff.

Q. It's just simple as that. They didn't add it up right, or whatever?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay.

A. Yeah. Potentially. Yeah.

Q. Okay. So when you -- let's say you're over. You put in your iPad, and the numbers come up red, you're going to kick bags off first, or whatever you deem appropriate. Does that require company approval to take weight off? Do you need to let anybody know?

A. No.

Q. Are you aware or have you ever heard of the practice of just reducing the fuel load to make the numbers work?

A. I mean I reduce my fuel load as much as practical, but land with an hour in Nome. Is that what you're asking?

Q. No. I'm saying that you would change your fuel load on the iPad to make the numbers work.

A. No.

Q. You're never aware of anything like that happening? Okay. Do you use the iPad on every leg?

A. Yes.

Q. And how would this new tool, the Flight Release tool, how is that helping you since the accident with -- and changes? How is that tool affecting your life?

A. It doesn't help. It just documents what we already did. I still look at the

same weather. I still plan my flights the same way. I just sign now and get OC to sign as well. But I talk to them before. I still talk to them now, you know, about each flight, Dispatch and Operational Control.

And so I had nothing --nothing's really changed for me that much as far like the way I go about doing my flights. I just sign and release, and it's all -- it's better documented, I would say.

Q. But is there a change in the weight and balance, like the -- I understand that it's already pre-populated, the passengers and stuff, but is there -- what's the change in the weight and balance portion? Is there one?

A. Oh, the Flight Release?

Q. The tool that the -- I'm trying to learn about it.

A. Oh. The Flight Release doesn't do weight and balance. It's just checking weather, and --

Q. But does this new system affect the weight and balance where the people are populated, or the weights are already populated?

A. Are you talking about the -- so the Flight Release, which is the online where I'm signing and the operational controller or Dispatch is signing, or --

Q. Well, I might be confusing my terms. Brian's still teaching me about it.

A. Okay.

Q. I'm talking about like people that fly a lot, already their weights are in, but you can add 10. Is that something that you're already populating in your weight and balance program on your iPad?

A. I enter those numbers in manually.

Q. Okay. I'll learn more about it. Just trying to understand this new tool, how it's helping you, or --

A. The app that creates the PFRs where I do my weight and balance, it's separate from the Flight Release.

Q. Okay.

A. They're two different things.

Q. That's what I want to talk about then.

A. Okay.

Q. How is that affecting?

A. The new thing, which is the Flight Release?

Q. No. The other one that's affecting the different app, the PFR is what you called it. Not that one.

A. Oh. That hasn't really changed. The only change that's happened in there is now TKS is not part of the operating weight empty. It's part of the operating weight, and so it's accounted for with -- so instead of me -- that's just an ease of life thing. So I get my operating weight for the day in an aircraft, you know, from the TEN (ph.), or from the SMS. That's also in the SMS program.

And I can add my weight, the weight of all the equipment on the plane, and then I can add the TKS per leg, or the fuel per leg in that PFR. And so that simplifies it for me instead of having to go on my phone or whatever and just calculate everything, you know, for each leg, which is what you had to do before, and what I was doing.

Q. Okay. And --

A. I don't know if that makes sense. And that's the only change that I've seen so far in the weight and balance app basically.

Q. You could put the TKS fluid in?

A. Yeah. It's not part of the operating weight empty. It's part of the

operating weight out.

Q. Okay.

A. And so it's easier to adjust that per leg.

Q. Okay. Interesting. Let's talk about TKS. You know, you guys told us last time that it's hard to rely on the G1000. It's not super accurate. So you take off full. How do you keep track? Is there a technique that you do in flight to keep track of how much you're using, and how much time you have left? Do you start a timer?

A. No, I don't start a timer, and I don't run it -- I didn't run it consistently before then, and I don't just turn it on and leave it on. I try to conserve it as much as possible.

Q. Yeah.

A. I just got into some ice the other day, you know, and I turned it on. And I was clearing it, but like my biggest priority was getting out of that ice. So I requested a block from Center, and was able to climb out of it pretty quick.

Q. Okay.

A. So it was not a big deal. But, no, I don't start a timer or anything like that. I do use the G1000, but I try to look at it and then compare it to the site gauge. So in the morning, I'll look at that, how it's filled up, and let's say I top it up to the filter neck so I know it's topped off. And then I look at my G1000 gauge, what's that reading. You know, maybe it reads low, maybe it read -- well, they don't ever read high. But they might read a little bit low.

Q. Right

A. But I know that I've got more than what it's indicating, you know? If I saw it down below 11, then it's cause for concern. I might just turn back to Nome, or something.

Q. So you kind of interpolate between the site gauge and --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- the G1000 gauge?

A. Yeah. And I've gone in villages and, you know, my gauge will be reading one thing, and I go out there and look at that site gauge, and it's a different thing. So I'll check it again with the site gauge to get a better idea of where I'm actually at.

Q. Okay. Let's go back to Unalakleet. I can't recall from the last time we talked, have you needed TKS load in Unalakleet before?

A. No, I have not.

Q. Okay. Have you ever heard of anybody getting TKS load there from your colleagues?

A. Not that I can recall, but I don't ask about where they're picking up TKS or what they're doing.

Q. So in Kotzebue, have you gotten TKS there?

A. Not that I can remember. I probably have. It's the same -- it's the same system we have here.

Q. Can you explain the system to us?

A. It's just the TKS drum that you pump fluid into. You can just walk it out to your plane, and --

Q. Not the big drum, but the smaller --

A. It's a good size, you know?

Q. Yeah? A 55 gallon drum, or --

A. I don't know what it is.

Q. How do you get that out to the plane? I guess --

A. It's on wheels.

Q. Okay. And do you do it yourself, or does someone --
A. Yes.
Q. And you've never had a problem getting fluid from anywhere?
A. Not if I need it.
Q. Okay. But I feel -- I think that's my -- for now. I'm going to pass it off to Tim.
MR. SORENSEN: Okay.
BY MR. SORENSEN:
Q. Thanks for coming in again. Tim. How long have you been flying in the 208?
A. Less than a year.
Q. Okay. And do you have 208 experience before you got --
A. No.
Q. -- to Bering? Okay. About how many hours?
A. Probably about 500 now.
Q. Okay. As far as icing conditions, I mean how significant are those to you, how comfortable are you with those in the 208? Maybe that's not quite a fair question because there's a range of icing conditions that come up. But is it normally a concern for you, and if so, is there any difference between before and after the accident?
A. It's always a concern, and I don't like to see any ice on my plane. You know, sometimes you can put up with it and deal with it, but if I start to get any, I'm looking to go anywhere. If there's an easy escape route, I'm not going to sit --
Q. Okay.
A. -- in even light or trace icing, you know? No, there's not a whole lot of difference between before and after the way I've been dealing with ice.

Q. Okay.

A. I've got speeds that I have to maintain.

Q. Okay.

A. Will not slow down if Center requests that I slow down. And you always keep the TKS topped off. That's what I was doing before. That's what I was trained to do before. That's what I'll continue to do now.

Q. Okay. And then with respect to TKS, as previously -- at outstations, it sounds like you rarely need to get TKS, or is that a misconception on my part?

A. What do you mean by an outstation? Just Unalakleet, or --

Q. So you're doing routes from Nome, and coming back. So an outstation would be an airport that is an intermediate stop to you. So that might be St. Michael.

A. Yeah. There's no TKS down there.

Q. I'm sorry. Say again.

A. There's no TKS in those villages.

Q. Okay.

A. There's TKS in Unalakleet. There's TKS in Nome. There's TKS in Kotzebue. You can't top off in a village.

Q. Understood. Okay. So Kotzebue and Unalakleet, you rarely need to get TKS there. Is that accurate?

A. Yeah. And that's just -- I mean that's just circumstantial, but I haven't had the need to top off there.

Q. Okay. All right. Switching over now if we could to the airspeeds, you had mentioned that. Has anything changed as far as the standard operating procedures at Bering Air as far as air speeds, air speeds and icing conditions before and then after the accident?

A. No. I mean we're using 120 as your minimum speed in icing before. That's still the case now. 110 to escape is your low speed.

Q. Okay.

A. And then the only new one is you're not allowed to let Center slow you below 140.

Q. Okay.

A. If you anticipate potential icing, just don't go below 140.

Q. Okay. All right. And was that your -- as a pilot in command, was that your procedure before as well?

A. Yes.

Q. Or -- okay. So for you personally, that really wasn't much of a change for you (indiscernible)?

A. Yeah. It wasn't a change for me. That's what I have been told, but the guys that I trained with during OE, they told me do not ever slow down if you're getting icing.

Q. Okay.

A. You just maintain your max speed.

Q. Okay.

A. I do --

Q. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to cut you off. Go ahead.

A. No. You're good. I was just saying I wouldn't even slow down much on an approach until --

Q. Okay.

A. -- you know, it was necessary.

Q. Okay. Understood. Do you ever get any pushback from ATC if -- or I'm

sorry. Let me withdraw that for just a second. Let me step back. Have you ever been assigned a speed reduction by ATC and declined it?

A. I don't think that I have. I was -- this is a while ago, but they had me slow down to -- I was in clear air. I slowed down to 110 knots. And then on the decent, they cleared for me -- they cleared me for the approach. I had told them I needed to resume my own speed, and they came back and said that it was -- I could do whatever I want basically, you know?

Q. Okay. Is it fair to say, then, in those limited situations, you have not gotten any pushback from ATC? Would that --

A. Yeah. I've never gotten any pushback.

Q. That's a fair statement?

A. If I tell them I need it, I'm confident that they'll give me that higher speed if I need it.

Q. Okay. As far as -- we've heard that with respect to over-water flights, and power of glide range to land, that there are now standard routes between some of the airports. Is that correct?

A. Yeah. I believe that was Ben Rowe. He created some routes for guidance. Not required to fly them.

Q. Okay.

A. And I don't always fly those exact routes.

Q. Okay.

A. Especially in VFR flight plan. I'm still maintaining my glide. But they are helpful, you know, if you've never done that route, or you, you know, want to look at it and plan it out, or if you're going to do an IFR. There's some useful weight points there.

Q. Okay. So situations when you would choose to fly a route different from those standards, those would be what? You said VFR, is that for an operational efficiency standpoint? Or --

A. Yeah. I might fly a different route just to, you know, maybe I got some better winds somewhere, go up a little higher, get up a little lower if I can. Maybe cut a little tighter. Mostly just to speed up the flight, or save fuel, or do any number of --

Q. Okay.

A. -- things that I --

Q. Those are good reasons.

A. Yeah.

Q. In those situations, how do you ensure that you're maintaining power of glide distance to the shore?

A. The way I do it, I have it on my iPad with the glide range.

Q. Okay.

A. I look at my wind indicator, and then kind of factor that in.

Q. Okay.

A. And then I have also the inset map on the G1000. I usually scroll that up to as close as I can to what the glide range would be. So let's say I'm at 10,000 feet. You can set it to 20 miles, and it has a little ring around your airplane, and there you go, there's that 20. But if you get a huge wind, stay a lot closer to land. You know, if it's going to be pushing you out away from it.

I don't ever err on the side of going further out. That makes me uncomfortable, even if you had a big tailwind because you never know if you might lose it. But I'll factor in, you know, a headwind into a glide.

Q. Okay. And then when you said when you're using your iPad, can you

elaborate on that? Or is that basically the same thing you were talking about with the G1000?

A. No. That is probably a little bit more accurate. It's a Caravan profile built into ForeFlight, and then you can just go into the settings and select like your glide range. Obviously, it's not connected to the internet, so that thing's not calculating wind. That's up to me. Neither of those calculate wind.

Q. And just to be clear, you're talking about the glide advisor functionality that's available in ForeFlight.

A. Yeah.

Q. Is that --

A. Yeah. That's what we're talking about.

Q. All right.

A. Yeah. And I would imagine that's a little more precise than the G1000, just the range ring. But, you know, using all three -- or using everything available to you is probably the best bet, and that's what I try to do.

Q. Fair enough. If I could, you mentioned before, but just to clarify for my understanding, basic operating weights, when you're going through a weight balance, could you describe that a little bit more? I'm not sure I'm clear on how you describe it.

A. Are you talking about the questions that Starr had about --

Q. Yeah. Yes.

A. -- the operating weights? Or --

Q. Yes. So do you want me to ask specific questions?

A. Yeah. It'll probably be better --

Q. Okay. That's --

A. -- because that's a little vague, and --

Q. That's -- I agree.
A. Yeah.
Q. It is.
A. And we might be going in circles for a while.
Q. The concept of basic operating weights, is that something you guys work with here? Or do you construct a weight and balance just with individual items? Is that --
A. Sorry. You're confusing --
Q. No problem.
A. -- me with that question.
Q. Okay. No problem.
A. Do you want me to -- I can just tell you how I get an operating weight, and then --
Q. Perfect.
A. -- go from there.
Q. Yes, please.
A. So operating weight is the weight of the aircraft as stated, you know, per aircraft. Each one's different.
Q. Right.
A. They vary by a little bit. And then you just add the weight of the equipment on the plane.
Q. Okay.
A. Myself. And then now the difference I was talking about, the TKS used to be part of that operating weight, or the operating weight empty. Now that's part of the operating weight, and that includes the fuel and the TKS and fluids to get your

operating weight.

Q. Operating weight empty.

A. Yeah. That's no fluids. So no TKS, no fuel.

Q. Okay.

A. And that's --

Q. So that's basically the --

A. The baseline weight.

Q. The empty weight of the airplane because that includes --

A. Empty weight of the airplane plus me, plus the gear.

Q. Got it. Got it. Okay. And that's standard gear kit, that's what you guys carry along presumably with any flight?

A. Yeah.

Q. Right. What weight do you use for that?

A. Sixty pounds.

Q. Sixty pounds. Okay. So I apologize, the -- but now the TKS fluid's included in that basic weight. Is that -- did I understand you correctly?

A. That's included in the operating weight versus operating weight empty.

Q. Okay. And -- okay. All right. So you use that operating weight that includes the empty operating weight, plus the TKS fluid. Do I have that right? I don't think I'm tracking. I apologize.

A. No, it sounds kind of backwards, and maybe we could just backtrack and talk about the -- so the operating weight is -- or just forget about the operating weight empty. The operating weight is the fuel, the TKS, the equipment on board, myself, and the airplane.

Q. Got it. Okay. So then you start with that?

A. Yeah.
Q. Do you recalculate that as you go around?
A. If I make adjustments, or if there's any changes to any of those things, yes, I recalculate that.
Q. Okay. So what would be changes to those things?
A. Pulling seats out, for example, I change --
Q. Okay.
A. That would change the operating weight of the aircraft.
Q. Right.
A. Adding TKS, that would change the operating weight, or using TKS now.
Q. But did you not say that fuel was included in that operating weight?
A. It is.
Q. Okay.
A. Yeah.
Q. So then --
A. So fuel burn.
Q. Okay. So --
A. No, that's also --
Q. So is it fair to say you recalculate that at every step?
A. Yeah. The operating weight I calculate every time.
Q. Okay.
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. The operating weight empty I do not typically --
Q. Oh, yeah. Yeah.

A. -- recalculate every single flight. Yeah.

Q. Okay. Fair enough. All right. And then have you had any situation -- so if I remember right, you had said earlier that then you have that operating weight at Unalakleet, or wherever, and then that gives you an available payload for that next flight. Have you ever had situations where there was more that needed to be loaded that could be remained within the weight of the airplane?

A. Can you repeat that because -- you're asking?

Q. So, again, going back to Starr's question about if you got 2,000 pounds, and they've got 3,000 they want to put on the airplane, again, how do you handle that situation?

A. Bump 1,000.

Q. Okay. Have you ever gotten pushback for that?

A. Not from the company.

Q. Okay.

A. Like, yeah, I get passengers who are upset, obviously. But --

Q. Understood.

A. -- you know, it is what it is.

Q. What about the people that are at the stations, the village representatives, the cargo handlers, any issues from that?

A. No. No.

Q. Okay.

A. No. (Indiscernible).

Q. Okay. Have you ever reduced fuel load? Have you ever taken fuel off to allow an increased payload capacity?

A. No. Well, you're talking about the question that Starr just asked, right? I

take less fuel sometimes than -- to get a better load.

Q. Yeah. Okay. And --

A. You know, and then --

Q. That's fine. That's not quite the question that was asked. So if you're at an intermediate -- or an outstation as I've calling them, an intermediate stop, have you ever said, well, we have more fuel than required. Have you ever taken fuel off the airplane to increase your available payload for --

A. No.

Q. Okay. Is that an option, or that's just not something you guys would do?

A. No. That's not -- it shouldn't be an option.

Q. Okay.

A. That's not how that works.

Q. Okay. That's fine.

MR. SORENSEN: I think that's good for now, so I'll move along to Paul.

MR. SUFFERN: Okay. I got some.

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. So I'm going to dive a little bit into weather, and I know there's been a change with the GOM bulletin as far as flight into known icing policy there. How has that affected -- since the accident, how has that affected your flights and such?

A. The change to the 8,807, is that --

Q. Yeah.

A. -- what you're talking about? It's added some -- it's added some workload for sure, but we're managing, and I think things are getting, you know, getting figured out.

Q. I guess what challenge -- it sounds like there may be -- and maybe it's a

wrong term, but there have been challenges with that, or is it just getting used to a new procedure?

A. Yeah. I mean the challenges with that, currently, what we're doing regardless of what the weather is saying is what we're at right now. Whatever the icing forecast says is controlling. So if I took off today and it forecasted icing, that'd be an 8,807. If I get a PIREP within one hour, I can go at 9,062 if it's documented in the system.

Sometimes those PIREPs are pretty slow to come in, and so that's what we've been dealing with recently. And that's kind of where the headache comes in. I took off the other day, I did two mail runs to Elim. The first mail run I did 8,807. I PIREPed the entire -- I did three or four PIREPs for the routed flight. There was no ice, clear skies, you know, it was good conditions.

I came back to Nome, I had to hold to launch on the next one because I was taking 9,062. I was waiting for my own PIREPs to be documented so I could back out on the same flight. And so there's, you know, there's a little bit of a hassle with that, and so it'd be nice to streamline that process, have that information documented quickly, and so we can, you know, get out there and do those flights.

Q. Okay. Have you noticed any difference -- has this both been -- I mean you mentioned that specific flight, were you talking to Center and giving those PIREPs to Center, or Flight Service, or --

A. Both.

Q. Both.

A. Yeah.

Q. And --

A. And sometimes you're just -- it's hard to tell and remember who I gave it

to, and where it's, you know, where it's going in the process. I'm not sure where the hiccups are exactly. I know like it almost seems like -- and maybe I'm looking at the wrong site. Sometimes it'll pop up on ForeFlight. Sometimes it'll pop up on the Alaska Aviation Weather Unit page. That one seems to be a little better consistently for getting them quicker. But it's hit or miss, and so sometimes you're looking at all these different sites trying to find these PIREPs.

And like in that case, I knew I put them out, and they weren't showing up. And so, you know, you're wondering where they went. Or it almost seems to me, and this is -- and this is just speculation that like a third of the PIREPs I give never -- I never end up seeing them anywhere, you know, they're not documented. And maybe -- and it goes for icing, too.

I put one out for -- I got icing going to Wales the other day, and I looked at it after that flight, and I never saw that PIREP in the system anywhere. So I don't know if those are just internally recorded for -- that was to ATC. I don't know if those are internally recorded somewhere, or if they're not published. I don't know what the process is. But, yeah, there can be some discrepancies with those PIREPs.

Q. Okay. Would there be a -- given that that's the flight into known icing policy, would there be a way that -- as a pilot who flies around here, would there be a better way to categorize flying into known icing for you as a pilot?

A. I would like to be able to use my own judgment more often and look at those icing charts, look at the altitudes on them, be able to fly below it, if I deem that safe. Or, you know, let's say you want -- do you want me to give like specific examples of routes --

Q. Great.

A. -- or something like that? Let's say I'm going to Golovin, that's a flight I

can do at 1,000 feet comfortably. The icing forecast is 4,000 to 1,000, something like that. It ends up being almost 10 and clear. But that icing forecast is still there. I launch for that flight at 1,000. I'll look up and I see that the skies are clear above.

I would like to be able to climb into that known icing to save fuel. You save fuel doing that. I can push my inertias (ph.) up. Or get that inertial in. I can climb up a little higher. I can save some fuel, a little bit of a quicker flight, a little bit safer because I got more glide distance. I feel like I can conduct that flight safer, but if I'm following the guidelines that we have right now, it's a little bit limiting in what I can do if I want to go at 9,062. And so that would be nice to see some changes there.

Q. So for you as a pilot, I know part of the definition that the FAA gives on flying into known icing includes the term visible moisture. What is visible moisture to you as a pilot?

A. Anything I can see. I mean any cloud, you know, yeah, that's about it.

Q. Okay. Do you think flight into known icing is something that you could determine when you're on the ground like before you take off?

A. What do you mean by that question? Like looking at the charts, or looking at the sky, or, I mean --

Q. Just in your experience as a pilot, I mean do you have to -- do you feel like you would have to be up there experiencing the conditions to know whether it's flight into known icing, or do you think there is -- whether it's a PIREP, or charge, you know, something out there that tells you, hey, before I take off, if I go up to 3,000 feet, there's going to be -- I know there is going to be icing up there? Or do you feel like you have to get up there to experience?

A. There is -- for me, I don't think there's any way of actually knowing until you get up there. Yeah. I mean you can -- you plan it out the best you can, you look at

all the information available. You look at the sky. You, you know, look at your destination, what's going on in route. It could be really nasty looking, like clouds everywhere, and you get no ice. Or it could be, you know, well, if it's 10 and clear, you're not going to get any, but, yeah, it's hard to tell.

Q. Since the accident, has there been anything different weather-wise that you do either pre-flight, during the flight, or post-flight?

A. No. Not that I can think of.

MR. SUFFERN: That's all I've got, Justin. Thank you.

MS. BLUM: Robert?

BY MR.PECK

Q. Hey, Justin. So these folks have asked about changes, right, that have happened with the weight and balance calculator in the release program and stuff. How well do you think you understand, I guess, those changes and why they have been made?

A. What are you trying to get at there? I'm a little confused.

Q. Do you understand why those changes have been made to those post-accident, they've made some changes?

A. To --

Q. So like SOPs, and to the weight and balance, and to the release, they've changed that release. So now that -- you get those OC at times when it's red, right?

A. I don't have really -- as far as the changes to the SOPs, and the weight and balance, like the app that I use, like those I'll understand and those make sense to me, and that's kind of a convenient -- like the weight and balance anyways, I think that's kind of a convenience thing with the TKS being part of the operating weight and balance, operating weight empty.

As far as the SMS program, that's not really my purview. It's just part of my job to make sure that's signed off now, and to follow those guidelines. I don't know specifically why that's a new thing.

Q. Okay. Would it be fair to say that TKS prior to the accident really wasn't used in weight and balance calculations, and now is?

A. I used it.

Q. You used it?

A. Yeah.

Q. If I understand correctly, from what we've been shown or heard about, I guess, more than anything, is that now there is a button, a checkmark that you put on your weight and balance calculator for the 9,062, or the 8,807. Is that right? Something like that. You pick whether you're doing the --

A. There's a button on the release tool, the 8,807 is manually entered by me into the weight and balance.

Q. Okay. So that's only on the release tool then?

A. That's only on the --

Q. Okay.

A. It doesn't just automatically carry over into --

Q. Right.

A. -- your weight and balance. You have to manually enter each leg and put your take-off weight in there.

Q. I see.

A. Yeah. And so I could, for example, I could leave it at 9,062 but take off below 8,807.

Q. Right. Yeah.

A. And it would say the max gross takeoff weight is --

Q. Sure.

A. -- such. But I actually calculate my weight to be under 8,807.

Q. Just a follow up to a couple of Paul's questions there. What is, in your mind, the difference known icing and forecast icing?

A. Known is just, you know, 100 percent guaranteed. It's out there at a specific time. I mean it's always, what do they call it, you know, it's always known news. But known is someone reported a few PIREP or Anchorage Center, you know, it comes from someone specifically. Or the reporting, like actual freezing rain or something like that versus a forecast is just that, a forecast for icing.

Q. So in your mind, if you're 10 minutes in front of another caravan, pick a location, you're --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- going in, you get icing. Is that known icing now for the guy behind you that's 10 minutes behind you if you pick up icing?

A. I would say it is, but I'm not -- I don't know exactly what the definition. I mean if someone reported icing 10 minutes in front of me, I would assume I would get some, too. You know, he may not, but I would consider that known icing.

MR. BECK: That's all I got.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Brian?

MR. WECKWERTH: I don't have anything clarifying, or anything?

MS. BLUM: Okay. Sabrina?

BY DR. WOODS:

Q. Justin, what were your impressions and your opinion of the company's approach to safety prior to the accident?

A. I thought it was, you know, some of the best safety standards they had in the state of Alaska. That's why I wanted to work here.

Q. What are your determinations for high levels of safety? What means -- what makes for a safe company to you?

A. Just really good training, good experience from prior pilots. The big thing for me is just the experience you get, and the knowledge you get from other pilots that have been doing it for a long time. And Bering Air had a lot of guys that have been around for a significant period of time. They have a lot of good things to say.

Q. Has that changed post-accident at all?

A. They're still here.

Q. But has your impressions of safety changed at all?

A. No. No, I think it's still a safe operation, and --

Q. Prior to the accident occurring, have you -- first of all, have you ever canceled or rejected a flight for cause?

A. For weather, or just anything?

Q. Cause. Whatever. You weren't feeling well, weather?

A. Yeah.

Q. Didn’t like the way somebody looked. Yeah.

A. Yeah. I haven't done that, but, yeah, I have rejected flights for weather, and even -- yeah, even depending on my mood. You know, some days I might try it, some days I might not. Just you got to factor in all of that.

Q. So how did that go? Was there any sort of pushback? Was there an issue with that?

A. No.

Q. Who'd you have that conversation with?

A. Sometimes with the Dispatch. Sometimes with Operational Control. You know, it only takes one person to say no, and it won't happen.

Q. So, therefore, can I equate that you're comfortable saying no if you had to?

A. Yes.

Q. Has that changed post-accident?

A. It's been the same.

Q. When you get together with, essentially, your fellow pilots, I'm calling these watercooler conversations, have there been any concerns that have risen that you all talk about?

A. To be honest, I don't spend a whole lot of time hanging around here just chatting about concerns. I usually am out doing my job. So -- and not that I know of.

Q. Have you had concerns that you've noted in the past?

A. Concerns about what?

Q. About the operation, something that you're dealing with on a day-to-day basis, about the aircraft, about the people you work with, concerns.

A. Not about the operation. I'll have concerns about the aircraft sometimes, you know, things that appear to be -- maybe in need of writing up, or have concerns about, you know, the -- I always had concerns about the weather or what I'm going, you know, my flights, but that's just daily. Like I'm trying to look at everything I have available. There's always risk, and doing my best to mitigate any of that, and make sure I do a flight safely.

Q. Do you handle that all yourself, or do you bring anyone else into the equation?

A. I'll bring in Dispatch and Operation Control if I think it's, you know, worth talking about. And, potentially, I might ask another pilot what they think about, you know, a certain situation, if I'm concerned with it.

Q. Have your concerns ever been dismissed, like that's no big deal. Why are you even concerned about that?

A. Not that I can recall.

Q. Have you ever had a difference of opinion where you believe one thing, but maybe Dispatch believes another?

A. No.

Q. Do you happen to know what would happen if that were to occur if you felt one way or Dispatch felt another, I guess who wins?

A. I win. If I'm not -- if I don't want to do a flight, I'm not doing it.

Q. Have you ever had feedback or something you wanted to share, an opinion about something you feel could go better or change for the company?

A. Yeah. I mean I might have things that come up, and I'll go up and mention them to, you know, anyone upstairs if I have any concerns.

Q. Who do you mean by upstairs? Anyone upstairs?

A. The chief pilot, director of operations. I talk to Ben Rowe frequently. I talk to Russell (ph.), all of them, you know, the guys that can make -- they can make changes to procedures and the way we do things here.

Q. Does Bering Air have a formal feedback process that you're aware of?

A. They do have a, I guess, it's a safety program or a safety reporting program. You can make a -- what'd you call it. I guess just a safety report, and you can formally write it out, and just that way it's documented. It will have pictures, you know, any, you know, and that's just a documentation thing. If you wanted to be well

documented, it's available.

Q. Have you ever used it?

A. Yeah.

Q. And I guess did you feel like your concern was addressed, like somebody's actually looking at it and it's not just going into the ether?

A. Yeah. I had discussions with the director of safety at that time about that report that I had submitted.

Q. Okay. And so is it a -- is it a tool that you would feel comfortable using again to address any feedback you would have?

A. Yeah. I've used it since. I've done multiple reports.

Q. Could you please walk me through your personal -- so you're showing up to work in the day, your personal approach to the day in regards to like kind of like I am safe checklist, and then like your go/no go process? Just walk me through Justin shows up to work today.

A. Can you get a little more specific there, otherwise I might be sitting here going on for a while about --

Q. And it's okay that you do, that's your time and information that you give us is great. But, literally, your personal process. Your personal approach to the day because everybody's approach is going to be different, right? So what are the things that you take into consideration as you determine if you are ready to fly, and then get ready to fly?

A. Well, before I even show up to work, if I feel sick or not up to it, I'm not going to -- not going to come. I'll just call in, you know? But if I show up to work, then that -- I'm good to go physically, mentally, I'm, you know, I'm ready to be here. And from there, it's just my pre-flight looking at the weather, the planning, calculating my

loads, giving those to cargo, giving them to Dispatch. Go out, load my plane. File my flight plans. Sign the release now, and take off.

Q. Have you ever gotten grief for calling in because you're not feeling up to it, or you weren't feeling well, or anything of that sort?

A. No.

DR. WOODS: I think that's all I have for this round.

DR. WILSON: Okay. Okay. Need a break yet?

MR. LAWS: No, I'm fine.

BY DR. WILSON:

Q. Okay. I don't have too many. Most of my questions have been asked. In the previous interview, you talked about the training that you received for weather. Anything that you didn't get trained on, or something you wish you had more training on regarding weather whether it be either in ground school, or simulator training?

A. Not simulator training. You can't -- the simulator training's not accurate to -- it would have been nice to do more OE. I mean it never hurts to do more time with some of those guys that have seen way worse conditions than I have, you know, and get their take on it. That would always be nice. You just --

Q. Okay.

A. -- you know, eventually get -- do it on your own.

Q. Yeah.

A. But, no, I don't have any burning desires to do more weather training. I did -- it would be nice to touch on the training thing. I was a little confused by that question. I looked at it in my transcript. I think you asked that question.

When I first started, I don't know if you're asking about my initial training or my current training. I mean we do all kinds of training. My initial training was a lot

longer than just a couple days that I said I did, and that -- like that was weeks. And then, you know, a ground school for a Caravan. I did that at Flight Safety. That's a week or five days, whatever it was.

Differences training, that'll be a couple days. So just to touch base on that because I think in that one, I just said a couple days, but I was confused by that question, and thought you just meant the training I did after I got back from Flight Safety.

Q. Okay. That's a helpful clarification. Thanks. You mentioned that you had -- when Sabrina was talking to you about the safety reporting, and you said you've submitted a few reports --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- into that. Have you ever checked the anonymous box when you've submitted something?

A. I think I usually do. I don't know. I can't remember though.

Q. Okay. And that's fine. I might do the same thing. But is there a concern about some kind of repercussion if you submit a safety concern and, you know, your name is attached to it?

A. No. No, there's no concern about repercussion.

Q. And have you always submitted safety concerns through the -- there's like an online portal, I'm assuming? Or is there another way you can submit a safety report?

A. Yeah. It's an online portal.

Q. I guess I was wondering, is there like an anonymous hotline you can call, or --

A. Not that I know of.

Q. Okay. Would you ever just walk into --
A. I mean I could just call Brian.
Q. Okay.
A. Or knock on his door. But
Q. Is that something you'd feel comfortable doing?
A. Knocking on his door?
Q. Sure.
A. Oh, yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. Yeah.
MR WECKWERTH: Regulars.
BY DR. WOODS:
Q. Okay. Like is -- never mind. All right. You mentioned earlier in this interview, I think you said that you were talking about -- possibly it was a reporting program, but you called it an SMS program, if I'm not mistaken.
A. Yeah. I don't know the official name for it. That's not the safety reporting program. That's the release program.
Q. Okay. And that's under -- you're calling that the SMS program? Or --
A. I think that's what it's called.
Q. Okay.
A. I'd have to look at it, and I don't know the official name. It's a release program, make it simple.
Q. I guess I was intrigued by you using the term SMS, and, you know, wanting to know what your understanding of that was, and how you think -- I guess let me ask the clarifying question. Are you referring to SMS as safety management

system?

A. I'm guessing that's what the acronym stands for.

Q. Okay. Are you aware of how that safety management system is in operation here at Bering Air?

A. Can you say that question again?

Q. Well, I guess I'm trying to get at what is your understanding of safety management system, and do you think that that's something that Bering Air is operating under, or do you think that they put forth the tenants of safety management system in their day-to-day operations?

A. I'm still a little confused by that question, but I'd like to say, yes. Like they, you know, there is a safety management system here, and it's being followed. And this new release program just, like I said before, just documents all that. So now it's documented.

There hasn't really been a change in the discussions that I have. It's just now it's signed off. And now they put written notes in about what I'm going to do on a flight, or, you know, what my plan is, what their plan is, you know, that's all documented.

Q. Do you see that as improving safety? Do you think that that's going to be beneficial for safety?

A. I don't think it's beneficial for safety. But it's good to have it documented, I guess.

Q. Okay. How did you learn that Bering Air has a safety management system?

A. I can't remember. I mean probably I've gotten emails, we've had ground school. You know, in ground school, it's come up.

Q. Okay.
A. Yeah.
Q. In the previous interview, Starr had asked you about your relationship with Chad, and I think you said that you didn't -- let me just ask it because I don't want to make an assumption about what I recall from reading it. Did you talk to him the day of the accident?
A. Not in person.
Q. Okay.
A. From what I can recall.
Q. Okay. Did you like chat over text message?
A. The day of the accident?
Q. Mm-hmm.
A. No, I don't text very much.
Q. How do you normally talk to him?
A. In person.
Q. Or communicate with him? Oh. Okay. Just always in person.
A. Yeah.
Q. All right. And do you recall if you talked to him -- when was the last time you talked to him prior to the accident?
A. Probably the day before.
Q. Did you see him like here at Bering Air? Do you have housing nearby?
A. Yeah. He lived nearby, and sometimes he'd come over and hang out. But I just seen him at Bering Air.
Q. Okay.
A. And he had just started that shift, I believe.

Q. Okay.
A. Or his shift.
Q. Okay. And you think that was probably the day before?
A. That he had just started?
Q. No, that you saw him?
A. Yeah. I'm sure I saw him the day before.
Q. Okay. But no text messages or anything?
A. No.
Q. Okay. And I think Starr asked you, but nothing seemed out of the ordinary about him when you did speak to him?
A. No, nothing out of the ordinary. He was in a good mood.
Q. Okay. Since the accident, I guess what are people talking about? Is there heightened safety concerns about certain things, or anything that a pilot group is talking about, either officially or unofficially, things you want to do differently, things you want to focus on?
A. When you say people, you mean specifically the pilots here?
Q. Yeah.
A. We talk about the same stuff we usually talk about. I got a roommate here, and it's nothing flight related typically, and try to keep it that way.
Q. Okay.
A. After I leave here, I prefer not to talk about it all the time. But as far as, you know, work-related stuff here, yeah, just trying to figure out how to do -- just figuring out the changes with the SMS. That's kind of our -- I keep saying the SMS. Let me just call it a release program. Trying to figure out those things, and streamline that. That's been probably the biggest topic of safety-related stuff. And -- yeah.

Q. Okay. Did you get a demo on how to use the new Flight Release program, or is it something that was just pretty easy, they're like we're using this now, and it just is self-explanatory how to use it?

A. Yeah. I got a demo initially, and then there's been changes, and, yeah, it's always changing. I mean trying to make it -- it's a new thing, so there's glitches, and frustrations here and there. The Wi-Fi quits working, and (indiscernible) now, you know?

Q. Yeah.

A. So there are hiccups, but initially, yes, I got a demo.

Q. Have you used the new Baldwin system that's been put into place here?

A. That's what I was talking about. That's the safety reporting.

Q. Okay.

A. Yeah. So I've used that, and then I use the old one. I can't remember -- I think the old one was -- what was it, Omni or something like that? Yeah.

Q. Okay. So you've used both of them?

A. I've used both of them.

Q. What do you think of the new Baldwin system?

A. It works. I don't know. It's --

Q. Is it better than Omni --

A. No --

Q. -- from your perspective?

A. Yeah. I --

Q. It's the same?

A. It's -- yeah. It's the same. Or it works. I don't really have an opinion on how much better it is. Or it works -- I get an email, and I can click on the link. I can

read, you know, something there. It is nicer than just getting emails though, because it's all there in one program, and so I can go back and reread things.

Q. Yeah.

A. You know, I'll forget stuff sometimes, so I'll go back and look at it again. So, yeah, it looks nice.

Q. How do you access the Baldwin system? Is it like a computer here, or can you get it on your phone?

A. I can get it on my phone and my iPad.

Q. Okay.

A. It's just log-in. I look at it.

Q. Is there an app, or is it a website?

A. If there is an app, I have not used it.

Q. Have no idea? Yeah. Okay. Did I read that you also few the 1900?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Do you still fly that?

A. No.

Q. Do you know if the 1900 has a minimum airspeed for icing?

A. I can't recall.

Q. Okay. If you are scheduled for a day of flying, and then flights get cancelled for weather or some other reason, do you still get paid?

A. Yes.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you get additional pay if you fly a leg, or --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- over a certain number of hours? No.

A. Well, okay. You do get additional pay if you fly over five hours in a day, but typically I fly right at or around five or four. I don't really take that into account into how much I'm going to make.

Q. Okay. Do you get a rotational schedule?

A. Not really.

Q. No. Okay. Do you live here full time?

A. I wish I didn't, but, yes.

DR. WILSON: All right. Justin, I think that's all I have for now. Thanks.

MS. BLUM: You still good?

MR. LAWS: Yep.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Okay. I'm glad you brought it up, the confusion on our last interview because as you can see, even with this new Flight Release tool, I'm still trying to figure it out, and back then I was trying to figure out your training and your process.

A. Yeah.

Q. So if there's anything else you want to bring up that you want to clarify, I mean, please do. Now's the time. Is there anything else that --

A. Not specifically. If it comes up again, I might address it. But --

Q. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. Because I'm just learning everything, too. So just want to make sure that you can correct things if you --

A. Oh, no.

Q. -- want to. I remember you like to hand fly.

A. Yeah.

Q. And you don't use the autopilot, which is awesome. I remember those

days when I was your age. Since the accident, has there been any discussions about the autopilot in icing conditions?

A. I did get some questions from the chief pilot about the way that I fly, just making sure that I'm aware, you know, I need to click it off every 10 minutes in icing situations. But he's flown with me before, I think he knew the way I fly -- like I don't -- I do use the autopilot, especially in IFR situations, but I do click it off.

But I guess I can say it, my big thing is -- my pet peeve is I do not like to click off the autopilot and have it do anything at all other than fly exactly as how it was flying before. So I do it all the time where I'm fiddling with it.

Q. Yeah.

A. It's just a pet peeve. Like it doesn't probably matter that much, but I like to have my rudder trim exactly where it needs to be, (indiscernible) try to guess, you know, the current -- I don't know. That's just the way I fly.

Q. Yeah. I get that. What I -- so Phen (ph.) had that discussion with you. Did you guy -- have you guys, as a pilot group, had any meetings ,whether it's with Brian, or Dave, or Phen, have you there been any meetings where you guys come together as a group and discuss anything together?

A. Yes.

Q. Post-accident?

A. Yeah.

Q. What was discussed in those meetings?

A. I can't remember all the specifics we talked so that the 140 minimum airspeed with Center.

Q. Okay.

A. That was a new discussion. And then they talked about some things you

can do in a spin. I can't remember what else was discussed. Those are the two things that I kind of took away from.

Q. Was there any -- I mean if you don't remember, that's fine. But was there anything else related to what we know so far about the accident that they discussed with you guys --

A. No.

Q. -- as a pilot group?

A. Not that I can -- I don't really know anything about the accident besides seeing what's in the pictures and what was in that report that you guys --

Q. Yeah.

A. -- put out.

Q. Okay. Fair enough. And then the changes that have happened, how were those disseminated to you, the changes that Bering has made, how has that been disseminated to the pilot group?

A. Any number of methods. So like the release tool, you know, I got a briefing from the guy that was -- or not a briefing, but a demo from the guy that's been helping them work on it, Andy (ph.). The change in the airspeed with Anchorage Center, that was a -- everybody was in here, you know, more of a formal briefing or discussion. The change with the -- the update to the weight and balance, making the TKS part of the operating weight. Just the operating weight, that was an email. Also, like a video demonstration of how to work the new system.

Q. Okay.

A. So a variety of methods.

Q. What about the confusion that's going on with the max gross weight and flight into known icing, how was that discussed to the pilot group?

A. Usually I discuss that -- I've been discussing that specifically with Operational Control, David and Phen.

Q. Okay.

A. I think -- I won't discuss it any further. Yeah. I'll discuss that with David and Phen, and then, you know, if they are willing to sign off the flight, I'll go do it at whatever weight I agree to.

Q. Okay. Last question for me. If you're facing weather coming in, and it's before -- you want to leave early than your scheduled flight time, what's -- do you feel like you can leave early? Let's say passengers haven't shown up yet, but you're --

A. If I thought the weather was closing down?

Q. Yeah. You call OC and discuss that. I mean how do you handle those situations?

A. That would be a very case-by-case situation. It depends on the type of weather, depends on if it's, you know, icing or whatever, if I need to even call OC. Maybe it's just a discussion with Dispatch.

Q. Okay.

A. You know, hey, I need -- I want to go earlier on this flight.

Q. Okay.

A. And then they can make it happen if possible, but that also depends on who all's showing up, you know, the passengers, can -- I don't know. It's very -- it's a fairly specific question, but the answer is really broad. It just depends on the circumstances.

Q. Okay.

A. I can go earlier at times if I think the, you know, the weather's closing down, we will adjust the schedule, but it varies quite a bit.

Q. Have you ever left early for weather, and left passengers or cargo bags behind, and been approved to do that?

A. Not that I can remember specifically.

Q. Okay.

A. Maybe.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Thank you.

BY MR. SORENSEN:

Q. Just a few more questions. Sorry. Are you still good?

A. Yeah. Still good.

Q. Want to keep going? Okay.

A. Yeah.

Q. With respect to Dispatch, how helpful are they to you as a pilot in command?

A. They're helpful.

Q. Okay.

A. Very helpful. And I don't understand the whole program luckily, about adding passengers on, taking them off. I don't necessarily have the time to be doing that for each of my flights. And so that's a big help, too, is having someone in there, you know, who can -- I can go in and discuss the weather. They know what's going on probably a little bit more than, let's say, the CSAs at the counter, but they can also go in and take people off the flight, or put them on, or change the routing, do any number of things to make my flight easier.

Q. Okay. So just from my understanding, that's just updating the flight manifest. That's something they do that you do not do.

A. I do not do that.

Q. Okay. Have there ever been -- have there ever been situations where the flight manifest, you needed to change it, but you weren't able to interact with Dispatch, or that couldn't take place for any reason? That's just --

A. No. I would just say no to that question. I -- no.

Q. Okay.

A. If it needs to be changed, it will be changed.

Q. And how does that process work, just for my information? You're at Kotzebue, or you're at Unalakleet, wherever, you're not in Nome. You can't walk up to them and talk to them.

A. You can always walk up and talk to them in any of the stations.

Q. Oh, I'm sorry. So there's Dispatch at any outstation, or at any intermediate stop?

A. Yeah. There's always someone working there, or working the manifest either Dispatch and -- like in Unalakleet, kind of a mix between Dispatch and --

Q. Okay.

A. -- CSA at the same time.

Q. All right.

A. But there's always someone there to do that.

Q. Okay. Thank you. I didn't have that, now I understand. Okay. Started asking about pilot meetings, are those regular?

A. I would say they are, yeah.

Q. Okay. About how often?

A. I can't give a number on it.

Q. Okay.

A. Maybe, you know, it depends on how many days I'm up here. It depends

on -- yeah, a lot of factors. But --

Q. Okay.

A. -- attend a couple of them per shift, or at least one maybe. But it varies wildly, so.

Q. Okay. And why is that? What is that based on?

A. I don't know.

Q. Okay.

A. What is what based on? The number of pilot meetings, or --

Q. Yeah. Pilot meeting frequency.

A. I don't know. Just --

Q. Okay.

A. -- the fact --

Q. All right. That's fine.

A. -- what you're going on.

Q. Understand. Maybe that's not a fair question. Understand. How is urgent safety information disseminated to the pilots from Bering Air?

A. Typically, I think if they want to get access to everybody in email.

Q. Okay.

A. You know, either directing you to the safety program, or just spelled out in the email itself.

Q. Okay.

A. At any given time, you know, probably a third to half the pilots are typically out of town, I would say, so.

Q. Okay. Is there any company policy requirement to review or look for emails, say, before a shift? Or what's the expectation from Bering Air to the pilots to

look for that information?

A. I don't know specifically.

Q. Okay. How much for you personally?

A. I check my emails all the time.

Q. Okay.

A. And I read it as soon as I can.

Q. Does Air Traffic Control solicit PIREPs when you're on flight?

A. What do you mean by solicit PIREPs?

Q. Ask you --

A. Yeah. sometimes.

Q. -- do you have a PIREP? Okay. All right. Has the frequency of that changed before and after the accident?

A. I'd say it's -- yeah, they ask more often --

Q. After the accident.

A. -- after -- yeah.

Q. So --

A. There's been a lot more PIREPs now than there ever --

Q. Okay.

A. -- have been, I would say it seems like.

Q. Fair enough. Going back to the weight and balance stuff, but going with center of gravity, you know, we've talked a lot about gross weight, but have there been any instances when you've been doing pre-flight planning your weight and balance, and center of gravity is not where it needs to be?

A. After loading?

Q. Well --

A. Yeah. I mean --

Q. Or before.

A. Yeah, sometimes. And I've had passengers adjust where they're sitting, or maybe I unload the whole plane and reload it, you know, if necessary. That has happened.

Q. Okay. There haven't been any instances where you cannot bring that center of gravity into the approved range? Is that an --

A. I've never had a problem with that. No.

Q. -- accurate statement? Okay. All right. You said that you like to have -- when you fly, you like to have the 208 trimmed up. You like to hand fly. You rarely use the autopilot, especially maybe in weather, extreme conditions. Have you ever had a situation where the airplane's doing something you don't expect? Maybe you turn off the autopilot and it's not in trim, and you expect it to be in trim, or the flight controls don't feel, quote/unquote, normal?

A. No. I mean every plane's different.

Q. Right.

A. And so like the first time I fly a plane, I'm probably not going to get my rudder trim perfect because they're all a little bit -- there's a sweet spot, but some of them are more to the right, some are more to the left. But it's easy to figure that out than it's -- for me, it's always been consistent. No change. Like you can get that thing pretty dialed in.

Q. Okay. But I guess I was referring to just individual rigging discrepancies between airplanes. If you turn the autopilot off and the airplane's not in trim, have you ever had that where it's trying to pull the, you know, one way or the other, or all of a sudden you've got some elevator pressure that you didn't expect? Nothing like that?

A. Nothing significant. No. I've messed it up and been slightly out of my rudder trim, and I keep my feet on those pedals, but it will kick a little bit if you don't do it right. Every once in a while, I don't know if it's specific on the autopilots, you'll get one that maybe it tends to be like a little bit nose down trim, or a little nose up trim, and so -- I mean I always do two hands on the yoke, too, when I'm disconnecting that because --

Q. Okay.

A. -- I'll get those from time to time as well.

Q. Okay. So you're holding on, how do you click off that autopilot, you've never had a, you know, a major --

A. I've never had any major --

Q. Just --

A. Nothing violent.

Q. -- divergence or?

A. Yeah.

Q. All right. Any issues with the power quadrant friction adjustment?

A. I never had a problem with them.

Q. Okay. Every morning I do go out there and tighten them up, and check if they're -- because they can back off overtime.

Q. Okay. And how did you learn about that?

A. I don't know specifically. I'm sure it's come up in ground school. It's come up in safety. I believe there is a safety -- not report, but an outline on that or something to that affect.

Q. Okay. Within in the messages, or the information you guys have online, is that --

A. Yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. I think there is something specific to that. And then it's come up -- that has been something that's been discussed when I was going through --
Q. Okay.
A. The other pilots have told me about that, so.
Q. Okay. All right. Okay.
A. A variety of ways that that's, you know, come to life.
Q. Okay. All right. And as far as adjusting, manipulating, you know, engine power, any of that, any of the power quadrant, have you ever had issues with that?
A. Never had any issues. I mean I've seen them get pretty loose.
Q. Okay.
A. And then it's just a matter of tightening it up appropriately. And --
Q. Okay.
A. Yeah. But I've never had them fall apart on me.
Q. Okay.
A. Luckily.
Q. Has it ever -- have you ever thought, yeah, I got to write this up, the engine controls are mis-rigged, or they're -- any thoughts like that?
A. No. Not with the --
Q. Okay.
A. Not with the power quadrant.
MR. SORENSEN: Okay. Okay. Thank you. That's all the questions I have. Thank you.
MS. BLUM: Paul?

MR. SUFFERN: I don't have any more questions, Justin. Thank you.

MR. LAWS: All right.

MS. BLUM: Rob?

BY MR. BECK:

Q. Remember, I did this for a while, and I remember going out multiple times and you'd be frustrated because you'd get someplace, to a village, oh, I called Josie, and she said two more people can get on. I'm like, there's no way.

A. Yeah.

Q. Do you ever have that here, and how do you deal with it, if you do?

A. Yeah. I have had that. You know, you have a full plane, or not even a full plane, and you have three people on board, it looks empty, but the next stop you're supposed to pick up six, and somebody shows up, and they say they have a confirmed seat. You look at the manifest, you're not on there.

And it sucks to deal with because they -- I have, you know, people screaming at me basically out there on the ramp. But what I did in that situation, I just called the Dispatch so it made it look like I was trying. I already knew what the answer was. The answer is, no, you cannot get on the plane. But I try to be as courteous as I can, but the answer is no, obviously, you cannot get on the plane, you still can't go.

Q. Would you say that it's fairly common or uncommon?

A. I haven't had it that often. So I'd say fairly uncommon. But it does happen.

Q. This is a very -- this next question's pretty broad, but what would be your definition, or what do you think Operational Control consists of?

A. Operational Control consists of myself, whoever is the designated Operational Control individual, and Dispatch.

Q. And what do they do, that group of folks?

A. Every person in that group is looking at this flight, trying to look at pretty much the whole picture, the weather, the load, the people on board, you know, what's going on. And then determining if you can do that flight safely, and if it should launch, or if should hold, or should be canceled.

Q. This is an extra credit question. Do you know what OPSPEC talks about Operational Control?

A. In Bering, no, I don't know.

Q. Last question. If you were Russell for a day, walked outside, there's a genie, boom, you're Russell, what changes, if any, would you make to this operation?

A. I probably wouldn't make -- I haven't thought about that. I probably wouldn't make any changes.

Q. That's fair. Thanks.

A. One day is not enough to change the whole game.

MS. BLUM: Brian?

MR. WECKWERTH: No. Nothing else.

MS. BLUM: Sabrina?

BY DR. WOODS:

Q. Before Kat was asking you about the feedback system and SMS, and it made me wonder what is your understanding of what SMS is.

A. Very, very little, I'd say. I don't know any specific definitions. Can you get more specific what that question, or --

Q. No. That's pretty much it --

A. That's (indiscernible).

Q. -- is what is SMS to you?

A. I know what it --

Q. What do you know about it?

A. -- stands for. I don't know. You know, to me, it's somewhere where I have -- it's a resource for me to go submit reports, where to look at things that relate to the safety of the operation.

Q. Okay.

A. And that's about it.

DR. WOODS: Okay. All right. Thank you. That's it for me.

DR. WILSON: I don't have any more questions. Thanks.

MR. SORENSEN: Good.

MS. BLUM: Justin, was there anything else you'd like to add, or --

MR. LAWS: Nothing else.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Well, we appreciate your time, and we're going to end the interview at 10:24.

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

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

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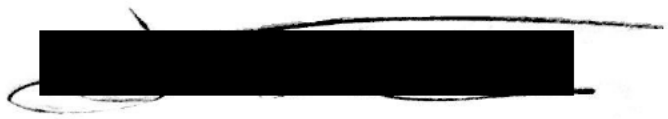
IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL COMMUTER PLANE CRASH NEAR NOME, ALASKA ON FEBRUARY 6, 2025
Interview of Justin Laws

ACCIDENT NO.: ANC25MA018

PLACE: Nome, Alaska

DATE: May 6, 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.



Jami McNear
Transcriber

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: YURI IVANOFF, Pilot Bering Strait School District

Nome, Alaska

Saturday,
February 15, 2025

APPEARANCES:

STARR BLUM, Aviation Accident 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

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INTERVIEW

(1:59 p.m.)

MS. BLUM: Okay. Today is February 15th. It's 1:59 Alaska Standard Time. My name is Starr Blum, and I'm an investigator for the NTSB. And our group is in the process of investigating the accident on February 6th involving Bering Air Flight 445.

Again, we want to extend our condolences, and we really do appreciate your time talking to us. The entire point of us being here is for safety and preventing anybody hopefully from having to go through this again and preventing something like this.

We will be recording this interview so it can be transcribed. After the transcript, like I said, if you do decide that you want to take a look at it, you can.

I'm going to go around the room and let the other group members introduce themselves.

MR. SUFFERN: Hi, Yuri. My name is Paul Suffern. I'm a meteorologist investigator with the NTSB. I've been there about 14, 15 years. Before that, I worked for the National Weather Service up in Alaska for about 4 or 5 years.

MR. IVANOFF: (Indiscernible).

MR. PECK: Hello, Yuri. Nope, sorry.

MS. BLUM: Go ahead, Yuri.

MR. IVANOFF: Hello.

MR. PECK: Okay. I'm sorry I cut you off there. Rob Peck, Anchorage FSDO, like they announced earlier, and I am here just for the safety part of this, just like she said. So please just help us, and we really appreciate it. I did want to add, no or I don't know is a completely acceptable answer to anything that anybody asks here. So

don't think like it's a checkride or anything like that. It's not. Nothing like that.

MR. IVANOFF: Okay.

MR. WECKWERTH: Hey, Yuri. Brian Weckwerth, director of safety at Bering. I've been back, I say back to Bering Air 2 1/2 years now. I was here from '98 to 2007 with Bering, and previously did some Wright and Warbelows flying in Fairbanks after I left Unalakleet. I was living in Unalakleet in 2007. And then spent also 12 years at the FAA, too, as well. So I guess that's what made me fall into this position. Please don't hold it against me.

MR. IVANOFF: Good to hear you, Brian.

MR. WECKWERTH: Yeah, you, too, Yuri.

MS. BLUM: So you are entitled to have a representative if you choose. Did you want to have a representative with you today?

MR. IVANOFF: No, I think I'll be all right.

MS. BLUM: Okay. If you need to take a break, just say the word. Other than that, do you have any questions before we begin?

MR. IVANOFF: No, no questions.

INTERVIEW OF YURI IVANOFF

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Okay. Could you please say and spell your name?

A. My name is Yuri Ivanoff, Y-u-r-i, I-v-a-n-o-f-f.

Q. Okay. And how old you, Yuri?

A. I'm 48.

Q. Okay. Can you tell us who you fly for?

A. I fly for the Bering Strait School District. We're actually contracted with Kenai Aviation right now.

Q. I'm sorry. You're teaming up with who?

A. Kenai Aviation. We have a contract through them with -- for BSSD.

Q. Okay. And are you a PIC, SIC? Can you tell us a little bit about your certificates and ratings?

A. I'm a PIC. I have PIC in the King Air. I have my ATP. Yeah, my ATP and fly the King Air for BSSD.

Q. Okay. And it's our understanding that you were flying in this area when the accident happened?

A. I was, yes. I was flying from Golovin to Elim first and then from Elim to Teller when this incident happened.

Q. Okay. And was that -- in the King Air, was that a 200?

A. It's a 200, yeah.

Q. Okay. Great. So going back to that day on Thursday, can you walk me through the day through the event?

A. Thursday we have a bunch of charters and we were shuttling kids back and forth. I think it was spelling bee then. When I started talking to him, I was on my way to -- I think I was on my way from Golovin to Elim when I first heard from him, you know, just casual talk, just like, hey, how's it going? Getting it done. That kind of deal. And went and landed in Elim, and then off of Elim, I was headed back to Teller to drop people off over there and was just kind of causally talking to him again on that one, just normal stuff. And then, and then it was a Teller to Koyuk with some people and then Koyuk to Unalakleet where my day ended.

Q. Okay. And when you say you were talking to him, was that just you heard him on the radio or were you actually saying, hi, or you know?

A. Yeah, we were actually saying, you know, just saying hi and how was your

day and that kind of type deal and tired of the weather and, you know, just normal talk between pilots and stuff and just wondering how the Nome weather was and just, you know, just weather talk and just hi and hello and, you know, that type of deal and what we were doing.

Q. Okay. Did he say anything to you about the weather?

A. He did. Actually it was -- he did. He asked before like I was in Nome or if I went to Nome, and I hadn't that day. So I didn't have any information on that. And then it was from the flight from Elim to Teller that we were kind of talking and Sophia was on there, too, a little bit and, you know, we said we were tired of the weather and he -- once he got close -- a little bit closer, he did mention that -- he said, oh, it's pretty icy down here and, you know, we were just talking back and forth. And I do not totally 100 percent sure or not, he's like, I don't know if he was kind of telling Sophia, you know, I don't know if he said come over this way, you know, just some kind of warning I guess. He did mention it was pretty icy down there.

Q. Did he sound distressed or stressed out when you were talking about that?

A. No, he sounded kind of normal to me, you know. Planes were going back and forth in there all day. So I just kind of figured, you know, like, oh, he's got, you know, some ice there. He didn't sound like he was panicking or stressed out or anything.

Q. And that was the flight from Unalakleet we're talking about, that he was on his way back to Nome when you talked to him?

A. That is correct.

Q. Okay.

A. Yeah.

Q. So I wish I knew all these places that you're talking about, but so you came from the southeast as well. Is that correct? At one point.

A. Around that area, yeah. I was towards like Golovin area at one time. And then Golovin to Elim which is, you know, the southeast area, yes. And then Elim to Teller, it was southeast to like the north that way.

Q. Can you tell us about the weather than you experienced, like at what altitudes you were at and what you saw that day?

A. Um-hum. Yep. Up at Teller, Teller to Golovin, I had first heard him off of kind of Unalakleet there I think or was it Nome? No, it wasn't. No, it was, it was -- yeah, I had an IFR flight plan between Teller and Golovin. I got up a little bit higher to go to 15,000 feet. I went in there to shoot their approach limit to Golovin, and up above it for the most part, and then, you know, I started descending in there. And I got some ice, you know, not an alarming amount of ice. Just a normal amount of ice. It was probably moderate or so. It was rime ice in there, but I was getting through it pretty quick. So I wasn't in the icing too, too long. So -- and I was able to shed most of it once I got down to Golovin there. And then the flight from Golovin to Elim was pretty much VFR, or it wasn't VFR. So, I, you know, I had ground contact and could see pretty much all the way over to Elim there.

Q. Right. I'm not familiar with what kind of deice equipment the 200 has. Do you have boots or TKS?

A. Yeah, just boots.

Q. Okay. And I know you said that you weren't in it long, and you were mostly above, but did you notice anything like abnormal about the icing, accumulate rate, anything like that?

A. No, nothing, nothing that wasn't normal for that area, you know. I mean it

wasn't -- I wasn't alarmed about the accumulation for me because that was, you know, I was descending pretty -- at a pretty good rate, and I was, you know, in it for not very long. So I was above it and then I was in it, and then I kind of was back out of it again. So it wasn't -- I wasn't in there for a long period of time.

Q. Okay. Great. Thanks.

MS. BLUM: I'm going to pass it to Paul now.

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. Hey, Yuri. Thank you again so much for taking the time to answer our questions. I think you mentioned to Starr during your rundown through the day that you took your last flight or one of your last flights from Teller back down to Unalakleet. Can you recall what time during -- on February 6th you took that flight?

A. On that one, like it was -- I did a Teller to Koyuk. That was later. That was probably around -- I'm guessing probably 4 o'clock I think, somewhere around there, maybe 4:30.

Q. Okay. And so, yeah. Could you describe the weather during the flight? After you left Teller and went on that flight, could you describe what altitudes you got up and then what the weather was like as you went further south?

A. Teller to Koyuk, it was -- as I recall, it was pretty nice in Teller. It wasn't too bad. And then Teller to Koyuk, on that one, I think I was at 17,000. So I was out of it, out of it, out of, you know, I was in the clear in there. And then going to Koyuk, what was it? I think it was pretty nice over there, too. It was like 2500 miles or so, something like that.

Q. Okay.

A. Those places were pretty decent that night.

Q. Okay. As far as weather resources that you use as a pilot, could you,

could you let me know kind of what tools you use weather-wise that are helpful for you, whether it's preflight or during a flight or anything like that?

A. I use, you know, the AWOS on there for the most part, and I kind of back it up with AeroWeather. If I can't do that, I try to call on the phone, you know, the AWOS phone number, for example.

Q. Okay.

A. Did that answer your question?

Q. Yeah. And on AeroWeather, are you just looking at the text data, like the TAFs and the METARs or are there any graphical things --

A. Yeah.

Q. -- you use on there that are helpful?

A. Yeah, just those ones. Like when I'm flying, I use those ones. They're the main ones that I use.

Q. Okay. Do you ever use the Aviation Weather Unit, the AAWU page as far as their graphics and all or --

A. Yeah, I use that pretty much -- I use that -- I mainly use that when I'm on the ground, you know, before any flight. I use that one, and I check the weather on that one, yeah.

Q. Okay. Do you ever use the icing graphical page at all?

A. Sorry. Say again.

Q. Do you ever using the icing page on there, and if so, is it useful, helpful or not helpful?

A. I don't know if I'm familiar with that one.

Q. Okay. Are there any -- as a pilot flying up here, are there any weather tools that you wish that you had, anything you can think of, whether it's equipment or

something in the cockpit or anything like that, that you think would help you be safer flying around?

A. There's a lot of times the AWOSs are down, you know, where you can't get them either on the phone or through air weather or anything else. It would be nice if they'd be able to keep those up, you know, because there's a lot of stations that have been down, and they've been down for quite a bit of while. So you're kind of using the web cams and going off of what people say sometimes and stuff like that. It would be nice to have them up and working most of the time, but all the stuff that I use right now off the top of my head, I can't think of anything. Just most everything is pretty decent.

Q. Okay. Well, if there's anything you can think of, please, please pass it along to us.

A. Okay.

Q. That's all the questions I have. Thank you so much, Yuri.

A. Yeah. Will do. Thanks.

MS. BLUM: Do you have any questions, Rob?

MR. PECK: Yeah, I've got a couple for Yuri.

BY MR. PECK:

Q. This is Rob again and, you know, I failed I guess in our introductions there. I do have -- I'm a pilot, right. I was a

C-130 guy. And then I flew 135 for Alaska Air Transit in this Caravan of the incident and accident. And then PC-12s also. So I have some high level stuff. C-130 guy in the Air Force. Now I'm in the FAA as you know. So I apologize for missing that to begin with, but a couple of questions. On that -- I think you were going to Golovin if I understand right, kind of at the time when this accident happened. Is that true?

A. No. Actually I think I was off of Elim and headed to Teller is when

everything happened there. You know, I was off of Elim headed to Teller, IFR flight plan and we were talking then. And then I remember hearing APP say, you know, the low level alert and they were looking for him, you know, trying to get him up and he had called up to see if we were able to, you know, try on different channels and stuff, and if we were able to hear him or get him up on any of the P tabs (ph.) or anything like that. And, yeah, that's when it happened, Elim to Teller.

Q. Okay. So, you were describing that flight into Golovin. How many minutes or half hour, an hour, was that prior do you think to that time-ish timeframe-wise?

A. I'm sorry. Can you say that again?

Q. Going into Golovin, how much in time was that prior to the accident just in rough numbers?

A. Oh, okay. Well, see, that could have been at least 35, 40 minutes probably is my guess.

Q. Okay. And, you said you came from high to low obviously because you have the ability to pressurize which is awesome. I love that in the PC-12. But, what altitude or do you remember approximately do you think the ceiling was that day as you were coming down?

A. I can't remember off the top of my head. It was -- there were some scattered stuff in there I believe. So it was probably, probably 8,000 down to going into Elim or going into Golovin, probably around 8,000 down to like 1500 or something around there.

Q. Okay. And, I think I heard you say you thought it was probably moderate type rime icing. Is that true?

A. Yeah, it was about moderate rime ice, yeah.

Q. Okay. And you didn't have any trouble with the boots on keeping up with it or anything like that then?

A. No. Yeah, no, I didn't have any trouble with it.

Q. Okay. And so then you were going from Elim to Teller. What -- I guess -- I'm assuming here. But you climbed through that layer of clouds again. Is it very similar in nature? Did it change at all on that flight?

A. That flight wasn't too bad over in that direction. Like it was -- it wasn't, it wasn't -- it was actually better from Elim to Teller in that direction there. And I didn't pick up much ice at all out of there.

Q. Okay.

A. Yeah, it was better.

Q. So going back, going into Golovin then, where would you say the worst icing was in that band from 8 to 1500? Where do you think it was the worst if it was one?

A. If there was, it probably was -- it was around 4,000 or 5,000 to like -- if I had to recall it or if I had to say, it would be, yeah, probably 6,000 down to 3,000, somewhere around there.

Q. Okay. And, did any of your other flights that day, did you experience similar things in that same altitude or was it getting worse as they day went on or was there any changes or better or whatever?

A. I seemed about the same to me. Yeah, it seemed about the same to me. I just -- most of my routes that way were pretty good because we were able to keep it pretty much ice free and if there was ice, it wasn't much at all. Like it was -- I guess what I'm saying is most of the ice that I got that day was from Teller to Golovin and the rest of the flights weren't too bad. Well, actually I got some ice from Koyuk to Unalakleet,

like to end my day.

Q. Um-hum.

A. But that wasn't too bad either. Like I was able to keep up with that. It wasn't no concern at all. I was able to shed, keep it off of there.

Q. Right, right. I think you said that the pilot had said something to you about it's pretty icy at some point there.

A. Yeah. He did. He had mentioned it.

Q. Just in your experience, what would you think that means I guess?

A. In my experience, it would me that it's icy, you know, and it's getting iced up pretty good and probably seeing a pretty good amount of ice forming up there, you know. That's what it would mean to me is like it's, you know, it's icy, a lot of ice.

Q. So, maybe more than normal or normal they would say that or would it be more than --

A. Probably, probably more than normal I believe. Pretty icy, that sounds like it's a good amount of ice I would say anyway. If I would say, I would say it was pretty icy and that was a pretty -- like if I was to say it to somebody, pretty icy, then that means that, you know, you have a really good amount of ice.

Q. Yeah, okay. Hey, thank you very much.

MR. PECK: That's all I have for right now.

MS. BLUM: Brian, do you have any questions for Yuri?

MR. WECKWERTH: No, I don't.

BY MR. WECKWERTH:

Q. Of course, being familiar with that area, that paints a really good picture for me, Yuri. I see what you're saying. Apparently that icing was generally south of the Teller/Golovin line, maybe the worst of it, and certain the Elim to Teller line was a fairly

decent track without much ice, huh?

A. Yeah, yeah.

Q. Thanks.

A. Like more ocean type kind of thing.

Q. Sure. That was it. Yuri. Thanks.

A. Thanks.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Yuri, is there anything that we haven't asked you that you'd like to share, somebody that you think we should talk to that might be helpful in this investigation?

A. The only person that was out, and that was talking between us three was Sophia, might be able to say something more to you, but it was -- when we were out flying around, it was just me, Chad and Sophia out in that kind of area, and we were -- where he was going in, I think Sophia was going into Nome. And we were all kind of on that channel and he was -- I guess ATC was going to ask him to hold or something like that, and he was like, why are they holding. We were just talking like, why are they holding? What are they doing over there? How long is it going to take and that type of deal?

Q. Okay. Yeah, we were able to talk with Sophia this morning. So --

A. Okay.

MS. BLUM: If there's nothing else, we'll go ahead and end this recording at 2:23.

(Whereupon, at 2:23 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

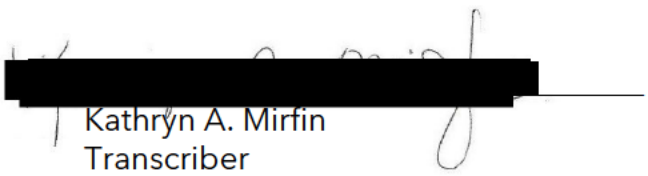
CERTIFICATE

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 Yuri Ivanoff
ACCIDENT NO.:	ANC25MA018
PLACE:	Nome, Alaska
DATE:	February 15, 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.



Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber

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: CHRISTOPHER PAUL OLANNA, Customer Service Agent/Dispatcher Bering Air

Nome, Alaska

Sunday,
February 16, 2025

APPEARANCES:

STARR BLUM, Aviation Accident 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

ROBERT RICHMOND, Representative
Richmond & Quinn
(On behalf of Mr. Olanna)

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INTERVIEW

(11:06 a.m.)

MS. BLUM: Okay, today is February 16th, 2025 and it's 11:06 a.m. Alaska Standard Time. My name is Starr Blum and I am an investigator with the NTSB, we're in the process of investigating the accident involving Bering Air Flight 445 on February 6th.

First off, we really want to extend our condolences, we're really sorry that you're going through this and sorry that we have to be here, but as you know, our role here is safety and the whole reason behind that is we're trying to prevent this from happening again and anybody having to go through this again. So thank you very much for being here and helping us in this factual part of the investigation.

I want to assure you that talking to dispatchers, pilots, management, pilots, is totally normal, we do this in most of our investigations, so don't let that concern you, this is a normal part of our process. And as we spoke before, anything you say in here can't be used for any certificate or enforcement actions against anyone.

We'll go ahead and go around and let everybody introduce themselves.

MR. SUFFERN: I'm Paul Suffern with the NTSB, my background is meteorology, so I do weather type of things. I've been with the NTSB about 14, 15 years, before that I lived in Alaska up in Juneau and spent some time, a little time in Anchorage, as well. I was a forecaster for the National Weather Service for about four, five years.

MR. PECK: And I'm Rob Peck, Robert, from the Anchorage FSDO, I'm an FLM down there, frontline manager, was an inspector. Before that I worked for Alaska Air Transit flying Caravans, PC12s (indiscernible) and then prior to that, I was military

for about 21 years flying the 130. And again, I'm here just in a safety role, okay, trying to gather facts with the NTSB.

MR. WECKWERTH: Yeah, Brian Weckwerth, the director of safety for Bering Air.

MS. BLUM: Okay, don't mind if we take notes, it's just generating thoughts. Also, just answer the questions to the best of your recollection, if you don't know an answer to a question, "I don't know" is a perfectly acceptable answer. And you're entitled to have a representative of your choosing, who will be your representative today?

MR. OLANNA: Bob.

MS. BLUM: Bob --

MR. RICHMOND: Richmond.

MS. BLUM: Okay, Mr. Richmond, please refrain from answering any questions on Chris's behalf. You can tell Chris not to answer a question or you guys can go outside and confer and have a private conversation, if needed, and also if you need a break at any time, go to the bathroom, you just want to stretch your legs, just let us know, no problem, we'll just stop and start when you're ready.

MR. OLANNA: Sure.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Do you have any questions before we start?

MR. OLANNA: No.

MS. BLUM: Okay.

INTERVIEW OF CHRISTOPHER PAUL OLANNA

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. If you would, please say and spell your name.

A. My name is Christopher Paul Olanna, C-h-r-i-s-t-o-p-h-e-r, Paul, P-a-u-l, Olanna, O-l-a-n-n-a.

Q. And what is your job title here at Bering Air?

A. I'm a CSA, so a customer service agent/dispatcher.

Q. Okay. When did you get hired here?

A. I had worked prior to this most -- you know, if we go back, I was hired in, I believe, 2003, March of 2003.

Q. Okay, was that as a dispatcher or --

A. CSA, just a customer service agent.

Q. Okay. When did you start as a dispatcher?

A. I believe that would've been about 2007.

Q. Okay, great. Are you a pilot?

A. No.

Q. Okay. Can you give us a CliffsNotes version of how you ended up here at Bering and interest in aviation?

A. I started here in -- I had taken a small break between 2003 and 2001, had worked a short stint here when I was 19 years old and it was just kind of something to fill the time while I was getting ready to go off to school. So then I left for school, came back, and I got offered a job right off the plane, the first day I had come back into town, I had run into an employee at Bering Air, they had known I'd worked previously and said hey, we want -- you're back in town and I said yes and they said well, come on over, you got a job, so that's how that started for -- in 2003.

Q. Wow, that's great.

A. Yeah.

Q. What were you getting your education in?

A. Biology.
Q. Okay.
A. I had plans to maybe be a dentist, but --
(Laughter.)
MR. OLANNA: Yeah. Not what I wanted once I got there.
MS. BLUM: Got you.
MR. OLANNA: Yeah.
BY MS. BLUM:
Q. Is Bering Air the only other operator you've worked for in this capacity?
A. I did a short stint with United Airlines in 2000 to 2001.
Q. What were you doing then?
A. Basically, the same thing, customer service.
Q. Okay. Again, I'm learning a lot up here about Alaska and 135, so flight follower and dispatcher is the same term, is that correct?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. When you became a dispatcher, what kind of training did you undergo?
A. Very basic, you know, radio etiquette, stuff like that, you know, protocols in case of, you know, situations, basic knowledge of weather and that's -- and it went on, it's not something you do, you're just given the controls and then you're on your own, you know, you're there for an extended period and I couldn't recall how long I did it for, there was a senior CSA or dispatcher/flight follower that did that for a while with me.
Q. Okay, so you worked together for --
A. Yes.

Q. Okay.
A. Yes.
Q. Do you train people now?
A. I do, yes.
Q. Okay. Is there any training manual associated with being a dispatcher, becoming one?
A. There is, yes.
Q. Okay. And then -- so you have a training manual, do you also have -- you know how pilots have checklists, do you have checklists?
A. We have checklists, yes.
Q. What do those checklists cover?
A. Basically, we -- you know, prior to flight following, we would gather any NOTAMs that the pilots need, any, you know, weather observations and stuff like that.
Q. Are dispatchers required to know how to interpret the NOTAMs and the weather, is that --
A. I don't believe so.
Q. Okay. Can you interpret the codings?
A. To some extent and then there's also the -- you know, you can decode them, too, when you're looking at those.
Q. Online?
A. The METARs and stuff like that, yes.
Q. Yeah. And do dispatchers -- so you guys, you have cargo you have scheduled and you have charters, right?
A. Yes.
Q. Is there a dispatcher for every operation?

A. No, not in the sense that I think you're referring to. Maybe you could clarify, you're saying that there's a -- someone that's flight following for every single department?

Q. Yeah, like would you follow a charter flight or a cargo flight?

A. Yes, we would.

Q. Okay. Is there a flight you wouldn't?

A. I don't believe so.

Q. Okay. How many dispatchers are there here?

A. Right now there's two.

Q. Okay. Is that enough?

A. I believe so, yes.

Q. Okay. And do you -- do you have operational control over the flight or is that just the pilot and somebody else, like the DO, do dispatchers have that?

A. Ultimate control is by director of operations.

Q. Okay.

A. And then, you know, it falls in line with the pilot discretion and the dispatcher's there to kind of be the go-between --

(Noise interference.)

MR. OLANNA: -- and flight following, obtaining the weather for pilots and stuff like that.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. At Bering Air do you have the ability to cancel a flight?

A. I can, yes.

Q. Okay. So can you walk me through what a typical day is, let's say I'm going to be your pilot for a flight, what's the interaction between you and I, I come in and I say, "Hi, Chris," where does it go from there?

A. I think it first starts when we walk in the door, which is printing out NOTAMs, you know, weather forecasts and stuff like that, there's a brief discussion with the DO, director of operations, if there's any information that needs to be looked over concerning weather and then a pilot would walk in, usually an hour or more before their departure time and basically, we would have a discussion of routes, weather, we might discuss runway conditions if, you know, there had been preexisting knowledge of bad weather and then, you know, if there was anything that we deemed should another step be taken, we may talk about coming back to it again, you know, in 20 or 30 minutes, time to assess and have a discussion with operations, but for any number of reasons.

Q. Okay, like a runway closure might be an example, snow removal?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. I guess I should've asked this, again, I -- generally, you're educating me about your role, what would you say your duties and responsibilities as a dispatcher are?

A. Flight following is, you know, our big one there.

Q. Can you tell me, like, what that means, like what does it mean to flight follow, what --

A. We're tracking the flight from the point of it departing through its continuation ending at Nome, so multiple stops, we're following that flight the entire time from departure to each site or airport and returning.

Q. Okay. And backing up again, you said you come in, you get a feel for the day and what things are like and you talk to the DO or whoever the OC delegate is or -- thinking about runway closures or snow, do you call people outside of the company to gather information?

A. You know, we do have communications issues once in a while, so yes, you know, you could talk to, typically, an airport manager in that, you know, village and then you might also have contact with an agent.

Q. The village agent?

A. Village agent, yes.

Q. Do you ever talk to AAWU, A-A-W-U, the weather services?

A. Not directly, no.

Q. Okay. So when a pilot comes in, we've heard about a clipboard and it sounds like the weather for the whole area is on that clipboard, is that correct?

A. Yes.

Q. Do the pilots ever -- so do they just kind of take notes or do you give them a copy?

A. They may take notes, you know, they'll look it over and, you know, they might point out something that they regard as important.

Q. Okay. And how does that work with the village agents, do they have weather printed out for them, what do they provide the pilot?

A. No, there's no weather reporting that they would have printed out.

Q. Okay.

A. And they're not there -- they're not an essential, like, you know, it's just a discussion like, you know, hey, you know, it's snowing, maybe it's not reported, but they might mention that it's snowing.

Q. Okay, great. Do you sometimes talk to the pilot in flight? Are you in radio communication with the pilot during their flight?

A. As far as the radio communication signals can go, I mean, there's limitations, you're not going to talk to someone that's a hundred miles away.

Q. Okay. About how far can your antennas reach?

A. I'm sure, you know, there's atmospherics, I'm sure. You could have -- there's good days, there's bad days.

Q. Yeah.

A. It all depends on the weather.

Q. Okay. So is it safe to assume, like, if weather's changing, you just pick up the phone and maybe call the village agents who can then relay stuff to the pilot, is that a fair statement or -- if you do see changes and you can't get a hold of them on the radio, do you do anything in that case?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you have any involvement with the weight and balance, the load manifest, any of that?

A. Not directly, no. I will -- that's usually, you know, weight and balance is a pilot -- and they'll address it in the manner that they do, and I'm sure they've talked to you about it, and I might only be brought in to find a solution to it, meaning, you know, another -- a later scheduled flight that might take on some of the cargo or baggage or anything like that.

Q. Okay, just letting them know, like, you're going to pick this up in this village instead or --

A. We're not going to move something.

Q. Okay, okay. Great. How many flights do you typically dispatch a day, how many are you watching?

A. I think it would be fair to say that every morning there is about six that depart and that's pretty typical.

Q. Okay.

A. And maybe with charters there might be eight, for the first morning flight and then that's the same number in the afternoon.

Q. Okay. I'm trying to think. On the day of the accident, can you -- can you walk us through what happened and your experience throughout that day, can you walk us through that?

A. It started out like any typical morning, you know, coming in 7:00 a.m. or thereabouts, gathering any kind of weather information that we could have access to, doing some runway reports where we were able to, but very straightforward conversation with everyone and this would include the pilot of the Flight 445 that afternoon, he spent probably, oh, I don't know, 20 minutes or more with me that morning, could've been even longer, and just kind of planning out the day with him and scenarios of, you know, that existing flight to Unalakleet and then we had a conversation about what might be done throughout the day there and then the completion of the day, basically, you know, okay, so a typical scheduled departure time for that flight and that was it, it was very straightforward, a normal day for us.

Q. Were you on duty when you found out, when it was found out that he was missing?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you walk me through what happened after that?

A. I walked in when he actually was -- or I was present when he had called in, when he had said that he was 20 minutes out and he had made a statement that he was 20 minutes out or thereabouts, depending on the reopening of this airport.

Q. Was that a -- I don't know if they schedule snow removals up here, but was that a scheduled runway closure?

A. No, I don't believe so.

Q. Okay. How did he sound before he took the flight and on the radio?

A. If you're referring to when he departed Unalakleet, are you saying that or --

Q. Like when he checked in -- when you -- the interactions, did he seem like he was rested, did he seem like he was stressed out about anything, did he -- what was your interaction like with him?

A. He was very collected, he was calm, he seemed very rested. He seemed like he was in a really good mood. It was normal for him, you know, there was no -- there was nothing that would indicate anything different in the day.

Q. Okay. When he called 20 minutes out or whatever it was, during that flight, did he talk to you about weather?

A. No. Not while he was in the air, no.

Q. Okay. Have you been in situations in the past where pilots have expressed concerns about the weather even though it was legal, the weather minimums there with -- you know, above that?

A. Yes. And those are all taken into consideration and they're considered to be a situation that should be upheld to a standard where if they felt that something's out the ordinary or something doesn't seem that they are comfortable with, then they have all the discretion to say I'm not going to do this, there's -- it's their choice.

Q. Okay.

A. Everything we do is their choice.

Q. Okay, great. So you've never -- have you ever seen anybody at Bering Air put pressure on the pilot to fly?

A. Never.

MS. BLUM: Okay, those are my questions for now, thank you.

Paul.

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. Thanks, Chris, it was really great to learn how things work here. I'm just going to follow up on a couple of things that Starr mentioned there, you mentioned the pilot calling, saying 20 minutes out, was that a direct radio communication to you, the company, how did you receive that communication?

A. That's a direct communications to us, as a company, you know, the dispatcher or the flight follower.

Q. So that's on a -- I don't know all the pilot terms, but that's on a separate frequency than maybe a common traffic advisory or something like that?

A. Yes, we don't listen to any of the common traffic advisories at all, we only have a company radio. So we don't hear any other conversations that they might have.

Q. After the flight departed from here in the morning did -- all their instruments, routes during the day, did you ever have any other contact with the accident pilot?

A. Not directly. We had talked to our operations in Unalakleet and we had discussed several times different things that were playing out throughout the day.

Q. So conversations with Unalakleet, do you mean there -- the village agent there as opposed to the pilot?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Do you recall what those conversations were throughout the day or what they discussed?

A. Normal operations anywhere that we were going to avoid for one reason or another, you know, scheduled operations for, you know, simple things, like you know, maybe the passenger count or the passenger load that was expected to come, you know, any minor adjustments that needed to be made.

Q. Did any of those discussions involve weather, whether it was weather in Unalakleet or around Unalakleet or anything like that?

A. We discussed in particular St. Michael and Stebbins weather, then had decided that we were not going to do some of the operations there that we would've typically done.

Q. And what were the discussions and reasoning behind that, on that day?

A. That they were -- the discussions were that we didn't feel it was necessary to operate in those places due to weather. Specifics, I don't remember.

Q. Okay. So you don't recall if it was ceiling or visibility or heavy snow or --

A. I believe it was a combination of them.

Q. Before the -- you mentioned you spent 20 or more minutes with the accident pilot on the day of the accident, do you recall if he mentioned any concerns about the weather before he departed on that day and any portions of the route?

A. He did not mention anything specifically other than, you know, he was aware of the weather and the conditions, that there were -- that they stood at that, you know, time and he had discussed the forecast.

Q. Do you recall what he mentioned about the forecast, was it just maybe the TAFs, was it pictures of "I'm looking at this picture of turbulence, I'm looking at this picture of icing," or do you recall any specifics?

A. The specifics that I recall having a conversation with him was that the weather was supposed to improve.

Q. Did he pick any particular region where he thought the weather was going to improve or just in general Norton Sound area?

A. It was in general Norton Sound area.

Q. Okay. So stepping back a little bit to your role as a dispatcher, what weather resources do you have while you're working dispatch?

A. The one specific that we use quite often is the NOAA surface observations and then there's METARs that we use, too, that, you know, has the pass that you can decode. We might look at weather maps, the 24- to 60-hour weather maps.

Q. Do you recall the specific name of the weather service or NOAA site that you were pulling up (indiscernible)?

(No audible response.)

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. Going back to your training and things like that, you mentioned that back in 2003 or '07 or somewhere in there, you had received, as part of that, some discussion about weather and things like that. Is there any, like, yearly training or six-month training that you, as a dispatcher, receive about weather, anything like that?

A. We tend to look at anything that's new that might come out and we have discussions about, you know, whether it's -- we can use or not use. There is a lot of weather apps out there and stuff like that and all of those are discussed, you know, on reliability and, you know, just simple things like that.

Q. What's the newest weather tool that you got access to in the past couple years, any of those types of discussions?

A. I believe the newest one that we've looked at and don't use it in any real official capacity, but it gives us, you know, a broader perspective on things is Windy.

Q. Okay. What do you like about that, that interface?

A. You know, I'm not familiar with it enough to really say that there's one thing or another that I like about it.

Q. Okay. When you're talking about dispatching a flight and things like that, is there any kind of a risk assessment or anything like that, that either you or the pilot go out, not necessarily specific to weather, but may include weather, but may include things like equipment or recent overhaul or anything like that, that you kind of step through and look through for the day?

A. Anything that's concerning equipment is usually through the OC and we'll be notified if there's anything that needs to be addressed where -- you know, change aircraft because of that, you know, equipment use. I think, probably, we've kind of looked at it as far as a discussion between pilot and OC and myself is that that is a company policy and there's also -- I personally look at things that -- and consider them when they're in this range of a thousand overcast three miles and anything greater than 20 knots on wind.

Q. Are there specific criteria for certain airports, you know, that you work that are automatically a no-go for that airport whether it's ceiling or visibility or crosswinds or ice or anything like that?

A. The pilots directly have better knowledge than I do of those things, there are a few that stand out, one of those in particular is Elim, that it's a no-go. It's pretty simple and straightforward.

Q. And would be no-go for what type of condition?

A. In that one in particular, it's a wind direction and a ceiling.

MR. SUFFERN: I think that's all I got for right now, thank you, Chris.

BY MR. PECK:

Q. Again, Chris, I'm here just on a -- the safety thing, so I want you to completely understand that. And we had flight dispatchers when I was in the industry at AAT, right, so I kind of understand, so I'm going to ask some questions to make sure I understand how they're used here because it could be some differences, to make sure I don't have some misunderstanding there. Would it be fair for me to say that when a pilot walks up to you to have that discussion, that 20-minute discussion that kind of got mentioned, that that expectation is that pilot has already looked at all the weather sources when he's coming to you or are you guys doing that together?

A. I think it's safe to say at least expect they'll have a knowledge of what the weather is, there is a lot of resources that he could use and then we might, you know, discuss specifics.

Q. Sure. So it's kind of two different points of view, right?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you agree with that?

A. Yes.

Q. Looking at that weather.

A. Yes.

Q. Yeah. Okay. That's kind of in line with what we've done in the past, that's why I asked, I just wanted to make sure. Another question I have is from where I've been in the past, the flight coordinators dealt a lot with moving people, for instance, today I got to get someone from Elim to Unalakleet, where normally go Unalakleet to

Elim type of thing, but because of whatever reason, we got to kind of do it backwards, so kind of the routing of flights on days, is that a big part of your guys' job also here or not?

A. Yes.

Q. So okay, and then if there was, I don't know, a boat loader at Elim that needs to get back to Nome or something, that is something that you guys would know and let the pilots know or -- if you got, you know, kind of bigger loads or unexpected loads or something like that?

A. I think the -- our responsibility is to notify the pilot of, you know, the circumstance and, say, the loader, and he's in the job and duty of, you know, ensuring that he can do it safely.

Q. Sure.

A. So it is his discretion.

Q. Absolutely.

A. Yeah.

Q. But you guys would kind of get the word that there's kind of some unusual cargo here or some heavy cargo or whatever that, you know, you might see show up at the airplane or something, so you kind of have those conversations in that 20-minute --

A. Yes.

Q. -- period, is that true?

A. Yes.

Q. Here, who normally -- I believe you guys use Takeflite, if I'm correct, is that right?

A. Yes.

Q. So in Takeflite, do you guys put in, you know, this -- and I'm guessing it's your -- the people that meet them when they first come in and take weights of the people and they -- do they put them into Takeflite?

A. Yes.

Q. And then how does the pilot get that, that manifest?

A. They have these iPads that they use.

Q. Okay.

A. And it has their weight and balance and their loads and they can look on it there and they also print it.

Q. Okay. Do you put stuff into Takeflite as -- let's just say we go back to the boat at Elim, a boat motor, would you put that, you know, potentially there's a boat motor, would that go in there or anything like that?

A. If it's -- it would be noted, yes, and then that pilot would, you know, assess the piece of equipment or whatever it is that you're going to put on board and he would manifest it.

Q. Right, right. Would it be normal, let's say, mechanic and has a hundred pounds or a hundred and 50 pounds of tools he's taking with him or something, would that be noted, kind of, in Takeflite in the notes or whatever, is that --

A. Yes.

Q. -- normal?

A. That's normal.

Q. Was there -- or do you recall, I guess, any conversations throughout any of your flights about icing on this particular day?

A. We discussed it first thing in the morning and there wasn't -- you know, I -- I don't think there was anything that could prove that it was there,

really. There was also discussions here that afternoon about it, but again, nothing reported officially.

Q. Um-hum.

A. There was a large gap between our morning flights and our afternoon flights.

Q. And what, I guess, do you mean as reported officially, would that be PIREPs or just hearing from another pilot in the organization or all of that or --

A. I would say that's officially, pilot reports, and inside the company, too.

Q. Okay.

A. Which would be noted and we would discuss it and it would be -- you know, we'd make sure that everybody knew.

Q. Do you remember having any kind of discussions about that icing or what those might have looked like, do you remember any of that?

A. No.

Q. You mentioned the company freight, company radio, right?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you, like the flight coordinators, do you guys have that radio right there and is there repeaters, like, maybe in the chief pilot's office or somewhere else or is it just you -- or do you know?

A. I'm not aware of it being anywhere else other than in our office, it could be, there could be other places, but as far as I know, we have the one in our office. There is no repeaters.

Q. And, I guess, the other question, kind of going along with his questioning, was -- and this is just because of previous experience, normally we had -- here's our bookmarks or our tabs, right, on our computer, is that kind of how you guys find your

weather, I'm going to click on this tab and this tab and this tab and I'm going to get all the different sources or is that not correct?

A. That is correct, there's tabs that we have direct access without any -- you know, it's there at a moment's notice.

Q. Right. Are those any way controlled, in other words, do you guys have kind of a set of bookmarks that we use every day and we're not going to necessarily bookmark anything else unless there's some sort of approval maybe or not?

A. Yes, yeah.

Q. So it's kind of a standardized --

A. It's standardized, you know, weather observations that we look at and anything else is discussed.

Q. And so would it be fair to say that maybe you, in that training period, are trained on those bookmarks to -- how to use them and look at them or --

A. No, it's fair to say that we're trained on how to use them.

MR. PECK: Okay. Brian.

MS. BLUM: Brian.

MR. WECKWERTH: I don't have any questions for Chris or clarification or anything, no.

MS. BLUM: Okay.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Thinking back to PIREPs, are you involved with disseminating those, collecting them from the pilots, do you have any interaction with PIREPs during the typical day?

A. I would report them if I was given any, through the company, which is our pilots that would report pilot reports. And typically, a pilot, if they felt the need, would probably talk to Flight Service or -- and get any kind of pilot reports.

Q. Sure.

A. And then also, on the weather counts (ph.) that are there, they actually will report up and pop up with a little tab that you can hover over it and it will have pilot reports that you can see.

Q. Oh, that would be neat to see. Yeah, maybe you could show us that. So if -- is it common for a pilot to report a PIREP to you or is it usually through Flight Service?

A. It's common for them to report it to us, but in most -- in a lot of cases, they would report it back to Flight Service, as well. At least that's my understanding, so --

Q. Okay. Just, I'm learning how important they are and not just for the pilots, but even for the forecasters, how important these PIREPs are. So if you -- if a pilot calls in and gives you a PIREP, does -- I guess that means most likely all the other pilots heard it or do you call up and tell another flight the PIREP you were given?

A. I believe that they monitor company radios quite frequently and the only times they might not have access to that is when they were doing their final approaches or on the ground and they're -- the communities that they're going to.

Q. Okay, okay. Sorry to back up, I'm still understanding operational control. So if you say hey, we're going to cancel this flight, is that unofficial or do you have the -- like, legal ability, do you -- can you be an operational control delegate?

A. And you're saying as far as --

Q. Can you legally say this flight's not going or does that have to come from the pilot or whoever's in operational control that day.

A. I wouldn't know if it was legal, you know.

Q. Okay, okay. I'm just trying to figure --

A. Company-wise, I have control enough to sit there and say, you know, I deem something as not okay, then I'm going to report it to the director of operations, they have final say in it, but it is --

Q. Okay.

A. -- almost unanimously decided that, you know, we're going to stop doing something, it's -- a pilot can do the same thing.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Yeah, I'm just trying to get a feel for exactly how it works. Those are my questions.

MR. SUFFERN: Okay. Yeah, I've got a couple more, I think.

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. So I think you mentioned earlier about you're kind of looking at weather at the various locations and things like that and you mentioned that example of the winds and ceilings at one of the villages and that's definitely a no-go, it's worse in those conditions, are there any conditions where you're checking weather in between locations and that's -- you see that the weather in between locations is a no-go or is it strictly kind of the end points that you have kind of set criteria for those?

A. You have the Seward Peninsula greater than the size of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island put together. You're asking me specifically if we have that ability to observe weather in between destinations? Is that what you're saying?

Q. I didn't know if you had any tools.

A. I don't believe there's any tools out there that can point out specific weathers, I think, you know, that's a -- you know, there's weather stations that we use to report and there's -- you know, you could discern weather to some extent, what that is, I

think it's better to say that you can discern weather over a broad area between points, not specifically between points, but a region.

Q. When you have a pilot, I guess, departing from a more remote location, do they ever contact you, call you via radio or is that a sat phone, what kind of communication is that like?

A. If there's cell phone communications, they will call in. They use sat phones, if they can and, you know, limitations of radios is -- if they're airborne high enough and close enough.

Q. Okay.

A. But generally, if they're on the ground, they're going to use some form of communication, cell phone or sat phone.

Q. And what kind of info do they usually relay to you as a dispatcher or it really depends on what it is?

A. So specifics of what they're going to do, is that what you're saying?

Q. Just what kind of information do they pass along, you know, before they depart those locations or have conversations with you, you know, equipment, "we ran out of this at this location," do they pass that along, weather, you know, "we had too many passengers come and I can't get them all on," kind of conversations with --

A. We have specifics on what their route might be, what their departure plan is, what their plans are, we'll have discussions about they deem it necessary to remove, you know, some object or another, whether that's freight or baggage, any -- and then, you know, they might relay it to a person that's traveling with them that, you know, your bags will be picked up at a later time, you know, our flight-following dispatcher is going to, you know, ensure that it's taken care of there, and things like that.

Q. Okay.

A. Yeah.

Q. Just a specific example about the -- Starr was asking questions about the Aviation Weather Unit page on there and it sounds like you have access to that. Do you ever use the icing graphic page on that, if you can recall?

A. I've seen it, I don't -- you know, those are more in the realm of what a pilot in the OC would do, that is not my expertise. They'll advise me of their decisions and I -- those decisions may, you know, curb how I operate, you know, their scheduled flight.

Q. Are there any weather resources or tools that you use that you feel like could be improved to help you do your job better?

A. You know, again, it comes back to the size of the Seward Peninsula alone. There's always room for improvement regardless of the entity. The reliability needs to be there, there needs to be, you know, more in the forecast to be developed, I think, and I think people need to realize the size of this area. And it changes localized weather, too.

Q. Um-hum. If you had to -- and there were infinite resources and money wasn't an issue or anything like that, is there one thing that you wish that you could have weather-wise, whether that's equipment, weather radar, automatic PIREPs from every plane all the time, what -- is there any weather resources like that, again, money not being an issue or anything like that, that you wish they could help you do your job better?

A. I think the reality is what person wouldn't want all those things, every bit of it, sure. If you had to pick one in particular, you know, I don't think there's -- it's too broad, you know, too broad of a spectrum to sit there and pick one, we need every little bit we can get.

Q. So there's not one that you, as a dispatcher, would prefer over another if you had to -- these are my top three, but I really wish we had this one?

A. Yeah, you know, I don't -- maybe a weather radar in Unalakleet or something like that, yeah.

MR. SUFFERN: Thanks, that's all the question I've got.

MR. OLANNA: Okay.

BY MR. PECK:

Q. I'm going back to just your job and how this company does things, do you guys have what you would call priority freight? For example, I've done flights before where we took, say, a dentist to a village and that now we're moving him from that village to another village with that thing, and so that equipment for that dentist, which is usually a substantial amount, is priority, that's one of the deals, do you guys do stuff like that here, also, or not?

A. I think the reality is that in our circumstances, the priority is first to the load available that the pilot gives, stands, so essential is not essential when we're concerned with the load, you know, the load available.

Q. Okay.

A. So if we just deem that it's not -- it's past any limit, then that's it. And we'll notify people and that's -- we'll find another way on a flight that, you know, has the capacity, but there's no -- I wouldn't call it essential or critical or priority. Sure, you could label them, but that's not -- that's not how we operate.

Q. Okay. I mean -- and I wasn't trying to infer that you're operating in any one way, but so I apologize if you took it that way. I mean, previous, right, if we had something like that in -- for instance, I was a pilot, I called up and I said hey, I'm not going to be able to get the dentist stuff, we have two options, right, we can bump a

passenger and/or we could bump some of the dentist stuff, that's not going to be a problem, right?

A. No, it's never an issue.

Q. Yeah.

A. And that's what I was --

Q. Yeah, getting at.

A. -- getting at, referencing like that's -- a load is met and then that's it.

MR. PECK: Sure. That's all the questions I have.

MR. WECKWERTH: Nothing, then. Thank you.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. I think I just have like one more question, maybe two. Do the pilots give you information like how much fuel they have, like when they take off or what they're coming in with, when they say hey, we're 20 minutes out, do they provide you any information about fuel or anything like that?

A. They will if they feel like this is something that might be extended, so they'll be -- you know, they always take more -- the assumption is -- and they do -- that they're going to notify us if anything that's -- you know, they see as -- making us aware if, like, they have to divert --

Q. Okay.

A. -- so like back to home base, like Unalakleet or Kotzebue.

Q. Okay. Would TKS fluid be included in that?

A. I've never heard any discussion, but they're always topped off, as far as I know, it's always topped off.

Q. Okay. Okay, well, is there anything that we haven't asked you that you wish we would have?

A. No, I don't think so.

Q. Is there anything that you think could help us in this investigation or somebody else you think we should talk to?

A. I don't think so. Nothing comes to mind.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Well, thank you very much and we will conclude at 11:59.

(Whereupon, at 11:59 a.m., the interview 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 Christopher Paul Olanna
ACCIDENT NO.:	ANC25MA018
PLACE:	Nome, Alaska
DATE:	February 16, 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.



Karen D. Martini
Transcriber

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: FEN KINNEEN, Chief Pilot Bering Air

Nome, Alaska

Sunday,
February 16, 2025

APPEARANCES:

STARR BLUM, Aviation Accident 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

ROBERT RICHMOND, Representative
Richmond & Quinn
(On behalf of Mr. Kinneen)

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INTERVIEW

(9:05 a.m.)

MS. BLUM: Today is February 16th, 2025, and it's 9:05 a.m., Alaska Standard Time.

My name's Starr Blum, and I'm an operational factors investigator with the NTSB, and we're in the process of investigating the accident on February 6th involving Bering Air Flight 445.

First off, we really want to convey to you and express our condolences. We're sorry that you're going through this. I wish -- but as you know, our role is safety and the whole reason we're here is to find the probable cause of this accident and prevent this from happening again, hopefully.

I want to assure that this is a totally normal process talking to pilots and management pilots. It might be unusual for you, but this is totally normal for us.

We'll be recording this interview; it'll be transcribed. As we spoke about, we'll review it, and you'll have a chance to review it as well before it goes into the docket.

And I want to, again, remind you that we're an independent agency. We have nothing to do with DOT so nothing to do with liability, nothing to do with blame. Again, safety only.

Let's take this opportunity to go around the room and have everyone introduce themselves.

MR. SUFFERN: My name's Paul Suffern. I'm a meteorologist with the NTSB. Been there about 14, 15 years or so.

Before that, I worked for the National Weather Service up in Alaska for about 4 or 5 years there, mainly in south east but a little south central too.

MR. PECK: Robert Peck, go by Rob. I'm FAA, again, here just for that safety piece, nothing else.

I'm an FLM at the Anchorage FSDO right now. Prior to that, I was 135, Alaska Air Transit, and then mail carrier prior to that on C-130s.

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

MS. BLUM: You're entitled to a representative of your choosing, is there someone here you'd like to have as your representative?

MR. KINNEEN: Bob Richmond.

MS. BLUM: Thank you. Bob, please refrain from answering any questions on Fen's behalf. You may direct him not to answer a question, or if you guys want to go outside and confer, that's fine.

And also, as we talked about, if you need a break at any time, please just speak up, and we'll take a break.

MR. KINNEEN: Okay.

MS. BLUM: Does anyone have any questions?

MR. PECK: You'd normally ask a captain if he wants Brian to sit in, listen in on this interview. You asked all the other people that.

MS. BLUM: Oh. Is there anybody here in this interview you would not like to be here?

MR. KINNEEN: No one. I'm fine. I'm comfortable with the situation.

MS. BLUM: Okay.

INTERVIEW OF FEN KINNEEN

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Let's start off, can you please state your name and spell it?

A. Fen Kinneen. F-e-n. Last name, K-i-n-n-e-e-n.

Q. And how old are you?
A. Forty-nine.
Q. What is your position at Bering air?
A. Chief pilot.
Q. Do you work anywhere else?
A. No.
Q. And when did you start at Bering Air?
A. September of 2001.
Q. Okay. And when did you become chief pilot?
A. That was in 2012 or 2013, I don't have the specific date.
Q. Okay. What certificates and ratings do you have?
A. I'm an Airline Transport Pilot, CASA 212 type, Cessna 408 and Beechcraft 1900. Instrument Rated, of course.
Q. Of course, yeah.
A. Single engine commercial.
Q. Okay. What class medical do you have?
A. First class.
Q. Any limitations?
A. No.
Q. If you were going to give me a ballpark of your total time, what would that be?
A. A little north of 10,000 hours.
Q. How much of that would you say is PIC?
A. Ninety-five hundred, or -- no. Nine thousand-ish.
Q. Okay, great. Tell us, like, a little bit about your aviation background.

A. I started at Bering Air with very little time. I flew in the CASA 212 a co-pilot and then went to the Caravan.

After that, I flew -- probably got a couple thousand hours in the Caravan. Flew the Navajo CASA 212, the Beech 1900 and, then, the Cessna 408 most recently.

Flying is reduced in the last 12 years or so, obviously, due to the chief pilot position, I don't fly as much.

Q. Do you -- how often would you say you get out and fly?

A. That varies on the month. Some months I'll fly 20 hours and some months zero.

Q. So what are your roles and responsibilities as chief pilot?

A. Pilot recruitment, training, overseeing our directing of training and pilot scheduling. I also -- I'm not sure where I was going with that.

Q. Okay. So you --

A. I mean, other than that, I also, as I said, get out and fly a line occasionally. I'm a check airman and occasionally do some training.

Q. Let's go back to the day of the accident. Can you walk me through what you were doing and what your role is during that day, like, what happened?

A. That day, I showed up to work around 8:00 a.m. and for much of the day, I was at my desk working on an email.

There were some observed check rides with the FAA that day so I think I came over here to this hangar that we're in now where the process was taking place.

I think that may have been just one time. Most of it was spent in my office at my computer.

Q. Once you got word that you got an aircraft missing, what did you do then?

A. I forget the exact order, but we initiated the emergency response plan with the iPad, and I also notified our POI who was here.

Yes, we -- David Olson called me and the director operations. Went over there and told me what was going on and initiated the emergency response plan. And, then, when appropriate, came over and talked to the POI.

Q. What is your role in the emergency response plan?

A. I'd have to go back and look at that, that's on the iPad. I don't have the exact duties down.

Q. Okay. No problem. Who had operational control that day?

A. The director of operations.

Q. How many pilots do you have here at Bering Air?

A. Approximately 50.

Q. And how many aircraft?

A. I don't know the exact number.

Q. So if you have 50 pilots, are you the only chief pilot?

A. We just -- we do have a helicopter chief pilot.

Q. How do you manage and oversee your pilots? Do you have monthly meetings, like, how do you keep track of your pilot group?

A. Face to face mainly. Telephone calls with some that aren't here, just depending on what the need is.

Q. Okay. I don't know if you guys have, I mean, I know you have bulletins in your GOM.

When there's changes or something that you want to bring to their attention, how do you disseminate information amongst your pilot group?

A. Typically by email.

Q. Email.

A. There are some bulletins as you said.

Q. When you send those emails, is there a way that you know that they've received them, and do they acknowledge them somehow?

A. No. No, I do not do the read receipt.

Q. Okay. So, tell me about the hiring process for the pilots, are you part of the interviewing and the decision of who you bring on board?

A. Yes.

Q. Tell me about that process and what you're looking for as far as times and, like, what's the hiring requirement?

A. That's dependent on the situation.

But as far as times, we -- just the basic requirements for -- typically, we're hiring SICs so just as long as they're qualified for the position.

PICs is a little different. We look just for their qualifications, whether they've flown in Alaska and what sort of equipment they've flown, experience they have.

Q. Is there a minimum time requirement for SIC?

A. No.

Q. Okay. And, then, what's the, like, typical progression in the company for a pilot here? Do they sort of, like, get hired right seat in the CASA, or how does it normally go?

A. Yeah. They get hired, as you said, in the CASA or the 1900. Sometimes in both.

As we've started using FlightSafety, we try to project when they'll reach the minimums required for the 135, 297 with the instrument.

We don't put people in the Caravan if they're not able to have an instrument check ride.

Q. Is that normally the next step of once they reach that? What's the flight time requirement for a PIC to fly in the Caravan?

A. Twelve hundred hours with a hundred hours at night.

Q. they -- that's commercial, right, not an AT?

A. Correct. Correct, commercial.

Q. And, then, after -- where would they go next if they wanted to keep changing planes?

Is that -- would you normally go right seat from the 1900 in the CASA and then PIC to the Caravan and then PIC into the twin, is that how it normally rolls?

A. Correct. If they've had experience in one of the twins or the other, you know, that's an obvious consideration, if they had prior experience as SIC.

Q. Okay. And I'm just curious, do you feel like you have a large pool of pilots when you're hiring, or is it -- when you open for interviews, is there quite a few applying?

A. For the SIC, for sure. We get several hundred applicants a month.

Q. Wow. That's nice. Can you tell me the structure of, like, leadership and management? So, who do you report to?

A. I report to the president, Russell Rowe.

Q. And, then, so, the director of operations, you just go straight to Russell, or is there a -- I'm trying to figure out what the organizational chart would be for the company, like, it starts at Russell.

A. It starts at Russell, yeah, and, then, there's -- I do report to David Olson as well. Although, we work closely together on a number of, most of the operation so we

get to see an insight into his role as well.

Q. Okay. And, then, director of training, do you work closely with him?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you help develop the training with him, or is that more his role?

A. He does most of the development.

Q. How would you say the staffing is here? Do you feel like you're properly staffed? Do you feel like you need more pilots?

A. The staffing's pretty good. Our staffing levels -- we're always looking for, you know, candidates that could be desirable. Just with the airlines always threatening to take pilots, it seems like we go through the hiring waves. So, whenever it feels like we're fully staffed, then we'll lose one or two to another position.

Q. Gotcha. Talking about dispatchers, so they're flight followers but also called dispatchers, is that correct?

A. Correct.

Q. Okay. Are they certified dispatchers in the 135 world? I'm not really sure.

A. No.

Q. How many dispatchers do you guys have?

A. There are typically two with one working Monday through Thursday and one working Friday through Sunday. There's also two in training at the moment.

Q. Okay. Is there -- there's always a dispatcher for every flight, though, like, if somebody's sick, can you have a day where there's no dispatcher, is that allowed? I don't --

A. No. No. We always have somebody in there.

Q. Okay. Do you guys have the SMS program?

A. No.

Q. So if there's -- let's say a pilot has a concern about something, how would they communicate that to you or the appropriate person?

A. We have a safety reporting program. We are in the process of transitioning to a new program; it's not quite set up yet. But, I often get phone calls or visits as well.

Q. Okay. Can you tell me about that safety reporting system? How does that work, is it a form?

A. It's online with logins for each pilot.

Q. Is it anonymous?

A. It can be.

Q. And, then, what do you do with the reports, whether it's anonymous or not?

A. They are filtered out by the director of safety to be -- to the appropriate department and worked from there.

Q. Okay. So do you see these reports yourself?

A. Some of them.

Q. Some of them?

A. Yeah. If they're directed to me.

Q. Okay. Can you give me an example of, like, maybe a concern you've seen recently?

A. I'm actually drawing a blank.

Q. These safety reports, are they -- is remedial action ever taken as far as a pilot is, like, let's say they did something they weren't supposed to, they broke an SOP and they came out and voluntarily disclosed it to you, are they free from remediation after that, kind of like an ASAP report in the airlines?

A. Yeah, it's designed to be non-punitive, yes.

Q. As the chief pilot, what are the protocols, like, if a pilot is not feeling well, wants to call in sick or fatigued, for instance?

A. They just need to let us know that they're not feeling up for it that day. They're allowed to raise their personal minimums if they do want to work.

If it's not a safety of flight, if they're just not feeling up to a low IFR day, we've done plenty of that in the last

10 days.

Q. Yeah, I'm sure. So, when you say raise the minimums, you're talking about weather minimums?

A. Yeah, exactly. Right. Or, if they're not fit to fly then, yeah, they're not assigned -- they're removed from the operations that day.

Q. Okay. Can they reduce their flight time, like, if they think they can fly one flight, but they don't have three flights in the -- if they're not feeling up to that, can they do that as well, or how does that work?

A. That's taken on a case-by-case basis. But if they're feeling like they shouldn't be flying then, yes, they can absolutely drop the rest of them. We have a lot of flexibility in the schedule.

Q. Okay. Do you have other pilots on call that -- if somebody calls in sick, how does that work? Were you able to cover the flight?

A. We typically don't have someone on call except for standing by for a medivac; we can use that pilot if we need to.

We can also pull a pilot from another flight if they're on cargo flights that day and we need to do scheduled flights, then we can pull from that pool.

We've also got myself or the director of safety that can fly as well.

Q. Okay, great.

A. Or the director of training, if he's in.

Q. Do you guys have a written fatigue policy in your -- in a manual somewhere?

A. We have the IMSAFE checklist in the GOM.

Q. And that's what you -- it's designed for fatigue?

A. Hm-hmm. Yeah, correct. Fatigue is built in to that.

MS. BLUM: Okay, gotcha. I think I'm going to pause there and turn it over to Paul.

MR. SUFFERN: Thanks, Fen. Really appreciate your answers, and it's real helpful.

I'm going to turn a little bit more towards weather-related questions and things like that.

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. As chief pilot, what's your expectations of pilots as far as their pre-flight weather that they're gathering and things like that for any given flight?

A. That's outlined in the GOM. There's looking at current weather for the origin station and the destination and area forecasts. And, then, the other AIRMET segments in the local area.

Q. Are there any resources that pilots would have in flight as far as weather or anything like that?

A. In flight, there is some ADS-B weather on the Garmin products. There are flight service stations, RCOs to get weather from. ATC will also sometimes provide weather and AWOSs and village agents can provide their own reports, communicating with other pilots.

Q. As far as dispatchers or flight followers that they're called here, what kind of weather resources do they have, and then what is the expectation of them providing any sort of weather to the pilot before the depart?

A. The flight follower or dispatcher will get weather from the same sources that the pilot would on the computer.

There's also Flight Service information that can be gathered as well, and the same information that they can get from the village agents. And also any PIREPs that may be forwarded in from other aircraft, other Bering Air aircraft. And, then, of course, any PIREPs.

Sometimes they -- or we will call over to Flight Service to ask if any other incoming traffic had any reports as well.

Q. As far as between the flight follower or dispatcher and the pilot going out, is that a verbal conversation, is that a piece of paper that they're handing them?

A. It's typically written down on the clipboard in Dispatch and can be enhanced, the conversation.

Q. Okay. So the pilot will -- the dispatcher will have a set of clipboards or one clipboard for that particular flight, have the information on there, and then the pilot will grab that, review that.

If it needs to be enhanced, they'll have some kind of conversation, something like that?

A. No, the clipboard will be for multiple flights. It's the weather throughout the region.

Q. Okay. So the dispatcher's pulling weather throughout the region and, then, for the various flights going out at that time and then the pilot will review that for the appropriate areas that they're going to?

A. Right. And, then, supplement information on the computers in the Dispatch office, there's several computers in there. Plus three computers in the pilot break room, and the iPads that the pilots are issued.

Q. As far as risk management or things like that, as it pertains to weather, is there any kind of checklists or risk assessment that either the dispatcher or the pilot is working through or stepping through before their flights for the day, check with them?

A. Yeah. The dispatcher will review the weather and if it's below certain parameters, get the OC manager involved.

Q. Okay. And, can you give me an example of some of those types of parameters?

A. If the ceiling is below 500 feet or visibility less than two miles in Nome or the village that they're going to, then the OC manager is to be consulted.

Q. What about enroute weather, things like 50 knot winds at a thousand feet, or turbulence conditions or icing or anything like that, is any enroute weather part of that OC manager contact?

A. Wind is -- surface winds are a factor there. The 50 knots at a thousand feet is not. And, then, I am -- I'd have to review for the rest of what you've brought up.

Q. Okay. As far as making the call to talk to the OC like you mentioned earlier, is that something that the dispatcher will do, or the pilot, or could be either one depending on what they're seeing?

A. It could be either one. Yeah. And if the pilot is unsure about the weather, even if it's above those, then sometimes we'll get calls about that also, wanting to double check.

Q. Okay. Are you involved in any way in kind of the weather training, whether it's your onboarding somebody or maybe doing a recurrent or annual training

or anything like that, are you involved in any of that as chief pilot?

A. Occasionally.

Q. What about a pilot onboarding, I think Starr had some questions about your role in the hiring process.

Is there any review of pilot's knowledge of weather, when you're going through the interview process or anything like that, and how do you step through that as chief pilot?

A. Not so much in the interview process. That's just part of onboarding and the training as it progresses.

Q. What typically -- weather training, since you do some of it or part of it or things like that, which sections or portions do you usually take, or is it dependent on time of year and who's available and so, Fen has it this time because nobody else is available kind of thing, and so, you would take all of that?

A. If nobody is available, then I would do some of it. I would be responsible for it.

Q. And in the last year, can you recall any weather sections or anything like that you provided training to as the chief pilot?

A. In the last year, I'm not sure.

Q. As far as you, as a pilot, if you're going to go take a flight today or tomorrow or something like that, what kind of weather things are you looking at, just a pilot here in Alaska?

A. Okay. Of course, looking at current weather and, you know, METARs for the villages enroute, area forecast, and the other products that are listed on there.

There's the Icing tab, AIRMETs and SIGMETs.

Q. Are there -- out of those resources, do you find them useful, do you find

them user okay, but this one's lacking and I wish it was a little bit better, or anything like that?

A. I think they do a pretty good job.

Q. Stepping back earlier, you were talking about getting weather from Flight Service or maybe other company aircraft coming in, kind of, I guess, PIREP or weather-types of things there, is there a process here when a pilot comes in and they don't -- they're not on with Anchorage Center and they've already landed and they just, either out of, you know, trying to get things done, things like that, they didn't tell Flight Service, for whatever reason, but they tell the -- the three pilots about to go out, or something like that, is there a process here for reporting that PIREP?

Is that just kind of internally, or is that, hey, that was a good PIREP, let's call Flight Service across the field to make sure we report that, is there any process for that?

A. Not a defined process that I -- yeah, not a defined process that I know of from that situation. I may not hear the pilots talking to each other about that.

Q. Yeah, because I know sometimes, you know, pilots are just chatting on CTAF or on frequency back and forth with each other and just relaying the weather that they're seeing in this area and they're probably passing that within company or things like that and, so, but sometimes, yeah, so I just didn't know that.

A. Sure.

MR. SUFFERN: I think that's I got for right now. Thank you, Fen, it's real helpful, enlightening.

MR. PECK: Hey, Fen. Again, condolences on this whole thing. I know it's a tough deal.

And when I'm writing notes, just so you know, I'm just making questions, okay?

MR. KINNEEN: Okay.

BY MR. PECK:

Q. So, you mentioned the FlightSafety, is it policy or is it when can -- I guess, that's what I'm trying get at, with sending folks to FlightSafety or whatever's applicable for the airframe because it would be whoever, right?

A. Right.

Q. It doesn't have to be FlightSafety, but is that generally how you guys do your 293, 297-type training or checkrides?

A. We do both simulator training and in house. It just depends on the situation. Sometimes FlightSafety's hard to book.

Q. Is there a preference for, like, a first time, for instance, PIC in the Caravan, do you prefer to send them to FlightSafety and then do in house, or is it preferred to do in house, or is there a preference?

A. No. There's not a preference. FlightSafety's nice because they -- we don't use a training pilot for that, but in house training is also good to do in the real aircraft, in the Bering Air aircraft, which has its own benefits as well.

Q. Right. And I believe you guys do company, anyway, company OE?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. Whatever you guys -- but company training in the airplane, is that true?

A. Beyond the FAA IOE, you --

Q. Right, yeah.

A. -- or (indiscernible) yes.

Q. Do you know what those numbers are in general at all, what you guys --

A. As far as hours?

Q. Yeah.

A. It's depending on the pilot. If they're a lower-time pilot then typically they'll get more IOE or company OE.

Q. There you go.

A. If they're really an experienced pilot with a lot of proficiency and experience out here, then less.

Q. Dispatchers, is there any minimum qualifications when you guys are hiring your flight followers, we'll call them, because it's --

A. They typically come from within the Customer Service department.

So if they've been working at the ticket counter and show aptitude and want to be a part of the flight following dispatch process, then they can be trained.

I don't know that we've ever hired anybody directly into Dispatch, although it's possible. It's a customer service position essentially, from the customer service position I should say, managed by the customer service manager but training from within, you know, multiple areas in the company.

Q. How long -- you said you have two, I think you said in training right now?

A. Correct.

Q. Generally, what is -- how many months or days or years would that training be?

A. I don't know the exact. I know that the two folks training now are set to be training all of February, but how long that goes into March or beyond, I'm not sure.

Q. Which is good because it's not even required, right, on the 135. Well, yeah, that's awesome.

You mentioned or started out into the safety reports, and just your thoughts, is that encouraged for folks to use that process and that system as company

wide throughout management?

A. Yes, all the way up through the president. I know that the president often recommends safety reports for anything that happens.

Q. Hm-hmm. What, if you could, in your professional opinion and observations, would you describe the normal process in February in Nome for TKS for a 208 pilot when they come in to go for a flight?

In other words, where they normally, would you think, they're going to have their TKS, full, not full or those types of considerations?

A. Typically, we'll be full. If it's not full and it's a good VFR day and supposed to remain that way, I mean, no icing conditions -- if it's a clear blue day, high pressure settled in over the region, then pilots will be less inclined to top off.

Q. Like at Unalakleet or Kotzebue, I guess for either one of them, is it easy for them to get access to TKS if they need it?

A. I have -- I know for sure in Kotzebue it is since the flights are dispatched out of there, multiple flights per day.

Unalakleet, I know we have TKS there. It's been a while since I've been there. I'm not sure. I can't answer that, yes or no, although I know it is available.

Q. Your at 24 years of flying up here if I'm doing my math correctly, something like that, that's just great.

In that span, from an ATC perspective, would you say that you get kind of directive slowing clearances from ATC or more just kind of advisory in your experiences up here?

A. In my experience, we get requests from ATC, and we try to comply when able.

Q. So, a clearance, or more of just an advisory, would you say?

A. Advisory.

Q. For PIREPs in general, is that encouraged specifically in your training?

And when I say PIREP, I mean, like, Flight Service or ATC, is that encouraged in that training or, you know, maybe not or it's more encouraged to actually just talk to each other?

A. No. There's references to it in the training and also in the GOM about PIREPs with Flight Service and ATC.

Q. I'm changing subjects here a little bit on you. I know we were talking about weather.

You said, I believe, 500 and two, right, for -- that's when you -- a lot of times there's more discussions going to happen?

A. Right.

Q. Would that change if you were going to a location that didn't have an instrument approach, or not?

A. Oh, absolutely. Yeah. Thanks for clarifying.

Yeah. If there's no weather then if it's -- if there's a weather station nearby and it's -- I don't know that that's specifically spelled out in the training, but use the nearby weather or the decision making in, or if the AWOS is out, we use weather cams and whatnot to help fortify that decision making.

Q. And so those -- would it be fair to say those numbers might actually go up in most cases?

A. With no weather reporting?

Q. Yeah.

A. Yes.

Q. And this was in reference -- I wrote a question here, I can't hardly read my

chicken scratch.

You know, I think it was Paul here who was asking questions about training in weather and stuff, and I know that earlier on you'd said, when you're recruiting PICs, you look for Alaska time, right?

A. Correct.

Q. And, wouldn't it be fair to suggest that part of that Alaska time is because of their experience with the Alaska weather?

A. That would be part of it, yes.

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

MS. BLUM: Okay. Brian.

MR. WECKWERTH: I don't have any questions at all.

MS. BLUM: Okay.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Expanding off of what Rob was talking about, one thing I am learning about Alaska is that it's a challenge for the pilots when the AWOS or ASOS is out, and I didn't realize that happens frequently, it sounds like, statewide.

A. Hm-hmm.

Q. And you talked about looking at the nearby weather and cams, I don't know all the location for all the cameras, but let's say there is nothing close by, I don't know what's considered close for Alaska terms, if that's --

A. Oh, sure.

Q. -- five miles, is that 10 miles. Is there a rule of thumb?

A. No, there's no rule of thumb. Just regional weather and, I mean, there's nothing specific written down for those guidelines, but if the weather's really good in one area, it could be expected to be similar in a village 5 to 15 minutes away.

But that would be supplemented with reports from the agent observations, and it would be either a VFR flight or IFR to a village nearby, and if you're able to proceed VFR from there.

Q. Okay. So, is there always a village agent for every flight, or is that depending?

A. Yes.

Q. Do they have weather training?

A. (indiscernible).

Q. So if the ASOS is out and there's no cam, how does the village agent get the pilot the weather?

A. How do they relay it to them?

Q. Yeah. Like, how were they know what to report to the pilot?

A. Just on their own observations and then, of course, we need to take that with a grain of salt. These people have been doing it for a long time.

If it's a new agent, then, it may not be as accurate, and we consider that as well. But if it's even marginal, then typically, we're not -- or, I shouldn't say typically, then we're not going to be pushing the flight.

Q. Yeah. That's kind of the next area I wanted to just ask about is pressure and pressure to fly. How do you mitigate pilots, whether they're -- let me back up.

A. Sure.

Q. Do new pilots have -- do you have height minimums?

A. Yes.

Q. How does that change weather wise as far as your minimums go?

A. Well, there's FAA height minimums where you raise by a hundred and a half. That's for certain types of aircraft.

But for pilots that are recently released, we would add something that we call the 15 Rule that the ceiling needs to -- the ceiling and visibility need to add up to a combination of 15. So, it needs to be a thousand overcast and five miles, for instance, with nothing lower than 500 and two.

Q. So I think I saw that in GOM. Basically, the ceiling and the visibility has to equal 15, whatever variation?

A. Right. And that's just our way to just increase the minimums for the pilots. And there's no set amount of time that they're on that -- when they're first starting, that's the way we ease into their solo flying.

Q. Is there a minimum amount of time for COE or Company Operating Experience?

A. If it's a pilot that's new to the company or their first PIC, it's a hundred hours minimum, but often more than that.

Q. And that's just flying with -- is that flying with an instructor or just a qualified PIC?

A. We prefer check airman, our instructor, but if they're not available, we'll hand pick from one of the other PICs as long as they have a year as a captain in that aircraft.

Q. Okay. So, let's say I got hired and I got off my COE because I don't have any Alaska time, if I go over a hundred hours, but I get checked out, and I'm going somewhere, whether it's maybe the ASOS is down or maybe the weather's lower, even though I'm technically legal but I'm uncomfortable, how would I approach you with that and the pressure I'm feeling to fly in something I might not be comfortable with?

A. Just come and talk to me about it. I'm not at all shy about going and talking to a pilot if their weather is looking marginal and tell them that they don't have

to go, or if they do dispatch, to keep an eye on the weather conditions.

And if they're not feeling good about it, turn around and come back once they find something to ground.

Q. Okay. Have you had pilots in the past tell you that they were uncomfortable?

A. Sure.

Q. Yeah. Is there more training provided, or how do you handle it when you have a pilot that's, maybe it's just an isolated incident, but if they're newer, what do you do then?

A. If they're uncomfortable, we won't send them on the flight, we'll -- if there's another flight available that they do feel comfortable with, we'll send them on that, potentially. Just depending on the need.

Occasionally somebody, if there's another pilot available, they can go in and ride with them to complete the original flight. That happens from time to time as well.

Q. So is it safe to say that it's a no jeopardy to come to you and say, hey, I'm not comfortable?

A. Oh, no jeopardy at all.

One thing that I tell pilots, and it was the, I think it was my first winter here, the owner came out during one of our trainings and said to me, or said to the group, he gave his little spiel, and then he came out and said, and if I hear you guys going out for a flight and the weather isn't appropriate and you turn around, I'll give you a pat on the back. If I hear about you making it in somewhere that you shouldn't have, I'll show you the door.

That's -- I have repeated that more times than I can count, I mean, that's

coming from the owner of the company so I appreciate that as a philosophy.

Q. Great, that speaks to the culture, right, it sounds like.

Were you part of Chad's training?

A. Yes.

Q. Was that the initial COE?

A. I did some of his COE, yes; I can't remember how much. I have a list of that, and I did see my name on there, but I didn't count how much I did with him, but part of it.

Q. Do you recall, did he come in with a lot of Alaska time when he got hired?

A. No. No, all of his time -- he did some training in Idaho, I know, and I can't remember where he did the rest of it, but most of his time was with Bering Air in the 1900 as an SIC.

Q. Okay. Could you say how you feel about his piloting abilities in your experience with him?

A. You know, he had lower time, like some of our guys do. So we spent, I believe it was 180 hours approximately of COE with him, and it was through a number of qualified captains, and we'll debrief with them.

The training was, I think, September through December so he got to see the darkest times of the year with the slippery runways and other weather.

Once everybody's comfortable, then it gets released for limited duty, limited as in 15 Rule, higher minimums.

Q. To your knowledge, was he ever involved in any other accidents or incidents?

A. No. To my knowledge, no.

Q. Were there any concerns ever about him, was he ever brought into the

office to talk about anything?

A. No. No concerns. I just -- I wish sometimes that he would wear warmer clothes, and I would talk to him about that, but he was always warm. That was my concern.

Q. Gotcha. I'd probably be on the opposite end of the spectrum.

Since the accident, has there been any discussion or any changes that have happened due to the accident in your policy, or has there been discussion about anything that's changing possibly?

A. Changing in policy? No. Just reemphasizing existing policy and procedures and reminding people to review SOPs and everything in the GOM.

MS. BLUM: Okay, thank you. Appreciated that.

MR. SUFFERN: Just got a couple more questions.

MR. KINNEEN: Sure.

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. Following along the lines of what Starr was going down with her questions and the accident pilot, Chad, do you recall a time where he ever turned down a flight for anything, whether it was equipment or weather, anything like that in your experience when he was flying here?

A. I do remember talking to him about that, and go and no go decisions. I don't remember the specifics, but I know that, without specifics, I know that we've talked about either holding flights and waiting for weather to improve, or sometimes cancelling.

I don't remember the specifics, and that's not something we record, but I'm sure he has not accepted every flight presented to him.

Q. I'm going to mess up the pilot term, I'm sure, but are there any techniques

or chief pilot advice that you give for pilots that are flying the Caravan, I guess, specifically about in icing conditions, you know, try and do this when you're flying the Caravan to make sure to avoid this or make sure that you have an outgoing this way, or are there any tips or knowledge or, I guess, more loose training that you provide as chief pilot, or is that more on the --

A. I wouldn't say that I'd have anything in addition to what the other pilots would be doing in COE.

Q. Going back to, I think, Rob's question, you were talking about the Dispatch flight follower group and how they're trained, as they're going through that process and even the two that are training now, do they receive any kind of weather training or anything like as they're going through that process?

A. They do. I'm not sure of the specifics of it. Sorry.

Q. So that would likely be more of a question for the director of training, or somebody like that?

A. I would need to get back to you on that.

Q. Totally fine. I'm going to jump around a little bit here.

A. Sure.

Q. In fact, the last time around, you were mentioning using the Aviation Weather Unit Icing graphic page during -- you said it was one of the tools that you use there, is there anything that you find confusing about the page as far as the different color levels or the text that's on there, anything like that, or is it pretty easy to (indiscernible)?

A. It seems pretty basic.

Q. How do you find it's accuracy when you've been flying around, is it pretty good, is it off half the time, is the time stamps too far away and so I can't get a good

idea sometimes?

A. No, I think it seems reasonable, yeah. I guess I can't speak to its -- yeah, I think it's fair.

Q. Are there any weather tools, whether it's a forecast or a piece of equipment, in the area that you all fly here at Bering Air that it's a known -- it does not give good weather, whether it's the location of where the ASOS or AWOS is on the field, and it just sits in a little valley and gives you mist right over, but the rest of the field is totally fine even right over the sensor, it's just mist there, and so there's not actually reduced -- is there any places that you fly that known kind of weather challenges, specifically with the equipment or the forecast always seems to be wrong or flying to (indiscernible), you know, things like that?

A. No. No, it's just as Starr mentioned, when the equipment goes down, that's -- but then we restrict operations as necessary which is fine for us, but the people trying to get home don't seem to understand that after a couple weeks.

Q. Are there any weather tools or resources that you use that you wish could be improved in some way, shape or form?

Any advice or, you know, as a pilot that has flown up here for well over 2 decades, is there anything that you wish that could be improved, other than the weather equipment being available more often?

A. Yeah, you were -- you hit that on the head there. Just having the weather, the METARs, would be great. We use the NEXRAD for a lot of predictive stuff, but nothing else coming to mind.

Q. Okay. Pie in the sky, excluding the weather equipment because you already mentioned that, are there any things that you thought of that I wish we had this, you know, more weather radars around the west and north western Alaska, infrared on

the weather cameras so that you could use them at night, at least a little bit, techniques, anything that you thought of that you wish you could have, you know, money not being an issue?

A. An AWOS in every village. They're somewhat down. It's getting pretty few which would allow for instrument approaches to every village. Yeah.

I'm sure more NEXRAD, that's -- yeah, more NEXRAD coverage, but, you know, other than that, we do with what we can.

MR. SUFFERN: That's all I've got. Thank you, Fen. It's real helpful.

MR. KINNEEN: Thanks, Paul.

MR. PECK: I just got a couple here.

MR. KINNEEN: Sure.

BY MR. PECK:

Q. One, I'm assuming you're probably not current and qualified in all the aircraft out there, which ones are you, I guess, is my question, first?

A. The Caravan and 408.

Q. Okay. In your experience with the Caravan, TKS specific, have you ever ran into a time when, one, you either used all your fluid; or two, the TKS system wasn't keeping up with the icing that you were dealing with?

A. I've never run out of fluid and, no, I've never encountered that as far as exceeding the capability.

Q. There are reports, I'm sure you've heard of them, about TKS smell in the aircraft at times, do you guys ever experience that? Is that a concern?

A. Yeah, I've not heard complaints from people about it or our customers. They -- it would be pretty vocal.

But, no, the pilots don't -- I don't know that I've heard of any complaints

other than we all have to look down at the floor when we're walking through the hangar as far as the slippery fluid. I think we're all used to that.

Q. And, then, my final question is, do you, I guess when you had operational control for the day or maybe the DO, maybe you know, do they -- a challenging day, do the guys ever pick up the phone and call the AAWU there to actually talk to a forecaster?

A. I'm sorry, do they do what?

Q. Pick up the phone and actually call one of the Alaska Weather Aviation Unit forecasters and talk to them?

A. Oh, no, I don't -- not that I know of. Just go through Flight Service and -- yeah. I don't think the AAW folks -- if they do, I mean, it's possible.

MS. BLUM: Brian, you good?

MR. WECKWERTH: Hmm. No.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. I forgot to ask this. What's your longest scheduled flight in the Caravan, time wise?

A. I want to say 2-1/2 hours.

Q. One way, or there and back?

A. There and back. Yeah.

Q. Okay. So, just an hour 15 is about the longest flight but one way though to the village?

A. Yeah. I mean, that would be -- the one I'm referring to is, you know, multiple stops.

Q. Ah.

A. Yeah, one way flights in the Caravans is going to be probably an hour,

max.

Q. Okay. In all your scheduled destinations, do you have TKS fluid available?

A. No. It's just in Unalakleet and Kotzebue. The infrastructure in the villages wouldn't really allow for storing it at the airport, pretty remote, and kids will be kids.

Q. Gotcha. Is there anything that we didn't ask you that you wished we would have?

A. I can't really think of anything.

Q. Is there anything that you would think could help us in this investigation, or somebody that you think we should talk to other than the people that you already know about?

A. No. Well, let me think about that before I say that. I guess I had already thought of that. No.

Q. Okay. Well, you can always let us know if you do.

A. Okay.

MS. BLUM: Again, Fen, thank you very much. This has been a good education.

We will end the interview at 10:16.

(Whereupon, at 10:16 a.m., the interview was concluded.)

1

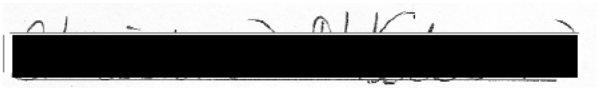
CERTIFICATE

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 Fen Kinneen
ACCIDENT NO.:	ANC25MA018
PLACE:	Nome, Alaska
DATE:	February 16, 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

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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: KYLE LEFEBVRE, Director of Training Bering Air

Nome, Alaska

Monday,
February 17, 2025

APPEARANCES:

STARR BLUM, Aviation Accident 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

ROBERT RICHMOND, Representative
Richmond & Quinn
(On behalf of Mr. Lefebvre)

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INTERVIEW

(10:05 a.m.)

MS. BLUM: Okay. Today is February 17th. The time is 10:05 a.m. Alaska Standard Time. My name is Starr Blum. I'm an investigator with the NTSB, and we're here investigating the accident that occurred on February 6th involving Bering Air 445.

We want to express our since condolences. I'm sorry that you guys are having to go through this, and we're sorry we have to be here. But, as you know, we're here for safety, and we want to try to prevent this from happening again.

As we discussed, the NTSB is not here to assign any blame or liability. Our purpose is to determine the probable cause of the accident.

So right now, I'd like to go around the room and have everybody introduce themselves.

MR. SUFFERN: Hey, Kyle. I'm Paul Suffern with the NTSB. I'm the meteorologist that Starr mentioned. My background with the NTSB, I've been there about 14 years or so. Before that, I worked up in Alaska, mainly the Juneau area and then south central for the National Weather Service. So that's kind of my background. I appreciate you taking the time to answer our questions today.

MR. LEFEBVRE: Thank you.

MS. BLUM: Just real quick. So can you hear -- did you hear Paul okay?

MR. LEFEBVRE: Yeah. Yep.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Great.

MR. PECK: And, good morning. Rob Peck, Robert. I'm again the official FAA FOEM at the Anchorage FSDO. I was an inspector prior to that, and then previous to that, I worked at Alaska Air Transit out of (indiscernible) flying the Caravan and the PC-12 and it was the same Caravans that Bering Air is flying up here, TKS, G1000 type.

I've got approximately 3,000 hours in the Caravan. And before that, I was military, C-130 guy, moved to Alaska in '05 and haven't left since. So and again, I am here strictly for that safety piece.

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

MS. BLUM: Okay. Let's see.

MR. LEFEBVRE: Are you ready for me?

MS. BLUM: Not quite yet. Sorry.

MR. LEFEBVRE: Okay.

MS. BLUM: So please answer the questions to the best of your recollection. You know, because I'm not involved in this world up here, flying in Alaska. If there's something that I say that you don't understand, please just ask me to clarify it. And also, if you don't know an answer to a question, I don't know is a perfectly acceptable answer.

You are entitled to have a representative of your choosing present during the interview. Is there someone here as your representative, Kyle?

MR. LEFEBVRE: Bob Richmond.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Thanks. Bob, please refrain from answering any questions for Kyle. You can direct him not to answer a question or you guys can take a break and confer with each other if needed.

Does anybody have any questions before we begin?

MR. LEFEBVRE: And Brian Weckwerth will be staying in the room as well, correct?

MS. BLUM: That is correct.

MR. WECKWERTH: Yep, I'm stuck here, Kyle.

MS. BLUM: If you don't want him here, we can --

MR. LEFEBVRE: I just want to make sure that he's there.

MS. BLUM: Yeah, he's here.

INTERVIEW OF KYLE LEFEBVRE

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Okay. Let's start off. Can you please say and spell your name?

A. My name is Kyle Lefebvre, K-y-l-e, last name phonetically spelled Lima-Echo-Foxtrot-Echo-Bravo-Victor-Romeo-Echo.

Q. Excellent. And how old are you, Kyle?

A. 38.

Q. Okay. Great.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The hard questions.

MS. BLUM: Yeah, the hard questions first.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. What is your title at Bering Air?

A. Director of training.

Q. Okay. And how long -- or let's start, when were you hired at Bering?

A. I was hired at Bering, May 22nd, 2012.

Q. Okay. What capacity were you hired as?

A. SIC Constitute 12.

Q. Okay. And when did you become the director of training?

A. I accepted the job October/November of '23.

Q. Okay. Cool. So with that spelling, I figured you were a pilot. Can you tell me what certs and ratings you have?

A. I am an ATP, commercial, multi, CFI, AAI, MEI.

Q. Okay. Any type ratings?

A. I have a type rating in a Beechcraft 1900 and D and also the CASA 212.

Q. Okay. Great. If you were going to ballpark, what your total time is, what would that be?

A. Over 10,000.

Q. And how much of that is PIC?

A. I only have -- let's see. Pretty much I was a SIC for maybe just shy of 300 hours, flight instructor before that. So I'd say a large quantity of that.

Q. Okay. Have about the Caravan?

A. Over 4,000.

Q. Okay. Great. Are you still actively flying?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. For the company?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. Okay. Are you still flying the Caravan?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Great. Would you give us a CliffNotes version of your aviation background and history?

A. I started flying in 2004, went to University of North Dakota, graduated in '09. Was a flight instructor. I took on a job in Bismarck, North Dakota as a flight instructor. By the summer of, let's see, 2010, I was charter coordinator for Executive Air Taxi. I applied to Bering Air March/April of 2012. Moved up to Alaska as an SIC in the Constitute 12, upgraded to Caravan, went to or took my training over, started flying in December of '12. Went onto assistant chief pilot the following year. I can't remember, maybe a year and a half later, I flew -- started flying -- I upgraded to the Navajo in '16 or I started flight and instructing in about 2014 for the company.

By 2016, I upgraded in the CASA 212, did my type ride. The following week I did my initial check pilot for -- or the observation for my Caravan and Navajo check pilot. By 2020, I transitioned to the check pilot in the CASA 212 and last year, April, I believe it was April, might have been March of.

Q. Okay. It sounds like you've worn a lot of hats. It's been a good ride for you. Can you describe what your duties and responsibilities are as the director of training.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did you lose him?

MS. BLUM: I'm stopping the recording at 10:14.

(Off the record at 10:14 a.m.)

(On the record at 10:17 a.m.)

MS. BLUM: Okay. We're back on the recording at 10:17 again.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Sorry the call dropped.

A. Okay.

Q. You were giving us your history, and I think you were at 2024.

A. Yep. So '23 October/November 2023, I got the role of director of training and then '24, last year, about a year ago, is when I went through my transition into the check pilot for the 1900, and here we are.

Q. Okay. Great. Can you tell us what your duties and responsibilities are as director of training?

A. Yeah. I report directly to the chief pilot on all matters regarding pilot training and checking. I'm also what -- it's written that I create and maintain training materials for the company.

Q. Okay. So, the training manual that's been given to us, were you integral

in writing that or was that from before?

A. We have -- I mean we've had manuals that have been well established since beyond my tenure, but modification to it, I mean we all have recognition of basic needs and adjustment to those. So I would say the PTT and the training material, I've had an influence on, but not the manual, the full manual itself.

Q. Okay. Great. I guess let's just -- I want to get a feeling of what training looks like. I understand that most people come in right seat, and then it seems like the typical progression is they then upgrade into the Caravan. Is that correct?

A. Correct.

Q. So let's say -- I'm sorry. Go ahead.

A. Go ahead. No, go ahead.

Q. So, can you walk me through, I get the call. I accept the upgrade. What would my training journey look like as a new Caravan PIC?

A. The Caravan (indiscernible) --

Q. Kyle, let me pause you for a second. You're breaking up. Can you start that again?

A. Okay. (Indiscernible) -- upgrade happens like Chief pilot (indiscernible) --

Q. Hey, Kyle. Sorry. It's not coming through clearly. Kyle, hang on.

MS. BLUM: I'm going to stop the recording at 10:20.

(Off the record at 10:20 a.m.)

(On the record at 10:24 a.m.)

MS. BLUM: Okay. We're trying to start again here. The time is 10:24 a.m.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Okay. Kyle, please tell us what your duties and responsibilities are as director of training?

A. You're talking about -- the first question was when somebody takes an upgrade, what are our duties and responsibilities for the upgrade? Is that the question you want or --

Q. Oh, yeah. I guess we -- well, let's go ahead and do that again just in case so it's on the recording.

A. Okay.

Q. Can you tell us what they are? And we'll start back at the Caravan progression

A. Okay. I report directly to the chief pilot on all matters regarding pilot training, checking and currency. I maintain the pilot board, and I create the maintain training materials.

Q. What is the pilot board?

A. The pilot board is basically our pilot currency. We have pilot binders and then we also have a pilot board as far as tracking currency. It's an Excel sheet.

Q. Okay. Gotcha. Okay. So skipping back to -- on your brand new Caravan pilot, walk me through what my training will be like.

A. Yeah. FlightSafety, GOS and then we have been doing familiarization flights and 244 time for the legal requirement. Training continues with our company operating experience that's listed in our manual, 100 hours for your first PIC aircraft, but continues on until both the pilot and the company operating experienced pilot understands that -- or believe them to be to the standard that we need them to operate for Bering Air in the area that we operate.

Q. Okay. So, let's start from the beginning. You said FlightSafety. That's in Wichita. How long is that course?

A. That is roughly about 2 weeks. All that information is listed on the

FlightSafety -- on my flight safety. So we have access to that.

Q. Okay. Does that include ground school and simulator?

A. Ground and sim.

Q. Okay.

A. And their checkride. So their AL31 authorized for training for Bering Air.

Q. Okay. So the checkride is a pass/fail scenario?

A. Correct.

Q. And if that pilot doesn't pass, then what happens?

A. If the pilot doesn't pass the checkride?

Q. Yeah.

A. It's just like any other checkride. They're the extension of Bering Air and there's the extension of the FAA in regards to pilot checking.

Q. So they get retraining and do it again?

A. Much like I am.

Q. Okay. What is GOS?

A. GOS is written in the PTP. It is the -- the outline is laid out in the PTP but it has a specific outline in regard to what is covered in the PTP.

Q. I'm sorry. And PTP is what?

A. Pilot training program.

Q. Okay. Just getting all these acronyms down. And then they come back to Nome? That's right, for the familiarization flights.

A. Yep.

Q. Is that IOE, initial operating experience for COEs? Is that what that means?

A. Yeah. It starts into there. 244 time is required for line operation. So

scheduled flights and familiarization flights could be a company flight under a flight number of 930 or 920, where we go up and just get them the feel for the airplane prior to flight with passengers because the sim does a lot of good things, but it's good for them to feel the aircraft before they start flying it on line.

Q. Okay. So when they take that first flight, the new person sits left seat and they have the check airman in the right seat with passengers?

A. Yes. No passengers.

Q. No passengers. Okay.

A. No, it would be a training flight. It would be under the number of a training flight.

Q. Okay. So when would they start flying passengers with an observation or a check pilot?

A. With the check flight, you're asking about 244 time, yes?

Q. Yes.

A. After the familiarization flight.

Q. Okay. So, is that -- when's the checkride after the 244? Is it after they complete the COE, the 100 hours plus maybe more?

A. What checkride? The line check?

Q. Yeah, I guess it's -- forgive my terminology. I'm not -- I didn't fly 135s. So I don't have all the terms correct. But, yes, when do they take their line check to be --

A. A line check, I'm looking at when we did it. The line check is at the completion of 244.

Q. Okay. As far as the ground school goes, when they come back here -- so they get ground at FlightSafety. Do they come back to Nome and they take Bering Air's ground school as well?

A. They come back and then they do GOS which is in the PTP.

Q. Okay. What does the GOS entail? I have the manual. I see the outline. Can you give us what they go through in that ground school?

A. Yeah, I'm just going to pull it up because that's what we do. Bear with me one second.

Q. No problem.

A. So we discuss weight and balance, performance. These are the titles, aircraft flight manuals, POH, company documents, flight planning, CRM, removal/installation, medevac procedures which we don't do in the Caravan, ground deicing, anti-icing, flight into known icing, adverse weather, maintenance procedures, emergency equipment, emergency drills, operations above 25,000 feet and differences.

Q. Okay.

A. Differences would be difference from sim or things that we have installed in our aircraft that the sim aircraft does not have.

Q. Okay. Great. As far as the weather training goes, we understand they do a yearly requirement for the text drawn course.

A. Yes. That's at an annual basis, and it's required before flying the Caravan.

Q. Okay. What do pilots do yearly? Is it the same course, like the basic indoc? What's in recurrent?

A. So basic indoc. We also have -- we have been using ice safety AL31 for the first ground and first checkride, like training and checkride. And then the repeat for the recurrent in ground for the following year.

Q. So is it --

A. So then 6 months, the 6 month check would be your 297, 135.297, and

that I done 6 months after the checkride.

Q. Okay.

A. The initial ride at FlightSafety. That's your IFR cert basically.

Q. Gotcha. Sorry.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's mine. Just ignore it.

MS. BLUM: He's getting a phone call.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Let's see here. I know that you guys are in the process of developing a SMS program. Is that correct?

A. Yes.

Q. Will you have a role in that?

A. Everybody has a role in it within the company.

Q. Okay. When do you guys -- do you think that that's going to be implemented?

A. Prior to 2027. We're trying to obviously get it implemented and up and running before that because we understand that it's -- I mean safety is of the utmost importance and having this SMS, safety management system integral to our operation is important to us and everybody else.

Q. Sure. And then how does CRM -- I see you have it in the training manual. Can you tell me a little bit about how you train CRM?

A. Yeah. It starts from the second you walk through the door as a SIC. One of the aspects is knowing, you know, what you have, not just available, not just in the aircraft, but on the ground and it starts from day 1 as a SIC and all the way up through, you know, the highest, you know, the captains and management. Man your resources, how to use them, when to use them, and it's -- yeah, CRM is definitely something that

starts at day 1.

Q. Okay. And it's also discussed it looks like during GOS?

A. Yeah, it is discussed during GOS. We do guided discussion on a lot of these things, and response with, you know, they come back from FlightSafety and they might have question as it pertains to Bering Air and our operation. And we discuss everything all the way through as far as aircraft avionics, how we do things with the region that we operate in and out of, how we communicate with ATC, how we communicate back to the company, what do we have that can help as far as that communication in regard to keeping up to date on your flights, your weather, you en route process, communicating back.

So then if we had restrict operation, how do we do that in regards to -- in our company aircraft. A lot of us have -- don't have GCI which is the recognized cell carrier that works at most of the airports, but -- so then we have SAT phones installed in all the aircraft that we utilize to communicate back or we'll use our village agents to help with that. So CRM is discussed in whole from the day that they walk through and then more specifically in GOS and any questions that they may have in regard to CRM or questions about the aircraft, what they have accessible to them, it doesn't end at GOS. It continues along the lines of when they're flying the line after 244 time or during 244 time.

Q. Okay. Great. And how does fatigue training -- do you have a program or how is that discussed in this process?

A. It started at basic indoc and I'm sure they also received it from their student pilot. We discuss it at great length in regard to basic indoc and time safe, and they know that -- all pilots know, as well as managers know, that I am safe and fatigue goes into the evaluation process prior to flight.

Q. Okay. Were you here on the day of the accident?
A. Yes. Here in Nome or --
Q. In Nome, I'm sorry. Yes.
A. Yes, ma'am. I was in Nome.
Q. Okay. Can you walk us through your experience starting at the beginning of the day and what you did and what your role was?
A. Yeah. So, I'm the director of training. I have been working on a project and we had our POI in town to go through the initial cadre SIC program that we've been working on completing, and I was in hangar 3, just overseeing and helping with the process with our POI, Craig Kenmouth, Nick Hajdukovich and Josh Kriebel (ph.).
Q. Okay. So you were in the building while they were flying. Is that correct?
A. While who was flying?
Q. Nick and Craig, the POI?
A. Yeah, I was on the ground and then I was in the building, hangar 3, while they were flying, yes.
Q. Okay. What happened after you found out the airplane was missing?
A. I walked over the hanger 1.
Q. Okay.
A. And was confirmed by dispatch that Flight 445 hadn't checked in, and I stepped into dispatch and remained in dispatch.
Q. Okay. Did you have any roles in the emergency response plan?
A. I was accessible and available in every regard that I could be helpful with. I stayed in dispatch. Planes were -- we had a plane and a helicopter that were dispatched, and I walked in and spoke with the search and rescue efforts.
Q. Okay. Well, thanks for all this information. I'm going to go ahead and

pass this off to Paul now, Kyle.

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. Hi, Kyle. Thanks for the information and your time today. It's real helpful. As far as the ground school and things like that, that you were talking about, the weather information and stuff, I've got access to the meteorology PowerPoint that appears. Is that the weather that's gone through in ground school is the PowerPoint?

A. We go through ground school, but with the implementation of adding an EFB to all of our pilots, it's the outline we follow and then we also go into the EFB because that's what we have access to in regard to weather, CRM, all the time, and we back it up also with our cell phones, but -- yeah. So, we discuss (indiscernible) and obviously if there's any deficient areas, then we cover it more, more in depth.

Q. Okay. And, on the EFBs, what kind of weather resources are gone through in the ground school training there?

A. On ForeFlight, we have imagery. We also have access to NOTAMs, and in dispatch, we receive NOTAMs and weather from a fax and then our dispatchers also go through their process in regard to weather, NOTAMs and call outs to the villages in regard to runway conditions and observations in addition to, you know, what they have because we're trying to acquire and obtain all the information available prior to flight. So, imagery. There's Alaska imagery that we go through on their prog charts. ForeFlight has a ton of information on there, and we try to go through that and teaching recognition and understanding what those documents and information they provide in regards to weather, icing, area forecasts, turbulence, prog charts. And then also in more in depth into discussing weather more specific to our region and area and how it's influenced by things like the Bering Sea, whether it's open or not during that time of year, stuff like that.

Q. Okay. And as you're going through that, I just want to make sure I understand. It sounds like you go through the graphical information as well as the text information for weather?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. And if you have any villages or other towns that have, for lack of a better term, known weather issues, just based on, you know, the hills around them or the ocean or the sound being near them, is that covered in the training there? And if so, are there -- could you step through any towns or any of the villages that have that?

A. I don't quite understand your question. We do have authorization in the GOM for like weather cam approach. The only thing that I'm speaking in regard to is we want our pilots to recognize and know every detail to the best of their ability before they launch. So, conditions like runway conditions, it's much better understood by somebody that can actually put the feet on the runway. So that's what I was speaking in regard to. So a lot of times, we'll have village agents run up to the runway and check it. That's above and beyond what the DOT puts out for the runway report.

Q. Okay. Yeah, I was more speaking about, for example, flying into say Kotzebue or White Mountain or something like that and, you know. With a northwest wind direction, you know, lots of times the weather forecast up there is more unpredictable with a northwest wind direction or something like that. Is there any kind of town --

A. It's discussed during their training in regard to going to the villages. We spend time during our 244 time and company operating experience, every flight it takes the attention of both the training captain or the safety pilot and the pilot that's going through it. And if there is weather that is -- they understand and they have the understanding of what the weather is with the -- so Golovin. Golovin has wind

direction, sometimes will vary, and if you just look at the text alone, they understand that. They need to -- the pilots are taught to look back and look at the trend because 6 knots might just be one report. So, and dispatch is trained that way as well, to look at the trends, so they understand the direction. Many times, like Golovin will have one report that say 6 knots, and then if you look at the trend, it'll be 2-7-0 varying to 0-6-0 up to 25 knots. So it's just kind of swirling around there by Little McKinley but, yes, they are taught those parameters and it's reinforced during company operating experience.

Q. Okay. And, as far as -- so that seems like that's the villages and the towns. Are there any particular things that are taught as far as maybe the en route weather depending on times of year, like you need to watch out more of this northeast of Kotzebue, you know, from October to December or anything like that, as far as the en route portion of the flight?

A. In regard to weather services?

Q. Correct. So, for example, I'll speak on something. So east of Kotzebue, the weather forecast is typically very challenging and not always correct between October and December for turbulence that's coming off the parts of the terrain there. Any rules of thumb passed along or just western Alaska in general kind of things?

A. I mean with our aircraft, with the G1000s, the EXs, we do have ADS-B in which we can receive at least the text data for each one. We also have weather radar installed in the Caravans. Our pilots are aware of those services. We utilize -- for en route, we can also use company frequencies. We have company radios. We have SAT phones in the en route section, and then also RCOs. Western Alaska really utilizes RCOs a lot. Flight service is essential to our operation, and if we are becoming weather observers and seeing something, then a lot of times we'll reach out on the RCOs for more information.

Q. Okay. And as far as training, is it training -- I mean you listed off it looked like -- or sounded like four or five great resources there while in flight. Is it trained to use all four or five depending on what is best?

A. Anything available.

Q. Anything available.

A. They know it's available as far as RCOs and how it -- I mean how essential it is to our operation. So, yeah, use all available resources and with the equipment that we have, it's easily accessible with the EFBs. We can bluetooth to our transponders. So then we get that information including traffic on our EFBs, and it's not difficult to do. Our pilots utilize all available resources.

Q. Okay. And so it sounds like the primary means that's trained and I guess for lack of a better term, expected is to use your EFB or ForeFlight for weather when that's available.

A. Yeah. And dispatch and like we also do our own weather briefing. We contact Flight Service if we have any more specific questions in regard to forecasts, and we'll do that either in the aircraft or with our cell phones.

Q. Okay. As far as the dispatch or -- and weather, do they receive any weather training either as part of their -- I don't know if it's called ground school, but when they become a dispatcher, do they receive any weather training. And if so, what does that look like?

A. I'm not going to speak out of bounds. I believe that the dispatch process in training is a document that you should have access to, but I'm not going to speak in regards to that.

Q. Okay.

A. That's a little bit out of my scope.

Q. Okay. So who would run that from a -- who would run more the dispatch training from the company perspective?

A. I believe that would be -- I'm not going to answer that.

Q. Okay. As far as -- let's say there's a brand new weather tool that comes out there that all Alaska's using, the AOPA is saying this is a great new thing, you know, something like that. How do you make that aware to -- a new weather tool to the pilots and maybe even dispatch, that this is available to use?

A. We are a small company. We could -- if we received the information and it is better, it is discussed among management and among the pilots. And we would make sure that -- we're in developed or in the developmental process of our SMS and our safety reporting, and that is one aspect that we would drive our pilots or even any information. It doesn't even have to be safety related to go through that system, and that's what we're working on and advocating for that.

Q. Okay. Is there any -- say I've been a pilot at Bering for 10 years, and is there any yearly recurrence or refresher or whatever the term is, kind of weather training on a yearly basis or another timeframe?

A. Yeah, it's part of basic indoc and then on a yearly basis, we also have to do aircraft specific ground training which includes GOS.

Q. Okay. Could you kind of step me through maybe more specifically the training as far as icing is concerned for the Caravan and what's taught here?

A. So, we're authorized to have flight safety through AI31. They do ground and flight training in the sim with flight into known icing. They come back. They have the AD that is a mandatory Cessna AD for flight into known icing. We discuss more specifically our operation in the Caravan here, and they understand -- they learn the theories. We have guided discussions in addition to that, and then during the

company operating experience, you can see that we try to schedule our Caravan pilot upgrades to be in the fall time. so then they get that and attain that information experience and they are at a standard that meets or exceeds the legal standard for flight into known icing for the Caravan.

Q. Okay. So it sounds like it's a combination of desk school and then quite a bit of flying out there with someone who's experienced in that. Would that be correct?

A. Yes.

Q. I think that's all the questions I have for right now. Thank you, Kyle.

A. Yep.

BY MR. PECK:

Q. Hey, Kyle. This is Rob. Again, thanks and I know this is a hard time. So I appreciate you spending time with us. Sorry it's under these circumstances.

A. That's all right.

Q. I'm going to ask just a couple of questions just for clarity more than anything for the record. When you say 244 time, you're referring to the Regulation 135.244, correct, which is operational experience?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. I'm just putting it on record. That's what I'm doing. I knew exactly what you were meaning but -- yeah.

MS. BLUM: Thank you.

MR. LEFEBVRE: Our industry acronyms and numbers are --

MR. PECK: Yes, yes.

BY MR. PECK:

Q. I had a question kind of about CRM here. CRM is a lot easier explained in a multicrew type airplane, right?

A. Yes.

Q. When you have a right seater with you, a first officer. What, if anything, do you guys when you're talking about basically single pilot resource management or CRM for a single pilot? Is there any differences? And where would that be covered if it is in your guys' training cycle?

A. Yeah. Obviously CRM is kind of recognized like you said, as a two pilot crew, but when you're a single pilot, you wear many hats in a sense that you still have to take off, fly and land safely. So anything available to you in the airplane is the essential crew resource management. We're kind of trained to know what these are and not in an overwhelming manner. So then we can organize and prioritize what we need for the aircraft moving forward. So obviously aviate, navigate, communicate, but utilizing the tools that we have in the airplane to have successful outcomes is kind of how CRM is catered towards the single pilot.

Q. Okay. Do you get into conversations about other ground resources or other, for instance, other aircraft? Do you talk about any of those types of resources that might be available or helpful?

A. You mean reaching out to other aircraft in flight?

Q. Potentially or maybe even back here to base or something. I mean --

A. Yeah, we have so many antennas that are flying around, that can help relay for the -- for any aspect of the flight. If we see something and we're in flight then, yeah, we do have company radios. We have SAT phones. We have -- that is all discussed. The pilots are taught and they know what they have and then the fine tuning and finishing up is definitely done during our 244 time. They're obviously to a certain standard to pass and then the company operating experiences is where we fine tune all of that, like going to Golovin, understand if you're going IFR there, once you're

below 4,000 you lose contact with center. Those are all types of things like who do you call next? Those are types of things that we're experts in knowing that but somebody that's coming new into it might be a little bit overwhelmed. So, we try to get the information to them without being overwhelmed and sometimes they have to learn that on their own when they're flying with the company operating experience for it to be vivid enough for them to retain that.

So like they learn on a typical day going IFR to Golovin, that below 4,000 they lose center, what are some other resources that they have available? We have SAT phones. We have predetermined numbers that go back to different places, dispatch, Kotzebue dispatch, flight service, known flight service Kotzebue, and then also we have the RCOs which are RCOs work, which RCOs don't. Those are all types of conversations that we discuss and have with them. And then learn that throughout the company operating experience much like Golovin RCO. Interesting enough, it doesn't work all that well. So what do you have available to you?

Q. Okay. Thanks. That definitely helps paint that picture. I appreciate that.

A. Yep.

Q. Now, I'm just going to ask a couple questions about TKS with the Caravan. And, I guess first of all, start with your experiences in the Caravan, TKS equipped. Have you ever had instances in which the TKS system wasn't able to keep up with ice?

A. As far as the wing panels and tail, I have not.

Q. Okay. Have you had any failures with the TKS system while in flight as in a pump or a panel not working, you can continue on down that list?

A. Personally, I have not.

Q. Okay. In the winter months, well, I guess all year round, but I would assume it's more in the winter, but what would you personal practices be for TKS on a

normal day at Nome going out to fly the line? Would you have full TKS, half TKS, tank, or the 11.7 obviously minimum but --

A. Yes, I like having a full tank.

Q. Okay. Would you, in your experience I guess, is a good way to put it, is that a fairly common idea between pilots?

A. Well, the nature of my business being director of training, I would assume that that would probably be recognized as something that we do.

Q. Okay. The radar got brought up here which is a very interesting thing. What kind of, and I'm assuming the majority of this would happen in OE because as you and I both know, the radar is a little finicky but once you learn it, it works out pretty well. But, what kind of training would you say is normal for a Caravan, a newer Caravan pilot on either the 244 or company OE time?

A. Interesting question. I have found that as far as utilizing the radar is more -- it's easier to paint or see things in the summer months in regards to like cells and build up like that. But, we have, we have access to them. There might be better information available to the crews in flight before they start going into the, into the weather radar, but I'll use it. I've found myself using it more in the summer months than I do in the winter months.

Q. Okay. And it would be true then that during that COE time or 244 time, that's when most of that training would happen?

A. Yeah.

Q. You mentioned contacting flight service about clarity I guess, and maybe I'm putting words in your mouth there, but clarity on weather or getting more definition on weather at times. Have you ever contacted the Alaskan Aviation Weather Unit or do you even know that that's an available resource?

A. Yeah, we utilize Alaskan Aviation Weather Unit. Many people do utilize -- before I came up to Alaska, I used to do ops and we used to do flight plan, and yeah. I mean there's so many different weather sources. I utilize the MOS. I use Air Weather. There are a lot of products out there, and the idea as a pilot or from a pilot's perspective is utilizing the information and the best information as it presents to them but, yeah, area forecasts, Alaskan Aviation Weather Unit is something that we use online. I don't know -- I can't speak to my -- beyond myself as far as what other pilots use besides what I've trained with them on.

Q. In particular, have you called them though to get that extra --

A. No.

Q. -- clarity? Did you even know that was available?

A. I guess no.

Q. That's not a ding on you. I didn't either for years. It's not. I promise. It's something that probably could be made more -- or the public, the flying public in Alaska could be made more aware of in my opinion. You did mention the Cessna AD, and when you just, again for a clarity thing here, that AD is the required annual Cessna training in which we select either TKS or non-TKS airplanes, correct?

A. (Indiscernible) learning, yes.

MR. PECK: That's all I have.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Brian.

MR. WECKWERTH: I don't have any clarifying questions or anything. There were some things that came up but I think it mostly got covered.

MS. BLUM: Okay.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. So as far as the AD goes, can you expand a little bit on that for me and

what it's requiring?

A. It's AD. So it's an airworthiness directive, and Cessna would be able to speak better in that regard, but recognizing the Caravan, and the legacy Caravans, you know, the history of the Caravan, looking at it, I'll start with 600 horse and then jump up to 675 with the boots and then it's the mandatory training requirement because it's a special airplane in regards to icing conditions. So they want to make sure -- my understanding is that people have the correct investigation in regards to that aircraft in known ice. I'm sure the Cessna lawyers could speak on that better than me.

Q. Does this involve the low speed awareness and autopilot usage?

A. Autopilot usage, 97 1/2 plus or minus 2.2, yes.

Q. Okay. I understand that. What is it about the autopilot? Is it every 10 minutes if you're in icing that you need to take it off? Is that correct?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. And is that -- this is an honest question. Does that mean you just take it off, move the controls and then you can immediately put the autopilot back on?

A. So, basically you're updating yourself on the aircraft status or condition. So if you're in icing conditions, the idea is as you accumulate ice, so a great scenario would be inadvertent flight into known ice at night.

Q. Okay.

A. So -- because obviously we can't see. So then we have other things that are installed, they have installed for us like the ice protection light, that little pin on the wind screen. But anyways, if you're in known ice and you start slowing down, your trim is going to start rolling back. So basically you disengage the autopilot, re-trim, and you're able to put the autopilot back on but flight into known icing is definitely -- you need to stay in tune with what the aircraft is doing in that regard. So that's why the say

every 10 minutes you're supposed to disengage it.

Q. Okay. Great. And then can you also go a little further explaining the 97 knots and the low speed awareness?

A. 97 1/2, plus or minus 2.2, is a designed number in that if you -- if the aircraft, say you're at night in inadvertent icing conditions, and it hits that airspeed, it's going to -- you'll have an audible warning. You'll have a flash above the PFD, and It'll also disengage the autopilot and it flashes red and yellow at you, and that's just, hey, you're kind of a test pilot from here on out. It's not designed -- the autopilot is not designed to understand or know anything beyond below -- or to operate below 97 1/2 plus or minus 2.2.

Q. Okay. And --

A. Not -- go ahead.

Q. No, sorry. Go ahead.

A. Nope, go ahead.

Q. And is there airspeeds associated with icing? Can you tell me what those are?

A. Yeah. So, airspeed for known icing conditions says 120 knots, 110 for climb. In theory, we want to make sure that we're staying clean as long as we can so we want to keep our airspeed. So that's what's trained. We don't want to, we don't want to see the decay on the airspeed. So we try to keep it. So it's trained to keep speed.

Q. Okay. Great. And 120, that's flaps up, right?

A. I'm sorry. What did you say?

Q. I said 120, that's flaps up, clean config?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Great. I've never flown a TKS airplane. So I've been learning talking to other pilots here. We've heard terms like keep the wing wet. We've heard, you know, maybe turn it on, on the ground, getting the wings wet. How do you train the pilots to use the TKS?

A. So TKS is used because of our operation and freezing levels and you might be below a freezing layer. We need to ensure that it is wet out prior to flying through that transition altitude where it now is freezing. So that's the process of wetting it out that you're talking about. So we want to make sure or ensure that it's wet out. It's checked during -- to make sure that all the panels are wet out and prior to departure and then it's wet out on the ground if we anticipate flying through a freezing layer or flying into known ice. And then when you fly, we have different modes of operation. We have norm, high, max flow airframe and windshield. Cessna has -- we follow Cessna in their AD and their descriptive nature in training, and then we will also -- so we'll run it in norm and for a lot of -- for -- their checklist says in order to conserve fluid, you can utilize high to remove the ice. So I think people, depending on the flight that they're on, they will either utilize norm or high and if we see that we aren't keeping up with norm or high, then we'll obviously exit icing conditions and not to be shy of the max air flow -- max flow airframe I think is the switch.

Q. Okay. So just for my clarification, wetting out whether it's on the ground or in the air prior to entering where you think you're going to pick up ice, does that mean you just turn it on for a second or two?

A. Yeah. So, you're running the pumps. You're making sure that you're visually seeing the TKS being pumped out. So when you're on the ground, you'll see it weep out of the wing and then you'll also see it coming down the wing struts. And we have -- they have maintenance checks that they do as well in regard to ensuring that

the TKS is working. And if there's any panels that aren't working, then that would obviously be written up and taken back to -- that information would get back to maintenance.

Q. Well, that's good to know. I hadn't thought about that, and if you don't know the answer to this, it's fine. How often does maintenance -- is that a daily check that they make sure all the panels are wet or not do you know?

A. I do not know.

Q. Okay. So it like -- so as far as the operation of it and the times that you should have, whether you're on high or norm, is this taught on the ground or is this more like on-the-job training in flight?

A. Well, there's flight into known icing at FlightSafety and on the ground. In the sim, they can duplicate conditions that we can't duplicate unless we're actually in the airplane. And then any time that we're doing company operating experience, you know, we discuss it in GOS. We discuss flying into known icing at great length, theory, how we operate, norm, high, what to do, you know, if something isn't working, escape plans, where can you go, who you can communicate with. I mean it's a whole process that continues beyond even company operating experience. We all intimately fly these airplanes and recognize and know what they're able to do and their capabilities.

Q. Okay. Thanks for that. So, were you involved in training Chad?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you tell me about that?

A. I did his 135.244 time.

Q. Okay. How did he do? What was his ability? What was your assessment?

A. I did -- he did well. I did 13 landings with him, 6.3 hours before he went to company operating experience, and I knew Chad leading up to it, and yeah. I mean

he was a conservative pilot. He was skilled and that's why he was up for an upgrade at the time that he was and, yeah, he did, he did great.

Q. Okay. Thanks for that. Do you know offhand how much COE he did?

A. Just over 179 hours from September through December 12th.

Q. Okay. And just based off what we've learned so far, you guys -- I know you've got the 100 hour, but it seems like, you know, you're more than willing to continue flying and giving people more hours as needed whether it's that they need -- they want it or it's deemed. So it doesn't sound like 180 hours just from my visit up here is uncommon or doesn't denote anything. Is that correct?

A. That is correct. 100 hours is the limit or the limit that we put in the book as far as our manuals go in regard to operating experience and we've seen more. We've seen less. And, that's our investment into our pilots much like it is our investment in the community, the aircraft, our facilities. We don't release them to the line until they have the confident, but also all of our pilots have the confidence that they're going to be safely -- a safe operator for all of them.

Q. Okay. Thank you, Kyle.

MS. BLUM: And, Paul, did you have more questions?

MR. SUFFERN: Yes.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Turning it to Paul.

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. Hey, Kyle. You doing okay? You need a break?

A. Yeah, I'm good.

Q. Okay. Yeah, I've just got -- some are more just kind of follow-up questions. So I'll probably be jumping around based on kind of what Starr and Rob have asked. How are pilots, specifically on the Caravan here, trained on how to exit

icing conditions? Is that something they learn at more FlightSafety or is that trained here as well?

A. It's FlightSafety. We discuss at great length on the ground during ground school because it's -- I mean the most critical as far as the safety aspect of our operation goes is the ones that are the highest risk, right, flying into known icing. So that is, you know, at very intimate discussions in that regard, and it is continued throughout company operating experience for utilizing instructors and check pilots and the experts about -- that know this information about the Caravans and the region. And, we do preflight briefs. We do post-flight briefs with them. How did you do as far as your standards are concerned? Yeah, it's a continued conversation and training. And, yeah, if we know something, you know, we have pilot reports. We're able to utilize the pilot reports. You can feed information back to dispatch and at any point, you can restrict or change your operation in regard to safety. So, if you're in flight and you're heading towards Nome and you find yourself in, you know, known icing and you start bleeding energy, bleeding airspeed, you can't stay out of it, you can't adjust up or down. Then the only way that you can go is back where you came, right. So where you weren't in those conditions. Exit conditions are definitely taught and recognized, learned throughout being a pilot and they already have their plan before they get there or their in flight.

Q. Okay. So it sounds like what you're talking about is being taught and the procedure would be to exit those conditions by maybe doing a 180 and going back to areas where those conditions are not and/or go to an area where you're getting a report or something like that where you know those conditions are also not, like a pilot report or something?

A. Yeah, yeah. You want to stay above the icing conditions if you can or out

of it as long as you can. If you are -- if you have a clearance to descend and you know that you're going into icing conditions, you want to make sure that you have an end goal and that's the runway. So you're not going to descend into known icing conditions if you don't have the end goal in mind. If you're going to be requested to descend down and you're going to be expected to hold, then you are taught to stay it out to before, yeah. I mean it's all based on the timing of what's happening when you're in the airplane, right?

Q. Yep. Okay. That's very helpful. Thank you. As far as, and I know the company, Bering Air, has many different airframes, but I'm going to speak specifically for the Caravan here. Is there any training as far as what would be no go for weather specifically for the Caravan?

A. FlightSafety, the AD and then if there's a pilot report or known condition, in regard to icing, then we would restrict operations. If a pilot felt they didn't want to or they observed icing, you know, in regard to heavy or severe icing, then we would restrict operations. We'd turn around. We would not launch.

Q. So, it sounds like known icing is a report or something like that. So a forecast would -- a forecast of severe would not necessarily be a no go because it's not necessarily known?

A. No, that's not what I said. If there's a report of severe, obviously we're not going to -- we will not operate.

Q. Okay. Can you kind of step me through the process of reporting pilot reports? If it's -- you have two pilots coming in, and they're reporting -- they're giving you the weather, whatever that is, coming in, and they're passing it via the company, is there any process to or training to also report those two reports to Flight Service or Anchorage Center if they're not on those frequencies?

A. Yeah. If there's any hazards to the operation, that would be beneficial to the other pilots, it's company policy to restrict and also call to Flight Service for that report.

Q. Okay. I'm going to jump around a little bit and I know Rob mentioned some more about the weather radar, you know, and you mentioned that it picks up cells in the summertime. Does it ever pick up any winter weather type of targets?

A. It's not that it doesn't pick up weather targets. It's that the other information in regard to once you're in the airplane flying, the weather that you're in is better than what the radar, in my experience.

Q. Earlier you also mentioned the village agents and things like that. I'm not that familiar necessarily with the term, but I assume that they're either a contract and/or a company personnel. Is that true?

A. Yeah, they're contract company personnel. Say if we receive a -- we look at like White Mountain and the weather says it's whatever it is. We might reach out to the agent, you know, in dispatch and just ask like, hey, what is it doing there? Just, just as a part of the story, you know, much like we'll reach out via the weather cameras because a picture is worth a thousand words a lot of times, more than what that report is.

Q. Okay. As far as those village agents, do they receive any kind of training from the company or is it just on-the-job experience over time?

A. It's on-the-job training, and it's nothing official that we're asking them for. We're just asking for more information.

Q. Okay. In your experience here as the director of training and also being a pilot, are there weather resources that could be improved or help you out?

A. Keeping all of our AWOSs open and operating. I know that, you know,

the uniqueness of western Alaska and getting people out there to keep them maintained, yes, it would be nice to have all of them accessible to our operation all the time. Each AWOS is only what, 5 statute miles, if you look at the area that we operate in, 5 statute miles even for each village is not a whole -- it's not the rest of the picture, but it does help us in operating in regard to IFR, VFR, and -- yeah, it would be nice to have that ADS-B. With the implementation of ADS-B, we're able to been seen lower, but as far as infrastructure goes, it would be really nice to be able to have center repeaters, and this has been a discussion and asked to air traffic control facilities for a long time. A lot of times we can't contact anybody, up river, Kotzebue, it's a known issue, the center. So having additional infrastructure would be helpful. Keeping the ILSes up because that goes into our training and checking, weather services, flight service is essential but even some of the RCOs, we can't keep them operating. So like Golovin. Cape Darby (ph.) was -- used to be a RCO that we all utilized. They demobbed that and then we were given Golovin RCO and it doesn't work. So it might as well not even be that. Newton Peak RCO, that was another one that was actually useful and helpful to a lot of -- well, to all of us pilots in the region, and I believe that has been demobbed. Being able to have somebody that we can reach out to and hear a voice, so we can adjust our altitude, when we are in flight conditions is helpful. We've kind of all developed our plan in tactful communication, how do we communicate, and we've utilized the SAT phones. We utilized the RCOs. A lot of times even if they're up and operating and not NOTAMed out, they don't work. If they're NOTAMed out, sometimes they work. It would be nice to have clean information as far as knowing what we have accessible to us once we're in the airplane.

Q. Okay. That was really helpful. Thank you, Kyle. Just one last one. If there's any weather forecast information you wish could be better, what would that be?

A. Sorry.

Q. Anything on the plate, man.

A. Yeah. Honestly, we have, we have METARs and we have TAFs, and a lot of our pilots recognize, actually all recognize that a lot of the time it's kind of an outcast. You know, we're trying to do our best to make decisions, and there are a lot of unknowns in regard to launching the weather because how often have we departed and, you know, the weather was bad, the TAF was bad. Then the weather's good for an hour, and we have TAF and updated weather sources that say that the weather's going to be good. And, so then we launch and we do our best to operate legally and safely and we find ourself now 30 minutes from home base, and now it's gotten back down. So we call it the outcast. It would be nice to have much more predictable weather, and I understand that western Alaska is unique to that, but I'm sure that there would be better services that could be provided to western Alaska and Bering Air in that regard.

Q. Fantastic. If there's anything else you think of, please don't hesitate to reach out to me, and that's all my questions, Kyle. You've been super helpful. Thank you.

A. Yep.

BY MR. PECK:

Q. Thanks, Kyle, again. Rob. Your experience with that Cessna icing training, I guess first question is, is it -- do you think it's adequate?

A. Are you talking for Bering Air or the country or the world?

Q. I'm specifically wanting to know you and Bering Air, is it adequate?

A. Our Cessna approach to icing conditions in regard to the training is adequate in that we are putting people, new candidates with the experts in that regard

and because of that, it is adequate.

Q. So without your OE, you don't think it would be adequate? Would that be fair or not?

A. A book can teach a lot of things, but -- yeah, I -- in that regard, with all of my aviation background, the company operating experience was probably the most intimate time that -- where I learned the most about me as a pilot, about the airframe and that is a huge investment from Bering Air. So, I recognize that and Bering Air recognizes that. So, yeah, I think, I think they can get the information out there but we're dealing with pilot interfacing with aircraft and they potentially have never seen it before. Who knows how somebody's going to handle it when they get in the airplane. I mean that is recognized by Bering Air. We've had multiple people, even since I've been employed by Bering Air, that we've invested all this money into and, you know, we shook hands and we -- it was a mutual agreement that operating in western Alaska, you know, wasn't going to work for them and it was going to work for Bering Air. So, that being said, time in the aircraft is essential to training especially in regard to flight into known icing. I don't think that that's time that I'd be willing to give up in regard to learning flight into known icing, and honestly it starts when people are copilots, some of the theories and whatnot. I mean that flight into known icing is something that is -- it's critical to have a good understanding of that and how to operate in regard to safety even more so or even with regard to flying single pilot into flight into known icing. You have to be -- you have to have somebody to help you through that, and that's why we do it.

Q. I'm in total agreement with you about the OE and the actual experience in the airplane. And my questions are really specifically with the Cessna training. Do you find that is a fairly easy process to go through? You know, because if I remember

correctly, it refers to like, refer to Supplement S1 multiple times. But do you think that product is an easy thing to sit through and gather information or could it be improved?

A. It could be improved. You know, as a pilot, you're kind of, you know, through the training process, you, especially with a new company, you come in and part of the training is where to go for different information and that flight into known icing, they try to drive people to the corrective documents, the source documents. Yeah, I mean I think they could probably expand on that discussion but I'm sure the lawyers recognize the needs of checking boxes and whatnot. So I'm sure that's kind of where that -- I don't know how else to -- it's a good course. There's a lot of good information in there, but the application level, you can't do with an online course.

Q. Okay.

A. Application correlation. I mean you're at wrote (ph.) and understanding, but you can't get to that application correlation level of understanding unless you have an airplane because you don't even know how you're going to respond to those types of conditions or even that airplane.

Q. Right. Okay. Thank you very much.

MR. PECK: I don't have any more.

MS. BLUM: Brian.

MR. WECKWERTH: No, nothing clarifying or anything else.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Okay. I think I just have a couple questions for you to finish up. I just want to make sure I understand what you and Paul were just discussing. I understand like if you've got reports of, you know, icing that you're going to cancel in these conditions. Like what I didn't understand was how -- do you ever make decisions to cancel based on a forecast or do you wait for an actual report?

A. Yes. I mean that's part of operational control and dispatch, the relationship between operation control, dispatch and the pilot. Yeah, I mean we'll restrict operations for a number of conditions, and it's in the manual. So I'm not going to read them off verbatim but -- and then if anybody has a reason to restrict or suspend operations, then the message is received and we will restrict operations.

Q. And you will do that just based on a forecast, just so I'm clear? You will if -- you have based on forecasted, not actual conditions?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Great. Is there anything that you wish we would have asked or you want to share with us that you think will help us in this investigation? Or someone you think we should talk to if we -- to help us in this process?

A. As far as Bering Air and our operation, just -- I'm sure that you guys are being educated pretty well about who we are and what we do. And we do have a lot of professionals from the pilots all the way up to management in looking at our tenure that we have in pilot retention. But, in that regard it would be, you know, we all have put ourselves in the, in the -- I should say we've chair flown Flight Air 45, and there's a lot information that we generally have access to that we don't, and I know that there's a unique process that you guys have to follow, but I would suggest to reach out and discuss in further discussion with the pilots and management in regard to our operation and how we do things especially when you start analyzing the EFB, the SD cards, the fast box. I mean rewind 8 years ago and that's information we wouldn't have had. And, we generally -- if there's something that comes up, you know, we have processes that we follow, but I think it would be -- it's critical that we -- we don't want to sit around for 2 years. We understand that, you know, the NTSB is -- you guys are trying to find -- figure out why this happened, and -- but I think it would help clarify a

lot of things for us if we had access to those three things, but I know that you guys are in a unique position, and probably are trying to figure out what you guys are able to do, but I think we can, we can help in that regard with the additional information, the SD cards, the fast box, EFB that he has, that he had access to.

Q. Okay. We really appreciate your time, Kyle.

MS. BLUM: We're going to end this recording at 11:46.

(Whereupon, at 11:46 a.m., the interview was concluded.)

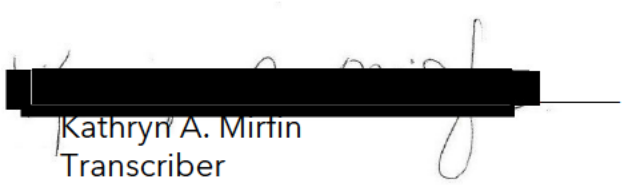
CERTIFICATE

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 Kyle Lefebvre
ACCIDENT NO.:	ANC25MA018
PLACE:	Nome, Alaska
DATE:	February 17, 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.



Kathryn A. Martin
Transcriber

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: DAVID OLSON, Director of Operations Bering Air

Nome, Alaska

Sunday,
February 16, 2025

APPEARANCES:

STARR BLUM, Aviation Accident 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

ROBERT RICHMOND, Representative
Richmond & Quinn
(On behalf of Mr. Olson)

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INTERVIEW

(1:29 p.m.)

MS. BLUM: Okay. Today is February 16th, 2025, and it's 1:29 p.m. Alaska Standard Time. My name is Starr Blum. I'm an investigator with the NTSB, and I'm in the process of investigating the accident on February 6th with Bering Air Flight 445.

First off, we want to again express our since condolences, and we're really sorry for what you're going through and that we're here, but as you know, our role is safety and finding the probable cause. And we're here to help figure that out and prevent this hopefully from happening again.

I want to assure you that us talking to pilots, management, dispatchers, the FAA, like the oversight, like this is a completely normal process for us. So I don't think there's anything unusual about it.

As I previously stated, this will be transcribed, and you'll have an opportunity to look at these transcripts before they become part of the public docket.

Let's go around the room so everyone can introduce themselves.

MR. SUFFERN: I'm Paul Suffern. I'm a meteorologist with the NTSB. I've been there about 14, 15 years or so. Before that, I worked up in Alaska, mainly southeast, south central area, working for the National Weather Service.

MR. PECK: And Robert Peck, Rob. I'm with the Anchorage FSDO, as a front line manager right now. I was an inspector before that, and previous to that, I flew for Alaska Air Transit for about 8 years, the PC-12 and the Caravan down there, TKS, the whole thing, same deal. And then prior to that, I was military in the C-130.

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

MS. BLUM: Okay. If we take notes, don't mind us. We may be thinking of a question based off somebody's question.

MR. OLSON: Sure.

MS. BLUM: You are entitled to have a representative of your choosing present during the interview. Is there someone here as your representative?

MR. OLSON: Yeah, Bob Richmond.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Thank you. Bob, please refrain from answering any questions --

MR. RICHMOND: Why do you keep repeating that? I don't ask any questions.

MS. BLUM: -- on David's behalf here. You can direct him not to answer a question or you guys can go outside and confer. And as I said, if you need a break, just say the word and no problem.

Do you have any questions?

MR. OLSON: Not at this time.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Let's get going.

INTERVIEW OF DAVID OLSON

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Would you please say and spell your name?

A. Full name, David Olson.

Q. That's fine.

A. D-a-v-i-d, William or W, middle initial, O-l-s-o-n.

Q. And how old are you?

A. 69.

Q. What is your position at Bering Air?

A. Director of operations.

Q. Okay. When did you originally hire on here at Bering?

A. October of 1984.
Q. Wow. So I suppose you've worn many hats here at the company?
A. Well, just pilot and director of operations.
Q. When did you become DO?
A. I don't know that exact number, 2005 or so.
Q. Okay. Let's see. What's certificates or ratings do you have?
A. ATP, multiengine and then single engine, commercial, type rated in the CASA and 1900.
Q. If you were going to ballpark your total time?
A. In the 20,000, somewhere in there.
Q. How much of that would you guess is PIC?
A. Most of it, maybe 1,000 that's not or 1200, something like that.
Q. Okay. Are you still actively flying here at Bering Air?
A. I'm not as active as I used to be.
Q. On what occasion would you go flying?
A. Right now it's mostly just training, some checkrides.
Q. Okay. So you fly in the Caravan?
A. No Caravan, not any more.
Q. Okay. How long did you stop flying the Caravan?
A. I'd have to look in the records when I last tripped out, but it's probably been 10 years I suppose.
Q. Okay. So if you don't mind, can you give us a CliffNotes version of your history in Bering years if you'd like?
A. Starting at Bering here?
Q. Or you can start before.

A. Bering years is fine. It's been 40 years worth here. So.

Q. Yeah.

A. Started out as a line pilot, hired on, flew 207s, 206s, Navajos, an Otter occasionally and Beech 18s. And then they started I guess upgrading the fleet to Caravan, King Airs, 1900s, CASA.

Q. Did you guys start out in Nome? Is that where you started?

A. Bering Air started in Nome, yeah, and then they -- I think when Alaska Airlines asked Jim to start running schedules for him, he bought Navajos and opened a Kotzebue base.

Q. Okay.

A. When we bought Shallenbergers in Kotzebue, that's where we got a hangar and just started more schedules up there.

Q. So was Kotzebue your first -- is that like base?

A. Yes.

Q. And now your other base is --

A. Unalakleet. We always flew through Unalakleet but, yeah, we just opened a base there in the past 5 or 6 years.

Q. Okay. Do you guys have scheduled overnights there, your pilots or --

A. No.

Q. It's always out and back?

A. Yeah, they're always leaving Nome and work out of Kotzebue or out of Unalakleet and then come back to Nome.

Q. Okay. Let's see here. Are you normally the person that has operational control on a daily basis?

A. I do, yeah, during the week.

Q. Okay. And then if you aren't, who is next?
A. Fen Kinneen, he does it. Brian does it.
Q. Okay. I'm getting familiar with the 135 operational control thing. Is that -- is there certain people that have to be designated as --
A. By the regulation, it can be me or my designate but there's certain people who have the experience and that we use like Fen and Brian and maybe Kyle occasionally.
Q. Okay. I don't even know. Are there requirements to -- legal requirements to become an OC? I mean do you have to have so much time or -- I'm not sure of the answer.
A. Well, I think there's legal requirements, but we require everybody that does it to have a lot of experience, be a current pilot.
Q. Okay. Talking about the load manifest, like who's responsible for the load manifest? Is that you and the pilot? Is it --
A. The load manifest is worked up by cargo, CSAs, basically between them and the pilot.
Q. Okay.
A. I don't get involved with that unless there's a discrepancy or question.
Q. Okay. I'm kind of jumping around. Forgive me.
A. Sure.
Q. How many employees does Bering Air have?
A. I think it's in the neighborhood of 150 now.
Q. Okay. That's includes the outstations?
A. Right, and some of village agents are employees.
Q. So you do have contract employees, too?

A. Some of the village agents.
Q. Okay. And how many pilots?
A. Fifty or so.
Q. Okay. And this is the only pilot base, but you consider Kotzebue --
A. Kotzebue is a pilot base.
Q. Oh, it is. Okay. So pilots live there?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. Is Unalakleet, too?
A. No.
Q. Okay.
A. Not at this point.
Q. And then where are your maintenance bases? Where would you --
A. The main maintenance base is Nome and then Kotzebue does most of the Caravans.
Q. Okay.
A. And most of the Caravan inspections.
Q. Okay. All right.
A. We rotate the airplanes.
Q. Okay. That makes sense. How many Caravans do you have?
A. I'd have to count, 15, 18.
Q. Okay. So the ones kind of getting inspected kind of stay up there and then you use the ones down here to --
A. Right.
Q. -- operate. Okay. I noticed on the website you've got the published flight schedules. And I was looking at 445's schedule online. I believe that one of those

flights wasn't made or one of the destinations was skipped that day of the accident. Is that correct?

A. Um-hum.

Q. Do you know why that flight was --

A. Due to the weather. The weather in the villages outside of the Unalakleet was fairly poor that day. So, the final or the last flight we had him do was direct to Nome.

Q. Okay. And what made the weather bad? Was it vis? Was it ceilings?

A. Probably both.

Q. Probably both. So we talked to the dispatcher, and it sounds like they have interactions before every flight with the pilot. When would you have or do you typically -- when do you speak to a pilot before the flight?

A. If they -- our door is always open. So if they have any question on the weather, maintenance, whatever, they come up, talk to us, call us, text us. As far as weather goes, if it gets below 502, it takes three of us to dispatch a flight. So, the 502 dispatcher contacts me, we talk about the weather, talk to the pilot. If we all agree it's a safe operation, we go.

Q. Okay. And on the converse of that, if you --

A. If it's bad -- if any one of the parties say no way or this isn't what we ought to go, then we don't.

Q. Okay. Whether it's the pilot or the dispatcher?

A. Or me.

Q. Yeah. Okay. Great. We've been talking about risk assessments, and I understand that you guys don't have a form, and you kind of go through this I am safe checklist.

A. The pilots use that.
Q. Yeah. So do you have your own personal risk assessment? How do you --
A. In the manual, we have a risk assessment.
Q. In the GOM?
A. Um-hum.
Q. And what is -- I'll go back and look at it later, but can you tell me what it says?
A. Basically up to 502, there's several criteria that has to be met. Then the dispatcher and pilot. And we say dispatcher, he's not a licensed dispatcher, okay. They decide if it's good to go. If it goes below 502 or if they have any questions on runway conditions, icing conditions, then we all talk about it, and if any one of us decide no, then we don't go.
Q. Okay. Do you guys have the CRM module here or training on crew resource management here at Bering Air?
A. Right.
Q. You do. Do you?
A. Um-hum.
Q. You do. Is that -- how do they receive that -- the pilots receive that training?
A. Through Kyle usually or whoever's training that day. There's a module that they go through.
Q. Is it on like an iPad or --
A. It's in the pilot training program and they have a PowerPoint.
Q. Okay. I'll talk to Kyle more about that tomorrow.
A. Yeah.

Q. Fatigue, do you have a fatigue program or training on fatigue?
A. It's talked about.
Q. Yeah.
A. I don't think it's a really big training on it.
Q. Okay. Now, your POI is in Fairbanks, correct?
A. Correct.
Q. How often do you see them here on the property?
A. Once a month.
Q. Really?
A. Um-hum.
Q. Okay.
A. Unless he has some other reason not to be here, but he's probably been the most active one we've seen in quite a while. He's here once a month.
Q. Okay. How long has he been the POI? Do you know?
A. Two years now. I'd have to look for sure. Two to three years, somewhere in there.
Q. Okay. Do you find the communications between you and them good? I mean is it a good working relationship?
A. It's been a good, a real good relationship actually.
Q. Okay. Great. So going back to the -- well, let me ask you this first. I skipped this. What are your duties and responsibilities as DO?
A. Basically oversight of the company, work between the flight department and maintenance department to make sure aircraft are ready to go and airworthy, with the flight department and make sure the pilots are current and ready to go. And then operational control.

Q. Okay. I realize that you've got your organizational chart going on the way down, and if a pilot had a concern or wanted to talk to somebody about that, how would that get communicated to --

A. A concern about? Anything?

Q. Anything, maintenance, weather --

A. It's pretty open. They come to the door on a regular basis. They call. Communicate with them directly usually, talk to the pilots in the morning if I see them.

Q. Okay. So you would -- would you say they contact you just as much as they contact the chief pilot or --

A. Yeah. We're all kind of a group. We're all in the same office. So, Fen probably has a lot more direct contact with them. Any time they have other concerns, issues, they come up and talk.

Q. Okay.

A. Come up or if I go down, it's -- whatever it needs.

Q. Okay. Great. Hiring. What's your involvement in the hiring process?

A. Bern (ph.) here gets a lot of applications. We sift through them. We talk about them in the office between Fen, myself, Russell, Brian. Then when -- Fen usually does all the, you know, the calling and interviewing, getting references. He gets all that. He makes recommendations. We look at them, we decided who to bring in for interviews. They come in for an interview. We all have to agree that we want them or want to hire him.

Q. Do you sit in on the interview?

A. Yeah. Unless I happen not to be here but --

Q. Okay.

A. -- yeah, usually all of us are.

Q. Okay. Great. Going back to a new pilot, let's say like myself, I'm coming in. I don't have a lot of Alaska time. What's your philosophy on getting somebody ready to fly in this environment?

A. Getting them ready to fly or before we hire them?

Q. Both, if you don't mind expanding on both.

A. With the advent of us getting the aircraft that require two crew, we've been able to hire more time pilots to work in the right seat until they get enough experience to move up. Prior to that we had a criteria of 3,000 hours and 1,000 in Alaska experience.

Q. Okay.

A. But the new pilots, they come in right seat and depending on their abilities, by the time they get enough time to meet the 135 requirements, we decide whether we want to send them to Caravan school or not or have them fly right seat for longer.

Q. Okay. So if -- what would you say normal or typical progression is from the right seat into the left -- or into the Caravan?

A. At least a year, preferably 2. Usually 1,000 hours of time because they typically come in with between 3 and 500 hours for the right seat. And, usually over a year, year and a half, they get around 1,000 hours, meets the 135 requirements of 1200 hours.

Q. Okay.

A. And they send them to flight safety for their initial, and then they bring them back, do the local or the GOS type of stuff, the local ground school, and then they get their legal IOE which 10 hours in the Caravan or single engine airplane, which can be reduced by 5 by the 135 regulation. And then after that, we're with them at least

100 hours with the training pilot or a senior Caravan pilot. And most of the time we -- it takes them more than 100 hours to get the training or the experience we like them to have, and we like them to go through winter with a training pilot.

Q. Is there -- I mean is there a checkride at the end of the COE or is it just --

A. Usually Fen rides with them --

Q. Okay.

A. -- to give them a blessing and send them on their way. By that time, everybody -- I shouldn't say everybody, all of the COE training pilots have ridden with them, give them evaluations which we look at, talk to them about, and then, yeah, Fen gives the last ride with them and sends them on their way.

Q. Okay. So, let's say I feel like -- I'm a new pilot and you guys feel like I'm ready. I'm not ready to leave the nest, and I tell you like more. How would you handle that?

A. We would continue doing it until, and the pilot has to be good with it.

Q. Okay. So you'd give me more hours if needed?

A. Um-hum.

Q. So how do you -- how does that translate into a new pilot that is signed off and, you know, stamped and I am not comfortable? Let's say I've been flying, you know, by myself, and the winter comes and there's weather that I'm not comfortable with. So whether it's a decision of going and looking and seeing, coming back or canceling the flight, are there ever times where you think, well, maybe we should go back up with this pilot? Have you ever run into that?

A. We've never done that before. If a pilot's uncomfortable with the flight, we can change his schedule and send him where the weather's better. Right after we give the blessing and send them on their way, we have a 15 rule for visibility and

ceiling that up through 15, like 1005 or 708 --

Q. Yeah.

A. -- somewhere in that neighborhood before we let them go. We usually keep them on that restriction until we're all comfortable with the pilot, myself and if they come and say, hey, I don't like this, you know, they don't go.

Q. Okay.

A. Most of the time, it's the other way around. I don't like it, and they don't go. So.

Q. Okay. That's good. Going back to the day of the accident, can you walk me through that day and what you were doing, and what your role was and how that day went for you?

A. Started the day. Pretty much it was a normal day. Come in, I come in early, get all the weather that I can find, go through the daily status report of the aircraft, make sure the aircraft we have assigned is airworthy and ready to go. Talk to dispatch. We confer first thing in the morning, you know, where's the weather bad and where's it good. What are we going to do today? Make a plan, and that's Chris most of the time. Make a plan with him, the weather's bad here. We're going to cancel now or we're going to delay it or watch it, whatever.

That particular day, there was some weather in the area I believe. I'd have to go back and look for sure, but some of the destinations down the coast were low, foggy, that kind of thing. So, westbound was pretty good and like in Chad's case, he went to Saint Michael and then onto Unalakleet. He got to Unalakleet. The weather was poor in the outlying villages. So, he sat there the day. At his departure time, the weather was flyable in Unalakleet and flyable in Nome. So, he was just launched direct.

Q. And then after you found out the aircraft was -- they lost contact, what did

you do then or how did --

A. I was working over here with our POI. At the time, they were doing some -- the POI was doing some checkrides with our courier pilot, Nick. We had some discussions over here, got the call that dispatched needed me. So I headed across there. They said that flight service had lost contact with our flight. The center called, I believe it was, and said, hey, this flight, we lost contact with them. At that time, on our tracker he was still showing active. It was -- he was 4117 at 3:18. He was still showing green on the tracker. So, at that time, I informed them that we hadn't had contact with him, but the tracker was showing green. We didn't -- we couldn't make contact with him. I think that was around 3:30.

Then we started our emergency plan you might say, started looking around, making radio calls. We had one flight that departed to the north or northwest and he wasn't able to get ahold of them. We had another flight that had departed to the northeast. That was Justin. He was staying at a lower level just to see if he could see something. The weather was poor. He reported getting ice. They called him back, told him to come back. The airplane going north of us was -- there was no issues. So he continued on. Also Sophia was in the area, and I didn't talk to her, but I saw that she was diverting due to -- I shouldn't say diverting. She was going a different route, supposedly going to hold because they were closing the airspace for Chad. And Justin came back. Sophia made it in.

Enough time had gone by we decided to send out King Air to go look, and we sent out a helicopter. A little bit after that, the helicopter encountered ice around Cape Nome, and he turned around and came back. The King Air couldn't see anything down through. So they made an approach I believe to White Mountain, got under the layer. They were still getting some ice on the windshield. So they couldn't

see much. And, I don't know, after 45 minutes, they came back.

Q. Okay.

A. And that was pretty much the day. We couldn't -- the Coast Guard came up. They couldn't find anything. Another C-130 did whatever they do up there. I think that was the Guard. By that time, it was dark and we had exhausted all of our avenues at that point. We suspended operations. The next day we sent out the two King Airs to go search and the one King Air was able to find them probably after an hour or so in the air. There was also the Coast Guard out looking around. So contrary to some things that I've heard, our King Air found the airplane and guided the Coast Guard to it.

Q. Okay. I didn't know that.

A. Yeah.

Q. Thanks for going through that with me. That will be it for my questions this round. Thank you.

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. Thank you. That was really helpful to hear. I'm just going to follow up on a couple of things you were chatting about to start with. I think you mentioned that -- you said Justin said he was picking ice and then you ordered him back. Is that the --

A. Yeah, I called him back.

Q. Do you know how far he got?

A. I think just past the cape.

Q. Okay.

A. Yeah, somewhere down in there.

Q. Do you recall what type of ice he said he was picking up or any of that?

A. To the best of my recollection, he just said he was getting ice, and so I just

told him to come back. We didn't go into any big discussion.

Q. Do you recall what altitude he was at?

A. Around 900 feet.

Q. I'm sorry. I stepped through a couple of things before I forget them. You mentioned near the beginning other than, you know, here and I think Kotzebue, correct, your flights are basically there and back, anything like that. Is that correct? Or several routes, but they end up back in Nome or Kotzebue by the end of the day?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. If unforecasted weather or a maintenance issue comes up say on a flight done four routes and you end up at White Mountain and you can't take off, what is the guidance for pilots or plan?

A. They call back in. They talk -- usually they talk to dispatch first, but they get ahold of me or whoever's available in the office and then maintenance. We come up with a plan. Most everything needs a mechanic to go look at. So, we'll load up an airplane, mechanic tools and head them out.

Q. Is there ever a time in the last 5, 10 years that you've gotten a call where it was because of weather and no other planes can there. So they have to stay overnight or anything like that?

A. I recall that happening in the past 10 years. I know it's happened to me a few times way back.

Q. If a situation like that happens, typically by the end of the day, you're able to get out or you're able to get the maintenance personnel out there to fix the --

A. Yeah, usually. If not, they would secure the airplane at the village and our agents take them in.

Q. Okay.

A. But it hasn't happened that I recall too recently.

Q. Okay. So, do the pilots that there's that option potentially that, you know, hey, if things are real bad and they can't get a plane in --

A. Right.

Q. -- they work with the village agents to get you something?

A. Yeah, they know.

Q. Okay. Is that part of the training or indoc or something like that?

A. It's talked about in indoc.

Q. Okay. I think you mentioned talking about weather with Starr, I think you mentioned the 502 kind of guidance there, looking at the departure and destination. When you're looking at things like that, is the en route weather ever considered, like what's in between?

A. Mid weather's always considered, the area forecasts, what we used.

Q. So are you typically using the text (ph.) of the area forecast? Are you using graphical or all of the above?

A. All the above, the National Weather Service site go through all of the graphical weather, the forecasts, area forecasts. They have the icing forecasts on there. It's accurate sometimes.

Q. As a meteorologist I understand your underlying comment there. I understand.

A. The most accurate is pilot reports, of course, yeah.

Q. As far as weather resources for you as a DO, what you're looking at, what things are you reviewing and maybe what things do you have up just to monitor?

A. Like I said, the National Weather Service site, it has a various amount of weather. It's actually quite good, not that it mattered in this particular incident or

accident. AWOS and weather cams are great when they're working. They're not very reliable like for instance, Koyuk (ph.), it's still out. It's been out most of the winter. Weather cams on and off.

Q. So for you as a DO and I would assume also for the pilots at Bering Air, when the weather equipment is out, it makes things much more challenging?

A. Well, much more challenging and you can't fly IFR without the weather reports. So it limits you. We've had to cancel Koyuk because it's just a regular one that's out a lot. So unless it's clear, the weather cams have been working there, but unless it's clear, you just can't go. Some of the weather cams or some of the weather AWOSs, they're not reporting over the internet but pilots can pick them up. So, we have to delay until another pilot can pick up the AWOS.

Q. Okay.

A. But, yeah. I mean the weather services are great if they are maintained.

Q. Going back, I apologize, just rattling round in my pea brain. As far as the 502 where they have that conversation with you and you mentioned, you know, inland weather is considered, what would be considered kind of a no-go as far as en route weather for one of your flights?

A. For the Caravans, if there's a forecast known, moderate, severe icing, we wouldn't launch into the air. Severe turbulence. Those are the biggest en route type of things. But they can divert around it if they encounter it. The biggest thing for area forecasts is to know what could be there.

Q. Okay. Is that something that you have kind of written down as the DO or is that just kind of internally known between you and the dispatcher and pilots as far as these are kind of the -- if we see these, it's an automatic no-go or is that written down on a form somewhere or anything?

A. I think on our form it just says like icing considered. I believe some are the moderate icing for Caravans is written down. I couldn't point my finger at it right now, but if I heard the question and get out our handy dandy iPads, it has the GOM, everything you need on it.

Q. Okay. As far as the icing chart from the Aviation Weather Unit which I believe is what you're speaking of, I know there's -- I think there's three colors on the chart there, and then there's a text on the right side, and every single one of those text categories have moderate. Is that confusing at all or how do you --

A. It can be. We use it mostly for advisory, and then pilot reports I mean are the most accurate.

Q. Okay. And, in a scenario where there's just not a lot of traffic coming in, there's a break of 3 hours before, you know, the next flight, whether it's one of yours or Alaska or somebody else coming in, how do you get other reports or is it sometimes it just has to be the flight in, after that 3 hour period of the first flight out of the day kind of a thing?

A. That's kind of what it has to be.

Q. Okay. Is there any process here for when you receive weather from a pilot and you're chatting amongst the different radio frequencies that you have here internally, but they're not on frequency with center and they didn't tell flight service just because they're chatting with you, is there a process for getting that PIREP and either you or the dispatcher have getting that over to flight service or center so they can get that into the system or --

A. We usually don't as the dispatcher or myself, but we do ask the pilots to make that pilot report.

Q. Okay. All right. I think that's got for now. Thank you. It's really helpful.

A. Sure.

BY MR. PECK:

Q. David, again my condolences obviously. Sorry we're here.

A. Me, too.

Q. Have we ever had a pilot come through that never gets off of COE?

A. Yes.

Q. And that's kind of a universal decision between the pilots and the chief pilot?

A. You know, I won't say that happens too often, but we have in the past just asked them or give them the option of being a copilot or if they want to find something else. It's pretty rare just remembering the past having to do that, maybe once.

Q. Did you know of anybody or yourself that might have had any concerns with Chad at any point in time?

A. Nobody voiced their concerns on the IOE. The COE, there's always evaluations and if there's information there that they need some more help with landings or use of flaps or whatever. Those things are concentrated on and until he gets a good evaluation from everybody that he's good to go. And Chad, I hadn't had anything from him or from anybody about him.

Q. On this particular day, the accident, were there really any concerns about the en route that were talked about in any of the prior discussions?

A. No. There wasn't any, there wasn't any really reports of icing and Nick and Craig, they had some light ice on their aircraft after their hour of flight out there, but it was just real light and nothing that would be of concern for flying.

Q. As kind of I guess the last man in that operational control if you're a level 1, I think we talked about it, but is there ever talks about the economic piece to this?

Like when I say that, you know, for instance previous because I handle operational control at times, and we give consideration to that. If we get all the way there and can't get in, we spend a lot of money and it's not very good chances. Is that even a consideration?

A. Our pilots are always given the notice, if they get in someplace they shouldn't, then they're more in trouble if they turn around and come back. It's just been one of our philosophies for a long time. You know, the economics -- Jim's always been real good about not pressing that, you know, on a go, no go decision. It's always there, of course, but when we're flying, he was a pilot forever. That part of it was never -- there was never any pressure for economics to go, you know. There might be some moaning and groaning later, but no pilots are pressured.

Q. So, how about your level though as the DO? Do you think that that's more pressure, pressure about the same?

A. On economics?

Q. Yeah.

A. I never push, I never push a pilot for any reason really. We have a civil discussion, and if he says no, then for whatever reason.

Q. Have you in the time you've been here which is a long time, have you had specifically a TKS airplane, a Caravan in this case, report that they -- that their TKS system was overwhelmed by ice or any of those or had questions from pilots or concerns from pilots about the icing, deice capability or any of that?

A. I can't say that we have. We've had them come back with a lot of ice in the unprotected areas, but the protected area by the TKS, if it's working properly does a pretty darn good job, yeah.

Q. How about, and I'm sure this has changed a little bit, maybe over the

years, but with ATC in particular, if a pilot were coming back up into Nome for instance and, you know, he's (indiscernible) and he says, hey, I've got some icing. Can we clear me for a fix for 2A? Are they in general pretty good about that stuff or what are you --

A. The center.

Q. Yeah.

A. Is that what you're asking about? If he asks for a priority, they'll give it to you. And then, of course, you have your -- if you declare an emergency, then you'd get it for sure but I've never had any problem with center working with the pilots out here.

Q. Okay. How about with like slow downs or are they mostly -- from your experience, what you've seen and heard, are they more in an advisory or are they more being directive as far as trying to get airplanes, you know, to slow down to a certain speed or are they just advising that, hey, the airport might be closed or whatever?

A. I haven't heard the transcripts on this one. So, I don't know whether it was advisory or telling him he had to. So.

Q. Just in general though. General Nome in the ATC world.

A. Well, they ask you to slow down so you don't have to hold or whatever but it's still up to the pilot to keep it at a speed that you need to. If you let them know that, hey, 140 is as slow as I can get, then they work with it.

Q. I don't have any more. Thank you.

MR. WECKWERTH: I have no clarifying or no questions.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Okay. I believe Brian did tell me but was this airplane a clean airplane as far as maintenance, the accident plane?

A. Yes.

Q. No write ups.

A. No.
Q. Any pertinent --
A. No.
Q. -- maintenance history?
A. No.
Q. Have you -- I think I'm probably just asking you to reiterate this, but have you encountered any mechanical type issues with the TKS system? I've never flown with one.
A. Have we encountered --
Q. A part that breaks or operational?
A. I've encountered it in the past, and it grounds the airplane. We've have to replace panels, replace pumps but, yeah, they're always taken care of before flight.
Q. Okay. Is there repeats?
A. No, they've been -- I'd have to look for sure, but they've been working quite well.
Q. Okay.
A. It's a far cry from the old boot as far as my experience goes.
Q. Has Bering Air had other accidents?
A. We've had other accidents, no -- we haven't hurt a passenger until this.
Q. When was the last accident for Bering?
A. I think it was gear up in Anchorage, a medevac.
Q. Okay.
A. I can tell the year. I'd have to look it up.
Q. Okay. Do you feel like it was more than 5 years ago or --
A. Right around 5. I'd have to look.

Q. Okay. Do you know if Chad was involved in any accidents or incidents in his history?

A. Not to my knowledge.

Q. Okay. Since the accident happened, has there been any discussions or changes concerning ops or safety policy? Has there been anything to -- I know it's still very recent, but has there been anything to shake out from this accident so far?

A. No.

Q. Okay.

A. We're waiting for you guys --

Q. Sure.

A. -- to figure it out. It would be nice to see the data card data and the fast box.

Q. Okay.

A. When do we get to look at that?

Q. It's Tim -- it's when it's finished and when the final report comes out.

A. Not in 30 days?

Q. I don't believe so. Don't quote me, but ask the IIC. He'll be the final --

A. Tim is the IIC?

Q. Correct.

A. What are you?

Q. I am an operational factors investigator.

A. Okay.

Q. So I'm a group chairman. So, I'm essentially working for him. I'm just kind of a piece of the pie, you know. We could make other groups like, you know, Paul will be meteorology. We'll have an air traffic control group. So my job really is everything

is kind of -- the best way to describe it is everything in front of the cockpit door that relates to the pilot --

A. I see.

Q. -- is kind of where I come in. So I will be looking at the --

A. Why didn't Paul sit in on all of it?

Q. Tim?

A. Or, Tim, excuse me.

Q. That's not what we do for groups, yeah.

A. Okay.

MS. BLUM: Do you have any more questions?

MR. SUFFERN: I've just got one or two.

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. I know we kind of discussed it earlier and you mentioned a couple of things, but are there weather resources that you currently use that could be improved? And if so, what would you like done with them?

A. What I would like to see is the FAA maintain the equipment they have. If they maintain that equipment, it gives us a lot of good weather information. I mean it's improved vastly over the time I've been here in the weather cams and AWOSes. If they would maintain them, it would be great.

Q. And then as far as pie in the sky and money not an issue, are there any weather resources that you dreamed up as a pilot or at Bering Air that you would love to see, like I'd love to have a weather radar every 15 yards, you know, or more weather cameras or --

A. Well, what we have is good but again, the maintenance is the issue. They

could make sure that there is an AWOS in every village because these GPS approaches make everything so much safer. But again, the equipment's all great except when it doesn't work and there has been 50 of them out and it seems like we've had 4 or 5 out in our region all winter long.

Q. That's all I've got. Thank you, David.

MR. PECK: I've got no further questions.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Is there anything that we didn't ask that you'd like to share with us or you wish that we would have asked?

A. No. Just want everybody to know that this operation, you know, cares as you can see, but we care. We've got a good team. Brian's a big part of that team. Fen, Russell, maintenance department. So this is real tough on people. This has been. No other questions. Everything's been asked. It's just a good company, and we'll continue to operate as a good company. We'd like to be able to find out what caused it.

Q. We're going to help you with that.

A. I hope so.

Q. Is there anybody else you think I should talk to that would help us in this investigation, other than the people you know we've already talked to or we're speaking to tomorrow?

A. It's good coverage.

Q. Okay. Well, we really appreciate you being here, and again, we're super sorry.

MS. BLUM: We'll conclude this interview at 2:28 p.m.

(Whereupon, at 2:28 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

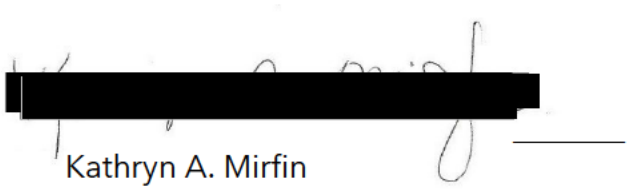
CERTIFICATE

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 David Olson
ACCIDENT NO.:	ANC25MA018
PLACE:	Nome, Alaska
DATE:	February 16, 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.



Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber

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: DAVID OLSON, Director of Operations

Bering Air

Nome, Alaska

Tuesday,
May 6, 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

ROBERT L. RICHMOND, ESQ.
Law Offices Richmond & Quinn
(On behalf of David Olsen)

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INTERVIEW

(1:59 p.m.)

DR. WOODS: Good afternoon. The date is May 6th, 2025, and the time is 1:59, Alaska time. My name is Sabrina Woods. I'm a Human Performance Investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board. I am here investigating accident number ANC25MA018 involving Bering Air Flight 445.

The NTSB is a federal agency charged with determining probable cause of transportation accidents and significant incidents. The NTSB is not a part of the Department of Transportation or the FAA. We have no regulatory or enforcement powers.

At this time, I'm going to have everybody here in the room, in the group, introduce themselves. So starting to my left with Katherine?

DR. WILSON: Katherine Wilson. I'm a Human Performance Investigator with the NTSB.

MS. BLUM: Starr Blum. Operational Factors with the NTSB.

MR. SORENSON: Tim Sorenson. Aviation Accident Investigator with the NTSB.

MR. SUFFERN: Paul Suffern. NTSB Meteorologist.

MR. PECK: Rob Peck. I'm actually FAA, but not here from an enforcement standpoint. I'll just help the NTSB team.

MR. WECKWORTH: Brian Weckworth, Director of Safety, Bering Air.

DR. WOODS: So that's everybody that is going to be asking you questions today. We will be using a digital recorder. After the interview, we will send that recording out for transcription to an independent company that does so for us and certifies the copy. We will review the transcript for like typographical errors, things of that sort. And a copy will also be given to you so that you can review it as well, before it goes forward to be a matter of public record in the docket.

We're here for you to share your insight and experiences. However, with that, just recognize that if you don't know the answer to a question, I don't know is a perfectly acceptable answer. We always try to be clear, but if we're not, please ask for clarity. We'll endeavor to do so. And if at any time, although we're going to go one at a time, usually two rounds, and we won't interrupt each other.

However, there's something that you remember that you want to add on to something that somebody asked earlier, we will keep it in timeline, but you can break the timeline as much as you would like. As always with this process, we afford you the opportunity to have one representative of your choosing. I see there's someone here. With that, who is the person that you would like to have serving with you as your representative?

MR. RICHMOND: It's Bob Richmond.

DR. WOODS: Okay. And Counsel, if you would please for the record, identify yourself, spelling your last name?

MR. OLSON: David Olson, O-L-S-O-N.

DR. WOODS: Actually, Counsel, if you would please?

MR. OLSON: Oh. That guy.

DR. WOODS: Yes. No worries.

MR. RICHMOND: What's that? Oh. I have to say my name?

DR. WOODS: Please?

MR. RICHMOND: Yes. I'm sorry. I was just checking -- Robert L. Richmond, R-I-C-H-M-O-N-D.

DR. WOODS: Thank you for that, Counsel.

MR. RICHMOND: Thank you for -- yes.

DR. WOODS: Thank you for being here. Just remember that this is a interview, not a deposition, so please refrain from answering on behalf of your client, or interrupting the interview process. However, that being said, if at any time you want to take a break and to confer, just let us know. Again, we'll go off record, make sure that happens.

MR. OLSON: Okay.

DR. WOODS: Okay? Any questions that you have?

MR. OLSON: No.

DR. WOODS: All right. Any questions for anybody else in the room? We're going to get started.

BY DR. WOODS:

Q. Okay then. I saw in your previous interview, you gave a little bit of the history of kind of how you came to work for Bering Air and that part, so I'm not going to

go back over that. However, I would like to delve a little bit more into what exactly does the director of ops do for Bering?

A. By regulation, I work with the Chief Pilot and director of maintenance, basically to run the company. Or run the department -- or the Aviation Department.

Q. So what does day-to-day look like?

A. Oh, morning's come in. Check weather, check aircraft availability, pilot steps. And move through the day.

Q. Who do you directly report to?

A. The owner, Jim Rowe.

Q. Okay. And how many people directly report to you?

A. Two directly report, but it's more of a work together type of thing.

Q. Overall, how do you feel your time is divided up in what things you're handling at any given time?

A. It's divided between the maintenance department, flight department, and operational control.

Q. Could you give me percentages of each of those?

A. No. It varies day-to-day.

Q. Is there any one that tends to demand more of your attention than the other?

A. Operational control on the poor weather days.

Q. What kind of meetings are you involved in? Are there any meetings that you host or regularly attend on behalf of the company?

A. Company meetings. Management meeting. And then, that's about the main one.

Q. How often does that take place?

A. Once a week.

Q. And who else is involved in that meeting with you?

A. The rest of the company management. Chief pilot, director of maintenance, director of safety, the ground crew operation, customer service manager.

Q. Do you have a regular standing meeting with the executive levels at all?

A. That's more or less the executive level.

Q. I meant higher, that meaning, like for instance, the owner or the vice president?

A. He's in on that meeting.

Q. Oh. Are all of the program directors, are they all considered equals in terms of management, supervision and running of the company?

A. Yes.

Q. How often do you interact with your FAA POI?

A. He's out here at least once a month. And by phone, fairly regular.

Q. What does your fairly regular look like? Because it might be different for me.

A. Depends what we have going on at the time. Once a week, twice a week. Just depends.

Q. And you said that the POI is out here --

A. Once a month.

Q. -- once a month? Okay. Are you involved at all in the hiring for a pilot for this company?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Can you explain your role, please, in that process?

A. We have a board, you might call it, that evaluates the pilots. Then we call them in. If we all agree, the two we might want to hire, we call them in. Sit down and have an interview. Discuss amongst ourselves whether we want them or not. And yes, basically hire them, making sure everybody wants them. If any one person doesn't want the person, we don't hire them.

Q. What sorts of things are green flags for you, that you look for in a pilot to potentially hire?

A. It's pretty broad.

Q. Give me your top five.

A. If we want to hire somebody, they need to -- we like to see them have Alaska time. If it's a copilot, someone who can get along with fellow workers. That's a big one. Yes, that's the main qualities, at this point. At that point.

Q. What about personalities or behavior traits?

A. Yes, that's what I mean. Getting along with everybody. They have to make everybody else's day better. Or we don't really need them in the company.

Q. What are some red flags for you when considering a pilot?

A. FAA violations. I don't know what I'd call the bad personalities. Disagreeing. Too cavalier.

DR. WOODS: I'm going to wait for a moment.

MR. OLSON: Yeah. Might be waiting -- I think they're running up that helicopter.

MR. PECK: Is that one of the Hueys? Is that the Huey?

MR. OLSON: Yes. That's a Huey.

MR. SORENSON: That's a Vietnam era helicopter.

DR. WOODS: Continuing on.

MR. PECK: It's sitting in the hanger, actually, close to the hanger, so.

BY DR. WOODS:

Q. What do you look for in a pilot's approach to aviation safety?

A. They have to be very safety conscious.

Q. What does that look like?

A. They need to take care of the airplane. Pay attention to the regulations. Pay attention to weather. Work with their coworkers. Cooperative.

Q. When a new pilot comes in, is that something that you yourself are working with that individual on? Or are there other people designated to do that?

A. I don't work with them individually so much anymore. So they have a director of training that does the basics. Chief pilot does a lot of work with them, as do all dressed pilots.

Q. Can you give me a high-level overview of what you expect from your pilots in their approach to flight planning and executing a flight?

A. They need to look at the weather, plan their flight accordingly, plan fuel, plan the load, work with dispatch, and if it's necessary work with us.

Q. What would be some reasons why they would need to work with you?

A. If the weather is below standard minimum. If the weather's below 500 and 2, they talk to us about it. We need to release the flight. If there's icing conditions, we need to review the flight and release it.

Q. Is it acceptable for a pilot to come and tell you that, hey, I don't think I want to take this flight, and then list the reasons?

A. Yes. If he doesn't want to go find the pen.

Q. You've never -- I guess what if you feel that the reasons that they have are not valid, or just not as bad as they're making it out to be?

A. We may discuss it, but if he does not want the flight, he or she doesn't want the flight, then it's a no go.

Q. Has that happened before?

A. Yes.

Q. Does anything after the fact happen, with regards to the pilot?

A. No. We might review it, discuss things, but it's just education.

Q. So in the we in that scenario, that's you and the pilot? Or you and somebody else?

A. Me and the pilot, or the Chief Pilot and the pilot, depending on the situation.

Q. What role does dispatch play in whether or not a flight is accepted?

A. Again, if the weather is above the 500 and 2 level or there's no icing involved, dispatch can release it to fly.

Q. What if there's a disagreement between dispatch and the pilot? Who has authority there?

A. Then we talk it out. Either work out what the problem is, or don't do the flight.

Q. And to clarify by we do you mean your capacity as OC at that point?

A. Yes, OC. Yes.

Q. Out of the three, OC, dispatch, and the pilot, I guess, whose opinion is weighted more? Or where are the weights of opinions in that?

A. It's all equal. Unless it's something beyond the other two. Then I probably weigh more.

Q. And that's, again, you serving in the capacity of OC.

A. Yes. OC.

Q. Okay. Has there ever been a situation where it was even beyond you and your capacity as OC, that you had to take it maybe to your executive leadership?

A. Not too often. No.

Q. But there has been in the past?

A. I can't recall any, actually.

Q. In your time here, and you've been here for a while, how would you describe, or what is your impression of, Bering Air's approach to safety?

A. Top of the line.

Q. What makes it top of the line?

A. Well we had a good record until this particular accident. We had a very good record.

Q. So does that mean that it's safe because there simply have been no prior accidents?

A. No. It's safe because of our approach every day to the flights that we're doing. These procedures have all been followed since, well, since I came to work here. They've evolved over the years. And continue to evolve.

Q. I guess what I'm trying to get at is, what are those procedures for someone who would not know? Who's not been here and not experienced it?

A. We can go to the manual and go through them all.

Q. Can you give me a high-level summary?

A. Of the procedures?

Q. Of what makes for a safe approach.

A. Positive attitudes, following the regulations, following our procedures, Bering Air's procedures. And doing it to the highest level of safety we can.

Q. Do you feel that's changed at all since the accident?

A. I don't feel it's changed. I feel that we have put more of what we do into procedure, written procedure.

Q. Was it not in written procedure prior to the accident?

A. Not as thorough written procedure.

Q. If it wasn't as thorough prior to, let's say I'm a new pilot coming in off the street. Then how do I learn about what's expected and how things should be done?

A. We basically taught it. Instructors, Chief Pilot, or myself.

Q. How would you define the safety culture here at Bering Air?

A. Like, very good. Is that what you mean? Or?

Q. Again, it's more about what does good look like to you.

A. Just positive attitudes, working with each other. If there's a problem, they're able to come to management and discuss it. We discuss it, change things we need to, or work with people so they know how to do things better.

Q. And does that happen? If there's a problem, do people --

A. Yes.

Q. -- bring it to you?

A. Yes.

Q. How do people usually bring it to you?

A. Well, nowadays they bring it to us through the safety program. We have the Baldwin Safety Program. Or they walk to the door and start talking.

Q. And does that happen often? Do you feel like people are comfortable doing that?

A. Very.

Q. Okay.

A. We've got a big chair in there for them to sit on.

Q. Oh, really comfortable doing that?

A. Maybe a little too.

Q. What do you feel your role is in encouraging that positive safety culture?

A. Just allowing people to have access to us. Being able to talk out whatever they need to talk out. If they don't feel comfortable with me, they can talk to Chief Pilot. Or the president sits in our office. Or they can talk to all three of us. It's pretty open.

Q. What do you feel that a pilot's role is in keeping up with that positive safety culture?

A. To bring anything they feel is not safe to our attention, which they do. And I hope they feel that we do something about it when they bring it to our attention.

Q. What quality control measures are in place for pilot performance?

A. Not sure what you mean.

Q. How do you know that the same person that you hired, and bought off on, is still that same person?

A. We perform, well, there's training, for sure. Every year, or more often if needed. Flight wise, any of the training pilots, safety pilot, or any pilot can ride along, evaluate, which we do on occasion, if necessary.

Q. Have you ever had a situation where you were concerned about a pilot and their behaviors and/or performance?

A. Yes.

Q. Can you give me a high-level overview of what happens next? How do you take care of it?

A. Well, I sit down and have a long discussion. If it's flight related, we have training pilots fly with them until they're satisfied. And then we have other pilots fly with them until everybody's satisfied. And then if that doesn't work, we kind of cordially allow them to leave.

Q. What is your expectation for a pilot's approach to weather?

A. They need to check the weather prior to every flight. During the flight. Need to be prepared for the weather situation. Cold weather, warm weather. Just be very knowledgeable and know what they're doing.

Q. How well did you know Chad?

A. We weren't close. We were familiar with him.

Q. You say we, but I'm just asking --

A. Okay.

Q. -- about you.

A. Familiar with him.

Q. Can you tell me about your first impressions?

A. He started out with us as a mechanic and worked his way up. He worked hard. Learned the profession. Did fairly well until this point.

Q. What about his approach to aviation safety and how he prepared for his flights?

A. He seemed prepared. He was conservative. Seemed, yes. He was always ready to go when he needed to. We'd had discussions over his tenure, and they were always positive. Discussions about the weather and loads and whatever.

Q. Had you ever flown with him?

A. I have not flown with him.

Q. Were any concerns about his performance ever brought to your attention?

A. No.

Q. How would you rate his performance as compared to the other pilots, in terms of, like, average, below-average, above-average?

A. He was on par with all the rest in his class.

Q. Are you aware of how well he got along with the other pilots?

A. He got along fine. I never had any poor comments about it.

Q. What about from other than pilots, like, for instance, dispatcher, loaders, or maintenance, feedback from customers?

A. No complaints.

Q. Did -- I know you said you have the big chair in your office, Chad ever sit in that chair?

A. He was there a few times. Never that I had to call him in. He came up on his own. Talked over flights.

Q. Was there any sort of, I guess, trend to what he would want to talk about?

A. No. It was like all of them. Depended on the day, loads or weather. Routes.

Q. Did he ever bring up a specific concern that he wanted addressed or resolved right now?

A. No.

Q. And if I heard you correctly, you said you -- did you ever call him in to have those kinds of conversations?

A. I did not have to call him in. He came in on his own and we talked.

Q. And the reason I ask, I'm going down this line of questioning, is because we have it that -- data that indicates that Chad was, on occasion, concerned about loads and weights regarding his aircraft. Are you aware of that?

A. He talked about them.

Q. I guess, what were his concerns, then? What did he talk about?

A. Just, you know, I don't remember any specifics, but when he'd come in, he'd talk over loads and weather. Again, I don't remember any specifics on what he asked.

Q. You didn't know what he wanted to get out of that conversation?

A. No. Not exactly.

Q. Okay.

A. Just confirming what he was doing, making sure it was right.

Q. Do you happen to remember if he ever cancelled a flight for cause?

A. He, again, I can't say specifically, but I know he held for weather. We'd mutually agreed on not going at times, for weather.

Q. Did he ever submit a safety report?

A. I'd have to look. I don't know. I don't recall any specifics.

Q. Outside of yourself, do you happen to know if anyone else, like, for instance, the Chief Pilot, or even higher than you, has had to call him in to talk about issues?

A. I don't know. I don't think so. Not while I was there, anyway.

Q. So with the new rule that's come -- switching to, sorry, switching subjects. New rule has come from the FAA for the installation of Part 5, SMS, Safety Management Systems for Part 135 operations. What is your understanding of what that SMS is going to look like for Bering Air?

A. I'm not sure.

Q. What has been your involvement up to this point?

A. We've integrated the -- we've gone through one program, and out of that one into the new Baldwin program. And as far as -- I haven't researched enough yet for the new, whatever's coming out in the future. Ryan's been working on that.

Q. And to clarify, the prior program evolving into the Baldwin program, that is your reporting system, correct?

A. OMNI SMS was the first one.

Q. But that's a reporting system. Is that accurate?

A. It's a safety reporting system.

Q. Is there anything else about SMS that you have been made aware of since the announcing of the new rule?

A. That it's coming.

DR. WILSON: Okay. I think that's all the questions I have for this round. Moving it along, you still doing okay? It's been about 30 minutes.

MR. OLSON: I'm good.

DR. WOODS: Okay.

DR. WILSON: Thanks. I don't have too many, and I might jump around a little bit. I read through your previous interview, and then just also had some follow-ups of things that Sabrina has asked.

BY DR. WILSON:

Q. And I think you answered this, but you're not aware if Chad was ever called in to the Chief Pilot's office or anything else to talk about concerns over him refusing loads, or maybe being, taking a more conservative approach to his flying?

A. People are never called in because they won't take a load, or -- we might discuss it, with how they came up with the number they came up with. But if they say this is the number, then we go with it.

Q. Is that something that's done, like, on the spot? Or is that when they get back from their flight?

A. Usually on the spot, because if they're concerned about it, it's usually before the flight so they talk about it.

Q. You mentioned that you and Chad had mutually agreed to cancel flights based on weather. Was there ever a time that you recall where you didn't agree? Chad wanted to cancel, and you thought that it would have been safe to still proceed with the flight?

A. I don't remember that being the case. But again, when the pilot isn't comfortable with it, then that's where it ends.

Q. Okay. Have you, I guess, is there a procedure or some kind of process? So if there is a concern, a disciplinary concern with a pilot, is there a formal process for writing up that pilot and something that would go into their personnel record?

A. If it gets serious enough, usually we can discuss about, with the meeting between the pilot, Chief Pilot, and whoever else needs to sit in on it.

Q. Okay. So there would be no formal documentation if something like that happened?

A. There is a procedure for it. I think the first one's verbal, and then we make note of it, just so we can have something follow up on.

Q. Okay. And was Chad, did Chad ever start --

A. No. No.

Q. -- that process for anything? Okay. Sabrina asked you about Bering Air's approach to safety, given your long standing here. What have you seen that's changed over the years, in terms of Bering Air's approach to safety?

A. It's always been a safe approach. Jim started the company. I came along five years after. And as he directed it, we made his policies and procedures work. It

was a small company then, so it was more pilots and more personnel showed up. Then procedures got written down, standardized. A lot of it was done. Again, it wasn't written out as extensively as it is now. But it was done pretty much the same.

Q. With the new Part 5 requirements for SMS, how do you think that's going to benefit Bering Air? What do you see as the positives of that?

A. I don't think it's going to change a whole lot. It's going to change, maybe the procedures and the way we do it. But I think our safety culture has been good enough that, I don't know, maybe it will enhance it, but I probably won't be here to see it.

Q. Okay. Going back to the day of the accident, you were OC that day?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. What were your -- I know that, in your previous interview, you had said that Chad was some there was some weather delays.

A. Yes.

Q. What conversations did you have with him throughout the day?

A. Actually, once he dispatched from here, I had no contact with him.

Q. Okay. Are you aware if he had discussions with dispatch, or anyone else, about wanting to depart early to beat the weather?

A. He did -- well, I discussed it with dispatch here, about departing early, which I believe he did.

Q. Was he wanting to depart earlier than the flight did depart?

A. I know they wanted to depart early from Unalakleet, passenger request to meet the jet here, because Anchorage flights to Unalakleet canceled that day.

Q. And did that factor in to any of the decisions?

A. No.

Q. Okay. Do you know about how early it did depart?

A. No. I'd have to look back.

Q. Okay. Did the dispatcher communicate any concerns that Chad had to you about the weather?

A. No. No.

Q. You mentioned also, in the previous interview, that the company had received a phone call from flight service, I believe, that they had lost contact with Chad's aircraft. And you also mentioned that on the Spidertracks he was still showing green?

A. On the Honeywell.

Q. Oh, on Honeywell. Okay.

A. Not Spidertracks.

Q. Okay. Were you using Spidertracks that day, also?

A. No.

Q. Oh, no.

A. Spidertracks is just with the helicopters.

Q. Oh, okay. All right.

A. It's a Honeywell flight tracker.

Q. All right. And is there different refresh rates on that? Like, can you, you know --

A. It's supposed to be five minutes.

Q. Okay. Is there an option, do you know, for a more frequent ping?

A Yes.

Q. Okay.

A. It's used for OAS type, or --

Q. And you all implemented an emergency response plan. How do you think that worked?

A. I think it worked okay. We weren't able to -- well, we did launch a King Air to go take a look, but the weather was such that he couldn't see anything, so we brought him back.

Q. Do you have a manual or an emergency response plan imprinted?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. And you all followed that?

A. To the best of our ability.

Q. Okay. Is there any promotion potential for pilots? Or what is the promotion potential here?

A. Moving up to larger aircraft, different aircraft. That would be the promotion.

Q. Okay.

A. Some people see it as a promotion. Others don't.

Q. Okay. Is that something that -- do pilots put in for a promotion? Or do they, is that something that gets recommended?

A. If we need pilots for additional aircraft, we may ask for a dead, if you want to call it that. Most of the pilots come in through the open door, and it's one of the topics. When can I move to another airplane?

Q. There's been several changes since the accident. The new flight release program, and the flight into known icing change. Who was a part of the decision making process for using, I guess, for both of those changes?

A. Ben Rowe did the writing for it. Craig Kenmonth had a lot of input, of course. And then, just our general input for the management team.

Q. Okay. Were any pilots involved in --

A. It was discussed with them.

Q. Did they have any feedback that you recall, what were their thoughts were on that?

A. Some good and some bad. Just adds another layer of whatever you want to call it. Red tape, if you want to put it that way. But it just consolidates, kind of, what we all, what we were doing on a piece of paper.

Q. What are your thoughts on that? Do you see a benefit to that?

A. There's some benefit to it. Especially if there's not just one person doing the OC work.

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

MR. OLSON: Okay.

DR. WOODS: Starr?

DR. WILSON: Guys, I apologize. I need to take a restroom break.

DR. WOODS: Okay, no worries. We can go off record at 2:40 Alaska time.

(Off the record.)

(On the record.)

DR. WOODS: We are back on the record at 2:45, Alaska.

MS. BLUM: Hi, David.

MR. OLSON: Hey.

MS. BLUM: It's good to see you again.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Prior to the accident, what was your interpretation of the max gross takeoff weight in flight into known icing?

A. The industry standard was the 9062, the Payload Extender weight.

Q. Was Craig Kenmonth, the POI, was he in agreement with that, prior to the accident?

A. There wasn't any disagreement, put it that way.

Q. Yes. We're trying to look into that, between the STC, the FAA, all of that, the confusion about it. And then, of course, as the investigations continued, we've found that more than one flight was overweight. What procedures would you say -- with the procedures that you had in place before the accident, how do you think that this occurred?

A. What occurred?

Q. That over overweight flights have happened? Like, where do you think the breakdown was where, you know, the rules that you had in place prior, and the training, and your procedures, but we're finding overweight flights. I'm just asking in your opinion, as the Director of Operations, how did that happen? How did we get there?

A. I don't want to speculate on it, I guess. I don't know that he was overweight. You're saying he is, but I haven't seen his iPad where the weights were written down.

Q. Okay. Have there been any changes or procedures regarding that, since the accident, for anything about the weight? Besides the confusion about flying into known icing, are there any other changes that you have planned or have occurred since the accident regarding flying overweight?

A. There's never been a procedure to fly overweight.

Q. Okay. So is the pilot part of the process of building the load for a flight? Is he a part in -- he or she, sorry -- are they a part in saying what the load is, helping them determine the load?

A. They determine their empty weight. They determine what the load is. They determine their fuel weight. Their fuel weight. Yes, depends on, you know, weather and alternates. And once they get the fuel, they can you -- or they meet for the flight. And the operation away to the airplane, then they come up with a load available, which is given to dispatch, and that's how the cargo builds a load.

Q. Okay. Have you been back to Unalakleet since the accident?

A. I have not.

Q. How often does -- before or after the accident, how often has management gone out to Kotzebue or Unalakleet to just check in?

A. Fenn's (ph.) usually the one that does that type of travel. I couldn't tell you how regular.

Q. Do you know if Fenn's been to Unalakleet since the accident?

A. I'm not sure if he's been to Unalakleet. Russell, the president's, been down there. Director of Maintenance has --

Q. Okay.

A. -- been down.

Q. Is that Ben, if I remember right?

A. Ben Koelsch. Yes.

Q. Okay. So after talking to the pilots, again, it seems like, you know, they haven't had to get TKS fluid in Kotzebue, or Unalakleet. The weather and the winters have been such that taking off out of Nome has been enough. They haven't had to request it. But also, during the course of this investigation, we found that the TKS fluid wasn't readily available to the pilots in Unalakleet. Were you aware of that?

A. No. There's fluid down there.

Q. Yes, it was found that there wasn't a pump.

A. I heard that, recently.

Q. Yes. And also, the wrong color fluid in one with the pump. Possibly looks like glycol. So I was just curious what actions have you guys taken to rectify that since then?

A. Well, they made sure that the TKS was labeled. There should be a pump there. Operational pump.

Q. How do you know if it happened or not?

A. I think Russell took it down, but I could verify that.

MS. BLUM: Okay. I'm going to pause there. Those are good questions for now. Tim?

BY MR. SORENSON:

Q. How would you characterize your, Bering Air's and your personal working relationship with the FAA, specifically POI Inspector Kenmouth?

A. I don't know. It's a professional relationship. Craig has

-- are you talking about our current FAA?

Q. Yes.

A. When he came aboard, he, a lot more thorough than previous ones had been. That he came, you know, somewhat after COVID, where there was no contact with the FAA. He's been here on a regular basis. We've had a few disagreements, but I think everybody does with the FAA. And we've worked out new policies, different procedures for different things, training, in particular. He's been real thorough, and even through our disagreements. Been good to work with.

Q. Does any particular situation come to mind, a particular example that was reasonable that you guys were able to work through a disagreement, what that might have been?

A. The training, policy with flight safety. That was one of the big ones?

Q. What was, I'm sorry, what was the nature of?

A. He just wanted us to use flight safety for training, more than our homegrown type. So there was some disagreements along the way that all got worked out, enroute. You know revamped the pilot training program. Got through several changes, and it's worked.

Q. All right. Specifically with respect to the AeroAcoustics STC, and in a TKS equipped airplane, you said that you had had, if I understood correctly, you'd had discussions with him about what the allowable gross weight for the 208B should be. Is that correct?

A. After the accident?

Q. No. Before.

A. We didn't have any discussions before.

Q. Okay. So there was no guidance provided by him, no conversations that you're aware of?

A. On the STC?

Q. Right, on --

A. None, that I know of.

Q. Okay. On, specifically, on what the legal allowable maximum gross takeoff weight --

A. It was all, I'm sure you guys have all read it. It's pretty vague. And we had to get to the manufacturer to come up with an explanation of what it actually is.

Q. Okay. So is it correct then that your conversations with the FAA regarding the gross weight for the 208B, those took place after the accident?

A. With the icing?

Q. Right, right. Icing versus no icing.

A. As far as I know.

Q. Okay. Okay. Fair enough. You had said earlier, if I understood you correctly, that the maximum gross weight of 9,062 pounds was an industry standard. How -- I'm sorry. Go ahead.

A. Yes. Maybe it's too broad a term, but as far as we know, everybody was using that for the gross weight when they had the STC installed in the aircraft.

Q. And when you say as far as you know, had you had conversations with other operators or?

A. Most of those conversations were after the accident.

Q. Okay. They expressed to you that they were using 9,062?

A. Well that's what I heard. Nobody really called us and said, hey, I was using this.

Q. Okay. Okay. With the exception of the gross weight limitations for the 208, are there any other procedures, policies, standard operating procedures that have changed with respect to how you operate the airplane?

A. There are.

Q. Okay. Such as?

A. Such as, if there's a forecast, I assume, in our area or route of flight, that we have to, before we enter the icing conditions, be it the icing weight of 8,807.

Q. Okay.

A. And if we get a pilot report with negative ice, then that negates that. We can dispatch with full gross weight.

MR. SORENSON: Okay. All right. That's all I have for now, Sabrina.

DR. WOODS: Okay. Paul?

MR. SUFFERN: Thanks, Sabrina.

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. I'll just lead off of where Tim just was there, with that new policy about flying into known icing conditions. Have there been any challenges that you have experienced due to that?

A. Yes. There's always challenges with new policies or procedures. On a day like today, if they forecast icing, it's, quite obviously, that quite obvious there's none, but we still have to, supposedly have to depart with the 8,807 until we get a negative icing report. It's one of the biggest challenges.

Q. Okay. And as far as that, I follow that with, I guess, two questions, one on the PIREP side. Have you had any challenges in pilots getting into the system --

A. Yes.

Q. -- to help.

A. ATCs had some issues on their end, where some of the pilot reports don't get disseminated for 45 minutes or so. Which, if we're using -- our procedures are the pilot report has to be within an hour to use it for negative ice. So if that thing gets in the system, doesn't come out, there only 15 minutes of the usable pilot report. So we're trying to work through that challenge.

Q. Do you, or have you heard from any of the pilots, if that's been a specific to a particular air traffic, whether it's flight service or Anchorage site?

A. It's Air Traffic Control.

Q. So Anchorage site?

A. Anchorage Center, yes.

Q. And then speaking, I guess, to the other side of the coin there, the icing forecasts, have they been realistic?

A. They're about 50%, maybe.

Q. So as far as flying into known icing is concerned, and your background with the pilot, experience and things, what is the most helpful way to know flying into known icing for you, as a pilot?

A. I guess I'm not really sure what you're asking.

Q. So I'm trying to understand. I mean, I know the FAA has a definition or verbiage on flight into known icing, and I'm just trying to understand from your perspective, if that's what you've seen, as you're, in your pilot experience, you know, whether it's just, if there's a forecast out there, do you consider that flying into unknown icing? Does it have to be a PIREP or a plane has actually gone through that icing and report back?

A. Are you talking about our procedures now?

Q. No. I'm talking about the FAA kind of verbiage on flying into known icing. Not your procedures in particular, no. I'm talking, just simply flying into known icing and if they --

A. Yes, I can't recite them exactly, but it's known icing, yes, when you can expect. The FAA forecasters are, I think, exceedingly, not sure which way you'd call it, conservative. They think there's a chance, they stick it out there. And I'm sure they have their measurements or where the freezing level is or where the cloud layer might be.

But when they put it out on a clear day, we have been able to get that removed by a lot of pilot reports. But that's like a three-hour, six-hour window. So the FAA is, forecast are, like I said, maybe 50/50.

Q. Okay, and as far as I think in the FAA verbiage, it has the term visible moisture somewhere in there.

A. Correct.

Q. As a pilot, or having operational control, what is visible moisture to you?

A. Clouds, usually. Rain.

Q. So going with that terminology, and things, do you think flying into known icing is something that you can determine from the ground, or do you feel like most useful if you have a report of an actual --

A. You can determine it from the ground if it's blue skies, or you have a 7,000-foot ceiling. As far as knowing what it's like in the clouds, then the pilot report's your best way of knowing.

Q. Okay. And then, I guess my last question is, is there anything you do differently weather wise since the accident, whether that's something you check differently, or something you encourage others to do?

A. The AAWU icing forecast, that lives on our computer now. That's what determines whether we take off at a 8,807 or the full gross.

MR. SUFFERN: I think that's all I've got for now.

DR. WOODS: All right. Rob?

MR. PECK: You still good? You need a break or anything?

MR. OLSON: Yes. I'm fine.

BY MR. PECK:

Q. So I'm going to continue with where it is. I mean, we have the FTC, which says known ice. Textron just says no known or forecast icing, right? What is the difference in your world, when you think about it, between known icing or known/forecast icing?

A. Forecast is what the, yes, the forecasters come up with, their best idea. And known icing is when we get a pilot report saying there's ice, 8,000 feet.

Q. Who -- was it you internally, as in Bering Air or was it FAA influenced by your POI or CMT that came up with the one-hour that is causing that frustration?

A. That was what was determined through our POI, that the pilot report's good for an hour. Is that what you're talking about?

Q. I guess yes.

A. Okay.

Q. You've been here for a long time, to say the least, right?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q. With your experience over that period of time, the CMT that currently has oversight of you with the FAA, Craig and company.

A. FSDO?

Q. Yeah, the FSDO.

A. Okay.

Q. Or the CMT. How would you compare them to past? Are they doing good, bad, indifferent, same? What's your thoughts on that?

A. Oh, there's more oversight. They're doing okay for what the FAA has to do.

Q. Is that both pre- and post-accident? Or just post-accident? Or?

A. I think there's, you know, that knee-jerk reaction that makes things a little more difficult than it needs to be, but that's all part of it. And we deal with it.

Q. Prior to the accident, did you feel that their oversight was adequate or not, from your perspective?

A. Their oversight was more than adequate.

Q. I'm going to skip on you now and kind of go back over where this question started. But with Chad, do you think he was a more conservative, or a less conservative, or right in the middle with, you know, kind of obvious with his level of experience?

A. He was just right there with what we figured he should be.

Q. Sure.

A. Yes.

Q. Okay.

A. I mean, he'd done just fine up to that point.

Q. So you and I both know that there's kind of a progress in a pilot's world, in general, right, where they first come in and they're have a pretty conservative approach and they kind of get more experience.

And then that kind of keeps going up until at some point they hit a certain event and then, oops, wait, check, right? So, and then that lots of times, kind of sets, that pilot's level, if you will, of risk or whatever you want to say at that point. So what would you say Bering Air's approach is, and specifically yours, into mentoring those pilots as they're here at Bering Air to help alleviate those?

A. Well, in the beginning, when they're first checked out, we fly with them for a hundred hours and one of their senior pilots. For a hundred hours, we work with

them until all the pilots agree that they're good to go, it's safe to go. After that, there are occasional rides by the training pilot or Chief Pilot. Again, there's an open-door policy. If they've got any issues, they can come and talk to us. I think it's a pretty good system. It has been.

Q. And would you say that that is an approach that all of your people that are in that mentoring position take?

A. I think so.

Q. When you are operating in the capacity of what you guys call OC --

A. Okay.

Q. -- in just as your capacity as a DO in general, what do you believe, if any, that ensuring flights are going out within weight limits is part of that. Or is it?

A. Well, we've never condoned going overweight. We don't -- we didn't oversee every flight and every load. It was up to the pilot to determine his fuel load and weight. It would get audited occasionally, if necessary. But, yes.

Q. Do you think that is part of the operational control function, that you should and kind of be in your privy, if you will? Or not? In other words, in your concern over the flights, as operational control? Does that make sense?

A. No.

Q. From an operational control standpoint, is it part of that operational control to try to ensure that flights are going out within weight standards? Or is that just a pilot?

A. No. That's part of our -- but not every flight is looked at every day.

Q. Post-accident, what is the -- what have you done differently while you're in that OC job, other than checking the box because we have the extra paperwork we were, you know, talked about. But is there anything else that you have brought into that?

A. The new flight SMS system has brought, kind of, everything we did in our heads, you might say, onto this piece of paper, where it's all very concise. We can look at their fuel load, their TKS load, equipment load. And then see what their load available is. We can see what their -- what they depart with, as far as the load. So now it's monitored very close.

Q. And this is my last question. I'm kind of switching gears again, going back to the TKS down in Unalakleet. You said you're pretty sure there's a pump down there.

A. Mm-hmm.

Q. And my question is how are they going to get a 55-gallon barrel to the aircraft?

A. That has been provided, too, as far as I understand, or it will be. But we have a barrel roller. Put the pump on, and either pull it or, I don't think it's motorized, but just pull it out to the, kind of the --

Q. So similar to the one you have here?

A. Yes, no. Exactly like the one we have here.

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

MR. WECKWORTH: I don't have any questions, clarifying.

BY DR. WOODS:

Q. David, do you -- Rob actually talked about mentoring, and kind of what your role is and the others, I think, that are commensurate with you. But I want to know about, within the, I guess, the pilot hierarchy themselves, is there a different hierarchical structure, or is everybody the same? Or do you have like junior and senior position pilots, or team leads, or anything like that?

A. I don't consider it a hierarchy but, of course, there's the senior pilots, who've been here longer. And I believe they all work with the younger pilots and mentoring them along the way. But as far as the hierarchy, they're pretty much all the same. You know, there's the older pilots that are just more experienced and can share their knowledge with the new guys.

Q. But is, like, is the word senior pilot, is that a title at all, or are you just --

A. No, no.

Q. -- they're senior because they've been here longer?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Is there a difference in pay structure for how long you've been here --

A. Yes.

Q. -- versus you being new?

A. Yes, yes.

Q. And is that simply based on longevity?

A. Yes. Yes.

Q. Or is it performance?

A. Yes. Longevity.

Q. Okay. So is there anything else that goes into determining?

A. Maybe the -- or, I shouldn't same maybe. The amount of aircraft they're in. They get a stipend, bonus, whatever you want to call it.

Q. What determines if a pilot can move aircraft (ph.)?

A. If, I mean, he's evaluated. If the other pilots agree to it. If the Chief Pilot, of course, and the management group all think he's a candidate to move to another aircraft, then we do it. Usually they have to be in an aircraft for at least two years before we move them up.

DR. WOODS: I think that's all the questions I have. That is the end of Round -- well, I guess I started the beginning of Round 2. So do you -- still good? Do you need a break?

MR. OLSON: I'm good.

DR. WOODS: Okay. Then I'll keep moving on.

DR. WILSON: I only have one question.

MR. OLSON: Okay.

BY DR. WILSON:

Q. I know you're retiring soon, but if you had the keys to the kingdom, what would be the one thing that you'd want to see changed at Bering Air?

A. I don't have anything specific. It's evolved over the past 45 years and can continue to evolve. So it's worked out well, continues to work well.

DR. WILSON: Thank you.

DR. WOODS: Starr?

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Yes. It's funny because I was just going to ask, basically, the same question, but add on to it. You have been here 40 years, 40 plus, you guys, talking to all of you, I know how much you care and you weren't expecting to expand, and be like the only operator out here, as quickly, as rapidly, as that's happened.

And so as you pass the baton to Fenn, it's going to be Fenn next, right? I mean on your way out, I was just going to ask for the same thing. Whether it's more FAA oversight, or something different? Or if it's an SMS program or operational changes. I know you want the best, and to be, continue to be, the quote unquote Gold Star, right? Up here? What? What would you tell Fenn that you think needs to happen, if anything, as you as you leave this legacy behind?

A. He's been working with me for the past seven years. I think most of the mentoring has been done.

Q. Okay.

A. New, younger blood. I'm sure it will be, go to bigger, better things.

MS. BLUM: Okay. Thank you, David. Tim?

BY MR. SORENSON:

Q. Just a few. Just for my benefit, the difference in the gross take-off weights, icing, not icing, 90, you know, it's 255 pounds.

A. Right.

Q. Not an insignificant amount, but an incremental increase. But how big an impact on your operation does that have?

A. I don't have -- are you talking about monetary impact?

Q. Well yes. Monetary, but more operationally. I mean, are you having to add more flights? You know, how does that impact?

A. That's one person basically in their gear, so.

Q. And then now, are you routinely basically having to deny boarding to passengers?

A. On those days, yes.

Q. Okay. So most of the time you're flying around it?

A. It makes a difference, but, yes.

Q. Actual or pretty close? Okay. All right. There was a comment before, maybe with Sabrina. You had talked about mentoring, experienced pilots mentoring, is there any formality to that program or that policy?

A. No, but I'm sure it will be more formal.

Q. Okay. Okay, but --

A. But the first hundred hours is formal.

Q. Okay.

A. As a person that moves to the a new aircraft, there's the FAA required IOE which a lot of places, then they set their pilot free, but we stick with them for a hundred hours or more if we feel they need it. Sometimes we'll check out Caravan pilots in the wintertime, so that they get that winter experience with a seasoned pilot beside them.

Sometimes it's a hundred hours, sometimes it's more. And if we set them on their own, and they say, hey, I don't feel good this day, we'll either send them with an experienced pilot so they can, you know, get the experience, or the flight doesn't go.

Q. Okay. All right. And then once they get off their operational, their OE, I think is --

A. OE. Yes.

Q. -- what you guys call it. At that point, it's regulatory check rides, unless they speak up.

A. If they speak up, or if we see something we need to correct, then --

Q. Okay.

A. -- we take care of it.

Q. Okay. Thank you. You made a comment about auditing flights. I guess auditing load manifests, weight and balance.

A. Now.

Q. Is does that what you -- can you just elaborate on that? What is that about? How often?

A. Well, now it's just about every flight. Well, it's every flight that I need to dispatch.

Q. Okay.

A. If it's flying into known icing or the weather's below 502. Or wind is another exception.

Q. Okay.

A. And yes. We have it all there in front of us now.

Q. Okay. So that's part of releasing a flight.

A. Yes. Right.

Q. Authorizing a flight, releasing a flight. That's not an historical look back or --

A. No. And now we can historically look back. All that's saved into a spreadsheet that we can look back at.

Q. Okay. But normally it's just a forward-looking can we release this flight?

A. Yes.

MR. SORENSON: Okay. Thank you for your time, very much. Thank you.

MR. OLSON: Thank you.

DR. WOODS: Paul?

MR. SUFFERN: I don't have any further questions. Just thank you, David.

DR. WOODS: Rob?

BY MR. PECK:

Q. I Just got one last question, and it kind of goes along because they kind of stole my thunder over here, these guys. So I'm going to rephrase it a little bit different. Last couple years, right, kind of a rapid growth with Bering Air, right? Would you agree to that?

A. Mm-hmm.

Q. Looking back, would there be anything you would do different during that rapid growth period, hindsight being 20-20?

A. No, there's nothing different. We continued our long IOEs or OEs. We always spend at least a hundred hours with the pilot. Give them a lot of winter experience. The only thing I'd change is not allowing people to go to other jobs. Well, you know how it is.

Airlines have that glamour, so some of them like that and move on, and usually that's kind of the top line guys. So we're continuing hiring and not changing our standards on who we hire or how we train them. I don't think we'd do it any different.

MR. PECK: All right. Thank you.

DR. WOODS: All right, with that. Thank you again so much for your time, twice now.

MR. SORENSEON: Oh, no question.

DR. WOODS: So anyway, thank you again for your time. We really appreciate it. With that, if you don't have anything further to add?

MR. OLSON: None.

DR. WOODS: Okay. All right. We are going to go off record at 3:21 Alaska time. Thank you.

(Whereupon, at 3:21 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

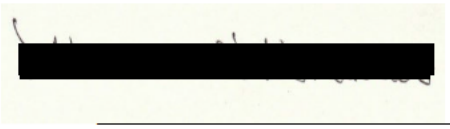
CERTIFICATE

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 David Olson
ACCIDENT NO.:	ANC25MA018
PLACE:	Nome, Alaska
DATE:	May 6, 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

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: BRIAN WECKWERTH, Director of Safety

Bering Air

Nome, Alaska

Monday,
May 5, 2025

APPEARANCES:

STARR BLUM, Operational Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

PAUL SUFFERN, Meteorologist
National Transportation Safety Board

SABRINA WOODS, Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

KATHERINE WILSON, Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

TIM SORENSON, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

ROB PECK, FAA

ROBERT L. RICHMOND, ESQ.
Law Offices Richmond & Quinn
(On behalf of Brian Weckwerth)

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INTERVIEW

(10:36 a.m.)

DR. WOODS: Good morning. It is May 5th, 2025. The time is 10:36 a.m. Alaska time. My name is Sabrina Woods and I am a Human Performance Investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board. We are investigating accident Investigation No. Alpha November Charlie 25 Mike Alpha 018 involving Bering air flight 445.

The NTSB is an independent Federal Agency charged with determining probable cause in transportation accidents and significant incidents and with promoting transportation safety. The NTSB is not a part of the Department of Transportation nor are we a part of the FAA.

We have no regulatory or enforcement powers. At this time, we have a group here that you see them around the room. I'm going to have each of the group members introduce themselves and we're going to start here off to my left.

DR. WILSON: Katherine Wilson. I am also a Human Performance Investigator with the NTSB.

MS. BLUM: Starr Blum, Operational Factors with the NTSB.

MR. SORENSON: Tim Sorenson, Aviation (indiscernible) with the NTSB also an Investigator charged for this accident.

MR. SUFFERN: Paul Suffern, NTSB Meteorologist.

MR. PECK: Rob Peck, I am FAA here with the NTSB's behalf just looking at the accident.

DR. WOODS: So with that line, with everybody that is going to be asking you

questions during this process, today we will be using as you see around the room, digital recorders. After the interview we send the recordings off for transcription to an independent company that transcribes and certifies the copy.

The copy of the transcript will go forward to be a matter of public record in the docket for this case. Typically we go in two rounds per questions. I'll start and then we'll go around the room. Everybody can have their opportunity.

We will go one at a time so you only have to focus on one person at a time. And we're just here for you to share you inside experiences that you have with Bering Air. If at any time you do not understand a question, please just ask for clarity.

We'll do so. If you don't understand or if you don't know the answer to a question, just say I don't know. I don't know is a perfectly acceptable answer. And if at any time you remember something or recollect or you want to go back and say hey I would like to address that question I was asked before, just because we'll go one at a time doesn't mean you have to follow the timeline.

You can break the timeline as much as you want as stuff comes to you.

MR. WECKWERTH: Okay.

DR. WOODS: You are always entitled to one representative of your choosing. I see here that you have somebody seated next to you. I just want to ensure for the record that the person that is sitting next you serving as counsel is someone that you would like to have as your representative.

MR. WECKWERTH: Yes. Bob Richmond.

DR. WOODS: Okay. What about him?

MR. WECKWERTH: And I, yes.

DR. WOODS: Okay, and with that, counsel, if you would please introduce yourself, stating your name and spell your last name for the transcriber.

MR. RICHMOND: So my name is Robert L. Richmond and my last name is spelled R-I-C-H-M-O-N-D.

DR. WOODS: Thank you for that. Just remember that this is an interview process. This is not a deposition so please refrain from answering on behalf of your client. However, both of you, at any time, if you need a break, please do not hesitate to do so.

We will go off recording. You'll hear that we will go off recording with the date timestamp and you can attend to whatever you need and once you're ready, we'll go back on recording. I will also do my best to check in with you to ensure that you are still doing well and that you don't need a break. So with that, does anybody have any questions?

MR. WECKWERTH: No.

INTERVIEW OF BRIAN WECKWERTH

BY DR. WOODS:

Q.Okay. All right. Seeing none around the room, we're going to start off with a really hard questions. If you would please, for the record, state your full name spelling your last.

A.This is the hard question. Brian Weckwerth, last name is W-E-C-K-W-E-R-T-H.

Q.Thank you and if, we're kind of going to go over, we're going to break this

down into parts. First starting with your function and what you do. What is your duty title here at Bering Air?

A. Director of Safety.

Q. Okay and what is your date of hire?

A. October 27th, 2022.

Q.And I don't typically not for Director of Safety, but are you on a Part 119?

A.No, not on a 135. I also had a pilot role too here as well so I'll make that clear.

Q. And who is your direct report? Who do you report to?

A. Basically to the President, Russell Rowe.

Q. And is there anyone that directly reports to you?

A. No.

Q. What certificates and ratings do you maintain?

A.I have an ATP, multi-engine land, commercial privileges airplane, single engine land, rotorcraft helicopter, instrument airplane and helicopter and CFI, single engine, multi-engine, instrumental airplane ratings. Better wait.

Q.If you would please just give us a high-level overview of your previous work experiences in aviation leading up to this position that you hold now.

A.I'll just start with, let's just go with the Alaska aviation. I came up here in 1993. I worked for several operators through the course of time and at one point, I was actually with Bering Air from 1998 to 2007 previously to this.

I was not Director of Safety at that time. At that time, I was Assistant Chief Pilot as well as a pilot. Since that time when I departed in 2007 and I went to a couple of

operators for a brief period of time in Fairbanks when I left the west coast, Alaska.

And then I went, I did 12 years with the FAA hired on in Fairbanks FSDO also with four years there and then eight years with AFS900 before leaving the FAA then and then coming back to Bering Air. And then I guess that's it really is here since the last two and a half years.

Q.So tell me, what does the Director of Safety for Bering Air flight do?

A.Well we're trying to implement a fully functional SMS here and that's in the process in the infantile stages. There was a reporting system in place. There still is a reporting system in place right now.

When I got here, there was one already put in place by a previous individual that has since moved on. I took over her position and we've changed reporting systems that we're going to use to implement our SMS.

Through that process, I'm just trying to get up to speed on SMS myself personally. When I was at the FAA, they did some training and that training at the FAA didn't seem to be completely adequate. I've taken a course since then.

So I'm still trying to get up to speed on SMS and trying to implement that here at this organization. We're trying. That's what we'll be doing.

Q.Was there a Director of Safety in position prior to you coming onboard?

A. Yes. Yes, they called it Director of Safety.

Q.About how long had that person been in that role? Do you know?

A.I don't exactly. Yes, I don't exactly know when she came on and when she exactly left.

Q. Was there overlap with your predecessor?

A.A little bit. There was a brief period of time. She'd actually moved on and had essentially quit kind of became a contractor so to speak, but she wasn't actively here doing anything when I came on in October '22.

Q.So was there any sort of handoff or training that you had prior to coming to the position that got you prepared to come to the position?

A.She, we went over the OMNI SMS is what the system was that we had at the time. We went over that two or three times just to kind of let the automation a little bit. But it was more of a high-level overview.

I was trying to go through and learn that system more on my own as a self-study along with their little help tutorials that they had on OMNI. And OMNI never did gain a whole lot of traction here at Bering Air.

It was pretty wonky for lack of a better term. People didn't really particularly like it. You had to go several places to do one thing. It was a lot of hunt and peck. The Baldwin system that we just turned on sadly to say my first involvement with face-to-face time was three days before the accident.

So that unfortunately went on hold because of the accident because everything that has been going on. Face-to-face instructions with the folks there at Baldwin. But we like that system a whole lot better. It's going to be a lot more linear.

It doesn't get super granular. It's going to be a lot better. They've even updated their hazard reporting system in there which is going to be way more part five compliant and easier to work with. I'm going to be really excited to do that.

Q.So for those who might not know, can you give us a high-level overview of what is OMNI?

A.OMNI was just a reporting system. OMNI, call it OMNI SMS which is, it was some -- I don't know how many people use it, but just it's a reporting system to try and help operators use to get, meet Part 5 requirements that are coming up here in the next couple of years. Same with Baldwin. It's doing the same thing.

Q.And, I'm sorry, about when did that switch happen from OMNI to Baldwin?

A.February 3rd. That's the day they can say it formally. That was my first face-to-face virtual Zoom meeting shall we say. We all know post-COVID. Zoom meetings are face-to-face.

Q.So given a typical day, how is the Director of Safety say divided up?

A.Most of the time I'm able to spend my time in the office, but I'm also doing some on some days I'm actually doing operational control as well. So I will step away from that Director of Safety role entirely when I'm doing operation control.

That's not mostly when you've got -- and there are days that I will fly the line so I will have to do that. And when I do that, I will separate myself completely from one to the next. We try not to intermingle a lot of the duties at the same time on the same day. It's unavoidable though. It is not a perfect world.

But what like I've been doing is that lately I've been just trying to kind of self-study the Baldwin system and work on trying to get up to speed on that. They had some tutorials that just came out recently here in mid-April so I watched those on this new hazard reporting. So it's clicking.

And how that's going to work. And what's nice about that tutorial, they actually had a Part 5 requirements, 5.51, 5.53 on a tutorial that really starts flowing better. I believe it's going to flow better than, but I'm trying to look for something that's going to make sense for the average user.

At some point it's going to make better sense for me. But I'm a tactile person. I need to have more hands on and that's what I've been trying to do is just hands-on tutorial training is what I've been doing.

Q. What kind of meetings, if any, are you involved in?

A. Kind of meetings what?

Q. Are you involved in? Company-wide meetings.

A.Oh, we have a, try to have a manager's meeting every week. It's not every week. It doesn't happen. If it's not perfect world, I'll be involved in those managers' meetings and stuff. And that's when I will because I don't want to try and put together another meeting, but that's when I'll have my say and my stuff on the safety meeting part of it.

So I'll write down some notes and stuff like that during those safety or during those manager's meetings and do the best I can, call it a safety meeting.

Q.Are those the only meetings that happen? Managers' meetings?

A. Management, yes. That I'm involved in, yes.

Q. So to be clear, are there any other meetings that you host?

A. I have not hosted any yet. No, I have not.

Q.What are some of the type of things that you would have to present at the

managers meetings from a safety point of view?

A.Well I'll talk about some reports that maybe recently came in and just address some issues that, you know, can be taken care of right away. And then I'll let the people know that might be in there that, you know, hey, you're going to see a Baldwin report come to you.

And what's nice is then we'll have some face-to-face time to discuss it right there at the managers' meetings. And then anything that I've heard, you know, grumblings through background noise around here and stuff, even if it isn't, hasn't been reported.

Q.Is there any information that you collect for presentation that's outside of the Baldwin system?

A.I have not, no. And I'm still trying to get up to speed to how that's going to come out. The reports are going to come out of Baldwin too as well.

Q.How often do you review the reports that come out of Baldwin?

A.Oh, at least every other day I'll go in there and look in there. I get an email every time a report is submitted so it will prompt me to go in there. If I'm not looking at it every day, it's at least every other day.

Q. Is there any other position that reviews these reports?

A.The Vice President looks at it, the Chief Pilot I believe had given them access that he can look at it as well. The President can look at it too as well. And our rotorcraft, our rotorcraft Chief Pilot too.

He can look at those reports and the reason he's doing it is he's using their risk assessment tool that they have involved in for the helicopter part of it so he's got

access to see it.

Q. What is the hierarchical structure here at Bering Air?

A. Like the whole organizational chart?

Q.Just to you and your, those that are commensurate lines to you, other directors.

A.Commensurate to me would be in that organizational chart would be myself and chief pilots to aircraft and fix my chief pilot, Director of Operations, customers, customer service manager, director of maintenance. I believe the director.

Yes, that sounds about right. And then all of us directly report to the President. Does that make sense? Does that what you're thinking of?

Q. Director of Ops?

A. Director of Operations too. It's commensurate.

Q.So under your purview, if there is something that needs to be discussed or there is somebody that you have an issue, who are you going to?

A.Well like on a safety perspective, like say there's a safety report, is that what you're asking? Let's say there's a safety report, I'm going to assign it. I hate to use that term, but, you know, I'll add that individual as an investigator depending on the Department it belongs to. If it's a maintenance issue, it goes to direct to maintenance.

If it's an operational issue, it will go to DO, Director of Operations and/or the Chief Pilot or both. If it's at such a level that it might involve the helicopter department too. It might go to the Chief Pilot too, helicopter Chief Pilot.

And I, you know, I'm not going to run around. I don't go running around talking

to them face-to-face. I would hope that they look at, involving themselves.

Q.How often do you interact with those other directors and managers?

A.Every time I'm here and we're all here together, it's run into them at least every day. At least once a day. If we're all happen to be here. The only person I haven't seen today that I believe is here is the helicopter Chief Pilot.

Q. How about on a more formal basis?

A. Like?

Q.Is it just that managers, are these individuals in that managers' meeting as well?

A. Yes.

Q.So is that the only time that you interact on a more formal basis with the directors?

A.Right. I was trying to do that to be, again, trying to do that weekly.

Q.How about with the FAA POI? How often do you interact with that person?

A.He gets here monthly. He's, well I shouldn't need be careful about it, he's tried to get here monthly. It hasn't happened always monthly, but every time he gets here, I'll be here. I can't remember the last time I have to be out of town when the POI was here. And I'll talk to him on the phone once in a while too as well.

Q.Are there site meetings that involve the FAA POI that you were also a part of?

A.Set meetings, no. No, it's pretty informal. I mean he'll come in and just kind of go through what he's going to cover that week and stuff. I may or may not be in on that conversation. Then he'll spend time with myself and sometimes the Director of

Training too as well.

Q. Are you involved at all in the hiring for the company?

A. No, I'm not.

Q.Do you have any awareness of the hiring practices here in company?

A.Pretty high level. I, yes, I don't watch it enough to really say that I do. Honestly, I don't. I, Chief Pilot, the only part of it that I would even know anything about even remotely is the pilot stuff, Chief Pilot gets resumes and he, I'll just happen to hear that somebody's coming in for an interview.

Just in passing so, yes, not a part of that. So yes, the overall practice of that is really it.

Q.Can you please give us overview of the overall mission here at Bering Air and how flights are I guess how the schedule of flights are developed?

A.Oh, wow. Well we have a set schedule first of all because we're a commuter operation. So that's set up ahead of time. Shall we say automatically because that's filed just like anything anyone else.

Then each day that we have to take into account the traffic that's on the flights for the next day as well as all the mail, the freight and everything that needs to be on -- this is a huge answer.

And then we, if I'm doing operation control, then I'll just put the right individuals in the right aircraft for the next day based on who's checked out and who's current in what aircraft and what needs to be moved and what aircraft needs to be flying for this particular flights.

That's how the schedule is put together each day. And then the next day you come in the morning and watch it all change. Because the dynamics of certainly flying 135 let alone flying in western Alaska. So it's a very dynamic and a very big answer so.

Q.Let's flip your hats for a second and talk about your role of Operational Control. Give us a high-level overview of what that entails.

A.Checking the weather along with the dispatch, and working directly with the dispatcher and talking to the pilots, checking weather overall. Making sure that the, there's no mechanical issues. They'll come to us.

Pilots come to us if there's mechanical issues. Making any changes that need to be changed. Having a real broad overview of really what's going on operationally whether load wise, aircraft availability, pilot availability, that's before we initiate and start flying, making any changes that need to be done enroute.

Q.If you were to develop a pie chart what percentage of your time overall is dedicated to duties as Director of Safety versus duties as Operational Control?

A.Operational Control is times that I'm assigned maybe 30 percent anymore now. It used to be more, but it's less now. And then pilot, 15 to 20 percent of my time. And it depends on the month.

I mean, I'll be honest with you, March because of why we're here today was zero percent flying or operational control. It was all Director of Safety or the role of being party coordinator because of this. That's changed.

This April I did some more flying so I'm safe. About that and 50 percent on a typical average would be Director of Safety. Trying to make that more for sure.

Q.If you were not the one filling the operational control duties, who else here is designated to do that?

A.Chief Pilot and the Director of Operations primarily are doing that on a primary basis. And then Director of Training occasionally will step in there too as well.

Q. So between you all, you make sure that function is covered?

A. Yes.

Q.You said earlier in that role part of the job is essentially right aircraft, right individual. What determines is the right individual for you?

A.Oh, well, they're checked out and current in the aircraft I guess. It's as simple as that. You know? That's as easy as that. There are going to be some days that I guess to submit qualified a little bit more, you might have a, because we have pilots that are checked out in multiple airframes.

I might have a pilot doing Caravans for three or four days and he's checked out in the King Air and we give him some time in the King Air. Just so this can stay, it can stay current for lack of a better term.

Q.Can you give us a high-level overview of how flights are accepted and/or rejected?

A.Now we have a flight release tool that we built and the pilots will put in there, build their flight report in our, in their EFB and then that will load into a flight, their flight release tool now.

It will go in and what injects into that flight release tool is weather, runway conditions, everything we need to have all the information that we need to have for

releasing that flight. The dispatcher will sign it off if it's at such a level, a green or a yellow level if that makes sense.

And then if it's a full color red level or a more heightened level, then the operation control manager on duty at the time will be the one that can release the flight. Then likewise, the pilot will then sign off.

And a lot of times there will be a face-to-face discussion too as well with the pilot, operation control person along with the dispatcher.

Q. What was in place prior to the accident?

A.It wasn't that formal. It was more of a face-to-face thing. There was weather, there was a weather sheet that actually written down. It wasn't inside of a computer. There was always a weather sheet. And there was our reservation system had the flights built in there.

So we had at least those, the routings and stuff like that. Took our weather into consideration. We had a board downstairs that had the runway conditions written on it. Now we've consolidated that stuff into a flight release tool that's now available. It's a web based thing that we can use.

Q.So did the previous, prior to the accident, was that green, yellow, red concept still in place?

A.Yes. Not in that formal sense. Couldn't sit down and see green, red and yellow. You couldn't see that. It was, it was should I say in a person's view. I mean, if the weather was below minimums, it was red.

But it wasn't, it wasn't sitting on a piece of paper or sitting in a computer. But we

knew that. And we've operated that way, Bering Air I should say would, I mean it was operated like that before when I was here several years, 20 years ago.

It worked quite well, but now we formalized it. And that even works really well.

Q.Prior to the accident occurring, was there a formal go, no go process?

A.Oh, yes. Yes. And our formal go, no go process was quite a bit more conservative than any other operators I have ever worked for in Alaska. Abundantly more conservative.

Q.Can you give us an overview of what it maintained or what it contained?

A.Well it's like I just said, it wasn't formal. It was, it was people with decades each of knowledge of how the weather and how things behave out here and being extremely conservative and being very cautious about things and how things are identified.

I remember days where we would be sitting on the ground when there are other operations in Nome. We'd be sitting on ground for days that other operators are going, hell bent for election still going at it. Didn't bother us to have them going.

And we still never did that. Even now that we're the only folks here in Nome. We have no problem not dispatching flights. It's always been like that whether it was formally written down or not.

Q.If I were a new hire walking in the door, I maybe didn't have this tribal knowledge, how would I know? How would I learn what the go, no go essentially sentiment would be if it's not written down?

A.Glad you said it. Finally, tribal knowledge because I was trying to avoid it. But

that's true, it was tribal knowledge. If somebody came in here new trying to see that and I'll, if I'm going to paraphrase, people that have come here brand new are, they're blown away by how conservative Bering Air is.

And how they learn that is when we come, we get new hires here fresh off the street. Let's say we're going to hire a street captain. Somebody that's, you know, qualified to be able to go off and we're going to train them in Caravan, we'll send them to flight safety.

Bering Air always has over its 40 years of existence, had a requirement to have 100 hours of operating experience in the aircraft before they're cut loose. And that's not, that's minimum. There will be pilots that have done more than that kind of time.

Through that process you're going to be doing very, very good at how we do operation control. When I was here before, I was that check airman that was doing that. And it was, I was, it was kind of silly.

I would do the formalize the check airman which is required by 135.244 and then we would do operating experience beyond that. That could be with any captain, anybody that's qualified in the aircraft whether that would be or other captains that were not check airmen, but they were qualified in aircraft.

It would be to a point where you would get, do so much we wouldn't think they would get mad at you because they're by you still riding with me. That's when you knew you needed to ride with them for about another ten or 15 hours.

Then they would quell and they would know that we're serious about it. And that's still going on today. We still do that. You get a very, very good understanding of

operation control at Bering Air.

Q.Prior to the accident occurring, if I wanted to go back and look back at essentially data as to what caused the flight to be accepted and/or rejected, or what constituted a go, no go decision, how would I be able to do that?

A.Archival data, hard numbers. I'd have to look in our system to see if I could even find out. Now that these systems that are built, I would have to try, I -- let's go just, let's go look at this accident. What did we look at?

We looked at the manifest for that day for that accident and we got the fuel log for that day for that aircraft. That would be left, we could do that. The same thing. I don't know how far back we can go now that, you know, it's May.

That would be the best, the only way that I could think of right now.

Q.To rephrase the question, just slightly, for instance if you wanted know in 2023 this is how many flights we rejected for cause, --

A. Oh.

Q. -- could you be able to do that?

A.I don't, I couldn't. I'm not, me, no, I'm not smart enough to be able to do that. That may be able to be found out, but I'm -- yes, it's not me.

Q.Are you aware of any processes in place at Bering that either does that or can do that? Like some other function besides you?

A.The new flight release tool. If there's not a signature from a dispatcher or operation control, the flight doesn't go. But for that, like I say, that wasn't a formalized process. It would have been tribal knowledge, word of mouth, hey, that flight's

cancelled. That's it.

That wasn't written down or timestamped anywhere, it was that flight's cancelled or it's on hold and then our reservation system we actually put a little tab up there that shows a little weather sign if it's on weather hold or if it's cancelled it's got an X.

Q.Touching back on that green, yellow, red, what makes yellow? What makes for a yellow in your eyes?

A.Marginal VFR situation might be. Going to an airport that may not have an AWOS might make that flight yellow. That system that was built by one of pilots, Andy Mercer. He would set up here and he builds his tables based on sealing visibilities, wind direction intensity, stuff like that. The guy's a genius.

Q.Are there any pilot considerations on what makes that flight right or flight yellow?

A.If we were to enter and a pilot were to enter the runway conditions and it had a certain number on there, runway condition number and we borrowed the numbers they use these days, one being like nil breaking action, five being good so if you have a two or one, I believe, I can't, -- don't quote me on this, whatever number that is, three might turn that runway yellow so that whole flight then and everything would be yellow in that flight.

And so it's built in there so that would be the pilot involvement on the yellow. Most of that stuff that's built in there, other than that, is going to be automatic. Weather gets imported from a system. I'm looking at Paul here.

I can't remember which one he's using, Aeroweather (ph.) or something. It

comes in from Aeroweather so it's automatically user imported. So if it's marginal VFR, that's going to turn it yellow automatically.

Q. Are there any other human factors considered?

A. In that flight release tool?

Q. Prior to the accident.

A.We had what's called I'm safe. We put it on the board up there that one time where we, it sits in our GOM and I think other operators have borrowed it and just, you know, check yourself. That's the human factor part of it.

Don't, I'd have to look it up exactly what it means before -- I'm not going to try to quote it off the top of my head right now. Self-assessment, that.

Q. What makes a flight red?

A.Oh, that's easily if the weather's really bad, the runway's conditions are horrible, let alone closed. I, don't quote me on this again, Andy moves extremely fast and he's doing stuff now. He's on his days off.

He's making that so he's probably doing changes right now as we speak, but he was going to try and get pilot reports, pilot reports for runway reports maybe injected in there at some point. Get a pilot report for a closed runway based on even from flight service. That might turn it red.

But just be an automatic thing. But we could enter that too. If we enter a one on that runway condition, that would turn it red. There's probably other things there too. I'm certain wind velocities and directions in the particular airports will turn it red. That's, again, that's built all into his tables.

Q.What role does the pilot have in accepting or rejecting a mission that flight?

A.They have the ultimate, the ultimate say at the end of the day. Always have. Bering Air has never swayed from that. At the end of the day, if you don't feel comfortable even if the weather looks decent, ain't nobody forcing them out the door.

You would never win that fight. I watched one of our pilots quite a while ago sat out here and the weather was actually calling it marginal VFR in Nome. He just didn't feel comfortable that day. He was not going on that day. I didn't ask him to go anywhere.

So they have the ultimate say in a flight going off that decision anyway.

Q.Who was involved in that notification chain if a pilot chooses to reject a flight?

A.Well that conversation there in particular probably would have been taking place with the person that had operation control during the day and the pilot and then we'll talk to the dispatcher. The dispatcher will make that notification too as well.

He will then forward it down the line or send it down the line to the cargo people so that they know they're not loading the flight. A lot of interface between all the departments.

Q.In your experience has there ever been a difference of opinion as to whether or not like for instance the pilot does not wish to take a flight, but operational control or dispatch are saying, no it's fine? What are the worries?

A.There has been professional differences of opinions. People are people. That has happened. At the end of the day we didn't, we wouldn't have an unsafe flight going at the end of the day. Yes, you might get an operation control person grumbling

about it, oh they didn't go or cargo people might be grumbling, oh, they didn't go or they didn't take enough.

But like I said, at the end of the day, the pilot has the final say.

Q.Sorry for the delay. I'm just kind of looking at how much, I'm about half way through so I think this would be a good time, first checking with you. How are you doing? Need a break? Still good to go?

A. Yes, I'm fine.

Q.Okay. I think I'm going to go on and let my contemporaries here --

A. Okay.

Q. -- ask questions. You want to Kat?

BY DR. WILSON:

Q.Sure. I'm going to jump around just a little bit just to fill in some of the gaps that I had in some of the other --

A. All right.

Q.-- answers that you gave. Operational control and I apologize if you already gave this. I know you said in that role you checked weather and do various tasks, but what is the, what is your understanding of the role of operational control?

A.Well it's, don't quote me, I can't quote the definition of operation control, the initiation, terminating and changing flights enroute. I have yet to memorize that I'm very sorry to say. But it's --

Q.In layman's terms like what do you think your role is when you're --

A.Whether we are going to initiate the flight and then have the overall control of

what's going on. There's no shortage of number of times that I'll be watching flights and watching the routings and looking at the passenger loads and the cargo and freight out there. That needs to go.

Certainly, the flight in and of itself, when the weather is dispatched, the pilot's on their game. I mean, I even look at, you know, if I have that conversation, I've got a pencil really ready right there quick.

You can kind of get a sense when a pilot's having not a day or at least I think I can. I'm no expert in that, but --

Q.Have you cancelled a flight because of something that you've seen with a pilot?

A.Not with a pilot per se, no. No, no, I have not had that luxury of doing that, but --

Q.Okay. Has there been a time where like you wished after the fact or you were like oh, man, I probably should have said don't go?

A.There's been a time or two where I have like kind of had a thought that oh, the weather was, it was dispatched, but had that thing in the back of your mind and then, of course, the weather was not quite as good as I had hoped that it was.

But it was dispatched when (indiscernible). Call it a little bit of hindsight, a little regret. Certainly a safe flight. I just --

Q. Yes.

A. -- kick myself a little bit. It's happened.

Q. Yes.

A. I'm not going to lie.

Q.You talked about the tribal knowledge and familiarity with weather, you know, for those who have been working here in this area for decades and Sabrina had asked you about a new pilot and things like that. But who would be providing that tribal knowledge to that pilot when making that go, no go decision?

Is that, would that come into play? I mean, the pilot's got the ultimate --

A. Right. Again, the process --

Q. -- decision.

A.-- the formal-ish process pre-accident would have been the discussions between the pilot and the operation control person. And dispatch would be involved in that.

Q. And was that face to face or would that be its own --

A.Oh, yes, that's all face to face, yes. It's a small enough organization that you can get, just walk up to the office.

Q.And is that discussion just had like at the beginning of the day or do you talk --

A. Each flight. If --

Q. -- even, before each flight.

A.-- it's a, yes, if it's a nasty day and there's weather around all, it would happen every flight. Could, yes. And, of course, in the day and age of texts, you can text as well or call on your phone, but.

Q.Are there any airports that you go to that are unreachable by cell phone?

A.It depends on if you've got the proper SIM card. Yes, we have a local-ish

carrier in Alaska, GCI. Some folks don't have that SIM card. So they may not be able to get cell phone service. A lot of folks are buying those SIM cards. You get a dual SIM card or whatever it is. I have GC, I have no problems being able to do stuff in the villages.

Q. So pilots are using their personal cell phones?

A. They can, yes. Yes.

Q. Can all pilots fly to all airports?

A.We have a few what we call special airports, not to meet the definition of the old 121 days if you're familiar with that. But we have special airports that we've designated that we are, you know, spend some time special approaches, Red Dog Mine is one of them.

Any of the flights that we have going out to Savoonga or Gambell at St. Lawrence Island we'll spend extra time with people that are getting checked out to go out there.

Q.Okay. You've talked about the new flight release tool and the red, yellow, green. Was any -- I know you said not like a formal thing, but was there a risk number or color assigned to flights prior?

A. No. It wasn't written down.

Q.Okay. You mentioned the old system working well. You said it worked well. It was here and kind of in place before --

A. Well before I got --

Q. -- you had previously.

A. -- here and when I was here before.

Q. Yes, what do you think worked well about it?

A.Everybody had a real interest in being the safest airline with Bering Air. Always has been. And oh, why we're here today to having this conversation, but like I said, when I talked about my background, I worked for probably the most unsafest airlines in the state and I work for the safest. (Indiscernible).

MR. RICHMOND: Just don't answer that safest.

MR. WECKWERTH: I'm not making that -- I'm not saying any names. I'm not trying to -- anonymity is my friend.

MR. RICHMOND: Don't identify their lawyer whatever you do.

MR. WECKWERTH: Right.

MR. RICHMOND: Yes.

MR. WECKWERTH: So I've seen the worst and I've seen the best. This has always been the best. And it was because of, yes, tribal knowledge is never a good thing. I realize that. But it worked here. It always worked here.

But it needed to be more formalized. When I was at the FAA and even today, one of the biggest risks out there is rapid growth and expansion. And Bering Air never asked it and Jim Rowe, the CEO, and owner of this organization never said he wanted to be the only person on the field. He's never wanted that.

And competition is always healthy. And that's where we are right now and we grew rapidly really fast. And I don't think that's helped anything. But, like I say again, it's just, it worked. But everything has a breaking point.

BY DR. WILSON:

Q.I think you said this so I apologize, but I don't want to make an assumption if you didn't say it. So a flight release is that, would that just be at the beginning of the day or there would be a flight release for each leg?

A. Each flight.

Q. Okay.

A. Each flight.

Q. All right.

A.Yes, it's difficult to do that. You say each leg, I mean, in a perfect world that would be great, but that's impossible because these flights go on multi-leg and stuff.

Q. Okay.

A.And then the nuances of trying to gain access to cell phone service and stuff each way.

Q. Okay so in the morning. Or --

A. Morning.

Q. -- before the first flight.

A.Before the first flight and then when they come back after that flight then they get re-dispatched, re-released for the next flight.

Q. Okay. Do flights always go in and out of Nome?

A. No. No, we have our Kotzebue base too as well.

Q. Okay so.

A. That works beautifully.

Q. They might overnight there or --?

A. Generally not.

Q. Okay.

A.That's when Nome pilots would go, there's always a Nome flight that goes up to Kotzebue every day, it ends up back here. There's a Unalakleet flight that goes down and it stays there for the day, comes back here.

The flights that are down there that are dispatched, if there's an operation control release that needs to be done by an operational control person, it's done here. As well as Kotzebue. It's still done here. Ultimate operation control is done by the person down here.

Q.So pilots aren't going to another location spending the night and coming back on a flight the next day --

A. No.

Q. -- they always end up at their base.

A.It's not like they're -- right, yes. Yes. That's the beauty of 135 operations is you're home every night.

Q. Yes.

A. Typically. Unless the weather keeps you from coming home.

Q.So what does happen if a flight gets cancelled for weather or some other reason? And it's not at the base?

A. Flight not at the base?

Q. Yes.

A.Well let's -- the only thing I could -- would equate that to is if a flight were to be cancelled down in say Unalakleet and the pilot's just going to sit there for the day. Ironically, that's what happened the accident day was Chad Antill was down there.

He did a flight down there and the flights he's supposed to spend the day doing down there cancelled because of weather so he sat.

Q. Did you talk to him that day?

A. No, I hadn't talked to him that day, not that date.

Q. Who was doing operational control that day? Do you know?

A. That day was David Olson, the Director of Operations.

Q.Okay. Could a flight, so if Chad had a concern about incoming weather, and wanted to depart earlier in order to beat weather, is that something that can happen? Or no, because you --

A. Well --

Q. -- your scheduled --

A.-- I believe and get that and you're going to talk to David tomorrow. I believe that's what happened here that day. It could happen, yes. Yes, and that's, yes, that's perfectly legitimate to happen. Even the flight that goes to Kotzebue may come back early if there's nothing going on up there.

Q.Okay. You mentioned when you're in the operational control role you're checking weather. Are you checking weather for a specific flight? Are you checking weather for the region? What are you looking at --

A. All --

Q. -- when it comes to weather? Okay.

A.Kotzebue, Nome flights, Unalakleet flights. Medevacs that may be going to Anchorage.

Q.So you're checking weather, dispatch is -- does dispatch check weather?

A. They're doing it. Yes.

Q. And then the pilot is checking weather.

A. Oh, yes.

Q. So that all three of you --

A. Everybody is, yes.

Q. -- are checking it and then you have a discussion about it?

A. Yes, exactly.

Q.You mentioned that about 30 percent of your time is operational control and that was a lower than previous.

A.Yes, I used to be doing every weekend. Now I'm not doing every weekend.

Q. Yes, why is that?

A.Want to do more, do more -- why are we sitting here today? That's one of the reasons. And then I need to get more into the Baldwin system and get the SMS up and running.

Q. Okay.

A.And we've got to clip -- granted the clock is ticking two years down the road, but we would like to do SMS a little sooner than that. Based on this reason as well I don't want to be the guy who is doing the last minute.

Q. Yes. And you mentioned flying. What do you fly?

A. I'm in the Caravan, the King Air and the 1900.

Q. Okay. You still fly all three of them?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Is there one you prefer to fly?

A.I think the King Air. That's my newest check out is the King Air. 1900's just a big King Air. I flew that before when I was here before.

Q. Do you get --

A. The Caravan is fun to fly too so.

Q. Yes.

A. I like flying all three of them.

Q. Do you get to pick what you fly?

A.When I'm doing operation control and the schedule, of course, I can, Kat. I can and do whatever I want.

Q. All right. Perfect.

A.But unless somebody else is doing operation control, yes, I'll fly whichever they need me to fly.

Q.You mentioned that at the managers' meetings, you'll sometimes brief recent reports that have come in.

A. Yes.

Q.Safety reports. What are some of those recent reports that you've briefed on?

A.Back last winter which was a good one we have this new SkyCourier. The tail

is 21 feet up. And they had, they have a de-icing cart that they put on the end of the forklift and the forklift has a boom on it up there and it would get that basket.

It was a basket. Fortunately it's at least a basket, you don't have to just stand up there on a pallet. And one of the guys was up there on basket de-icing the tail on the courier, forklift's moving so I can only imagine like this.

So he put in a report saying we had this de-icing piece of equipment that we acquired when another operator went out of business and get it up and running and it's a nice -- Brought that up in a managers' meeting. Just can we get this thing running? So they did. They got it running.

There's, in light of this accident, we were down in Kotzebue. Up here in Unalakleet there's a drum down there labeled TKS and it wasn't TKS. I brought that up. Fixed it right away. People got on it immediately. Mislabeled drums, that's one of the scariest things I think we can do.

Q.Yes. Any reports of, from pilots about like unsafe flying conditions, pressure to fly?

A. No.

Q. No, nothing with --

A. No, I haven’t had any reports like that. No.

Q. Have you seen any change in reporting since the accident?

A.Well not safety reports and because this, again, was in our infantile -- as a matter of fact, the company didn't get added to Baldwin. All the employees didn't get added to Baldwin until a couple of weeks after the accident. So they all haven't had a

chance to get into it.

And I haven't had a chance to pull everybody in. There's a lot of people that don't know about it. Unfortunately when the, when Baldwin loaded all the people, it sent out an automatic email. Well you can just imagine these people got an automatic email from Baldwin, spam delete. Right?

So unfortunately some folks were -- we're getting everybody in recently. But there are, there's in the pilot side of things, there is a heightened reporting now. Recently and then looking at Paul over there, another thing pilot reports, not in our safety program obviously, but pilot reports I widely use them.

Q. The system OMNI was how pilots used to report --

A. Yes.

Q. -- safety concerns?

A.Well the whole company, that was, that was available to everybody. Right?

Q. Was there a way through that system to report anonymously?

A. There was, yes. And there is even in the Baldwin.

Q. Okay. That makes --

A. Yes, you can select a button, radio button anonymous.

Q.Okay. Do you get, do you feel that the reports that come in or whoever is submitting that report, are they submitting their name? Or do a lot of people check that anonymous box?

A. Most people are submitting it with their name attached to it.

Q.Okay. And then is there a follow-up from you or someone else so I've

submitted a report. Am I going to get a response back that says we've looked into this, this is the response we're taking?

A.I haven't done a super good job of that. Sometimes we're getting it, when I assign it to the investigator, they'll get in touch with the person reporting person individually.

Q. Okay.

A.To handle the report or sometimes the Vice President will jump in his role. What's happened is that and not a bad idea, it can, there can be reports that are just not safety reports, but operational business wise.

Even the President, Russell, said maybe we could use this as a, you know, a tool for doing business. We can do whatever we want with our reporting system. Right? So the Vice President will do things that he can do operationally like modifications to standard operating procedures and just running the business. And he's done that not too long ago actually.

Q.Are you coordinating with the FAA, your POI in the development of your SMS or are you doing that sort of on your own and then you'll just --

A.I don't, I just had a brief conversation. There was a Zoom meeting that the Fairbanks FSDO, the fast team folks put out.

Q. Okay.

A.The Fast Team program manager put out and he was just and that was just a broad overview of, you know, why we're at where we're at and the rule making went into effect on Part 5 and stuff. I have not been really involved, admittedly, in that.

Q.You mentioned the POI's visits. Are they always scheduled or does the POI sometimes come on surprise visits?

A.Yes, he is usually trying to hit the first full week of the month is what he was doing.

Q. Okay.

A.And he had held to that, at least that I can remember for last year doing it.

Q. He ever just drop in without anyone knowing he was coming?

A.No. No, and going back to when I was with the FAA, ironically I was the POI for Bering Air for three years when I went to the FAA which is really odd. But this, you know, and so when I went -- and the reason I bring that up when I was with the FAA even any of the other operators that I just found it to be a professional drop courtesy to tell them I'm coming instead of doing a drop. So Craig has never, never done that.

Q.Is there a concern though if you, you know, tell them that you're coming that they're going to be on their best behavior when you get there?

A.Even when you show up as a surprise, everybody's on their best behavior anyways. I found that then and we did in CHEP inspections and stuff like that didn't matter.

Q. Yes.

A.FAA's in town, they always know you're coming. Come on, they figure it out.

Q.Sabrina had asked you about, you know, monthly sort, any sort of safety meetings that you have which you said you haven't organized those yet. Is there anything with like morning safety briefings or anything where all pilots get together

and there's kind of a talk about whether in the region or things are going to be happening, any areas of concern that's --?

A.Nothing formal. Again, it would come through that, our flight release to what's going to be available on there. I haven't since I've been flying the line a little bit, I haven't been involved in it specifically.

But I know the pilots just kind of congregate, the ones that are there for the day for the morning and they're all just kind of talking about stuff. And they'll just talk about their recent runway conditions and stuff like that.

I haven't been involved in that, but I know that's what happens. We're pilots, I'm sure that they study that.

Q. Yes.

A. It's not a formal thing, no, there is not.

Q.Have you ever been at an airport and requested TKS fluid and it not been available?

A. No.

Q. Have you ever heard of that happening?

A. I have not.

Q.Ever changed paperwork to make your weight and balance be an appropriate number before takeoff?

A. In the past I have. Myself personally.

Q. They don't do that anymore?

A. No. It's not worth it.

Q. Yes. Were you asked to do that?

A. No.

Q. No. Do you think pilots are doing that now?

A.No, they're not. I don't think they are. But you can't, you know, don't hold me to that.

Q. Yes. What makes you think that?

A.We are under the microscope and everybody knows we're under the microscope. The new flight release tool makes it very difficult to even try and shall we say forge an entry.

Q.So you think since the accident people aren't doing it as prior to the accident they were?

A.I can't, I'm not going to answer that. That's speculation. I can't, I can only --

Q. Okay.

A.-- speak for myself. But then there again, too, I guess speculation.

Q. Yes.

A. What people are even doing right now.

Q.Sure. Are pilots able, is there any way for pilots to get weather, in-flight updated weather in flight?

A.On the airframes that we have, the Garmin G1000 that we can Bluetooth to the system, it will load onto your iPad so you'll get current weather even when you're outside of AWOS frequency range. It's pretty cool.

Q. All right. And all pilots have an EFB?

A. Yes, --

Q. For --

A. Yes, exactly. Yes, we have.

Q. Okay. Company issued?

A. Correct. Yes.

Q. It is assigned to them or is it assigned to the aircraft?

A. It's assigned to them.

Q. Okay. Did you ever fly with Chad?

A.I would only have ridden around with him. I didn't do any of his training. I don't think so.

Q. Okay.

A. No, I don't think I ever did do even just a flight with him.

DR. WILSON: Thanks, Brian, I think that's all the questions I have for now. We've been going about an hour, do you need to take a break?

MR. WECKWERTH: I'm still okay.

DR. WILSON: Okay.

MR. WECKWERTH: You all okay?

DR. WILSON: Yes, I'm all right.

MR. WECKWERTH: Tim looks like he's about to fall asleep.

MS. BLUM: Okay, thank you.

DR. WOODS: Go ahead, Starr.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q.Okay, Brian, so as we've talked about, we need to document things that happened prior to the accident and then after. So we talked, you brought up TKS. Let's start there. Will you tell us, you and another one of our investigators went down to Unalakleet.

A. That's why I already referenced it because I knew it was coming up.

Q.You knew it was coming. So why don't you tell us what you found and then what's --

A.When we walked into what's -- for those of you that maybe don't know, we have a hanger down in Unalakleet that's ours. It was just being renovated. We're still not actively using it. But we had stuff in there that was ours.

There were two drums in there that were TKS drums. And as soon as I walked in, I walked up to the, that drum and that the one drum that was labeled TKS, there was no other labeling on it. It was a dark fluid.

The TKS drum is a see-through drum and it, we don’t know exactly what it is. They've asked. I've asked people and nobody is actually on top of it. The pump was in there. It is obviously not TKS fluid.

So but there was a drum behind it that was also labeled TKS that hadn't been opened. Suspect that was TKS fluid in that one, but yes, we had a drum down there that was nobody, -- whatever was in there, we're guessing it may be a glycol because of the renovation.

How will they do that in the transcription? Pause, aircraft noise? The, I'm guessing it was maybe that load that the system when the boiler was installed. It might

have been glycol. And they used that drum. That's just a guess.

But, yes, it was pretty disheartening to see that. But there was a TSK drum there that didn't have a pump for it. That was the other, that's what came up in a more-recent meeting, managers' meeting, my safety meeting, part of it.

And so I saw that we actually have a new pump going down in and I said to make sure don't send the pump down, don't take that pump that's in the drum with the glycol and put it in the TKS drum. Please don't do that.

I don't know if that's happened yet. But there, again, too, and now we're kind of getting past TKS time fortunately.

Q.Yes, and some of these questions will be more for David too, but if you were able to track and you didn't know this, how does Bering Air know that their pilots were able to get TKS fluid in Unalakleet.

You know, do you monitor the fluid levels that are in the drums? Did --

A.We have building -- what happened when we discovered that it got handled over to our building manager.

Q. Okay.

A.And he, as far as I know, he's the one that ordered the pump that ended up going down to Unalakleet, the new pump was supposed to go down there. And Russell, the President, actually took it upon himself because they had actually gone down there with a bunch of folks to see to get, you know, get stuff squared away on that hanger.

Q.Now isn't there two, so west coast aviation if the FBO and they help. Correct?

A. Correct. And --

Q. So -- go ahead.

A.They supposedly had a, they had a pump there too. Now their drum that they had may have been an older drum from a previous year that we bought. One year they came there all in these dark blue drums. You can't see through them.

The next year I think it ended up last year they were in kind of a see-through white drum. But we didn't have a pump in the drum of west coast. And I'm hoping that pump, that new pump may have just went to west coast and not down to the building because west coast is where we turn.

Q.Right. And so the, that other hanger you guys are, I don't know what your plans are for that third hanger, but right now it's just kind of storage --

A. That's what they said. Just sitting there.

Q.Okay. So do you know what the plan is if you said maybe it hasn't happened. We are getting in the springtime, but do you know what the changes are going to be as far as resolving the TKS issue?

A.As a matter of fact, I was going to go down myself and actually go to Unalakleet and look. But I haven't yet.

Q. Okay.

A. Just actually thought of that last week.

Q.Okay. So let me ask this. Prior to the accident, have you reported or identified any risks that we are not aware of at Bering Air?

A.Going back to my put, I don't know, going back to my FAA days so to speak, I

brought one thing up, rapid growth and expansion is a high risk. I opened up the guidance that you used to use whether that we can still use as a public and identified, you know, what folks or principals would enter in the chat.

Other things that I've identified and marked up are there's cultural changes that need to be more robust here I do believe. Again, that can be subjective, the whole chat is subjective the way it was built in SAS and I know maybe some of you don't know what that SAS system is.

I know Rob knows what the SAS system is. Things that I would like to, you know, maybe address and then that cultural thing not just business, but also some times operational control, cultural which is kind of scary to me, just scary to me.

And it goes back to tribal knowledge mainly and that's being, getting its butt kicked with the new flight release tool. And I do believe that cultural change, that big change is making and that's making it very positive, it's doing a very good thing for us.

There was other, the other risk indicator in the chat from trying to use the same terminology that's in there, personnel changes. The Director of Operations is finally retiring -- I hate to say it, finally retiring because Lord knows he's been here long enough.

He's been here a long time and has a reasonably expected life. Bering Air has been so successful. It's because he's been here. He's moving on and the Chief Pilot is going to take that position. And then there's going to be a new Chief Pilot.

But there again, too, key management personnel changes are big risk indicators and I don't think Bering Air really can appreciate that or knows that necessarily from the

perspective and it's no fault of theirs.

It's just those are the kind of things that I key in on. To go back to the cultural side of that, if I were to try and raise that flag, I got to be real careful how I raise that flag. Because you've got a family run business here.

It, unfortunately, looks like I'm just trying to get in the way. Sometimes I feel like I'm trying to get in the way. And that's that cultural side of it. I'm not trying to get in the way, I'm trying to run the interference between something that could cause some problems later on.

And that's just a growing pain I think and understanding of where I, the level of thinking that I may have having my background. And a company that obviously has been extremely successful. And that's where I get with the, come with the cultural side of things I think.

Q.So when you talked about the, you expressed concern over the rapid growth, was that when you were POI?

A. Oh, no, there wasn't a rapid growth going on back --

Q. Oh, yes, so in COVID you were here.

A. Since I came back.

Q. Yes, right.

A.And even before that we already knew they had already grown super loud, super large and right after COVID when the other organization went out of business and they and Bering Air took over, the whole airport, not the whole airport, but for all of the passenger stuff. It's all here. It's all done by the Bering Air.

Q.So in light of that, you and I have chatted before about the DCTs and SAS. What do you think is the systemic problem with between the FAA and Bering Air with the rapid growth? Do you think what could be done better in that regard?

A.Well we saw the DCT findings report. Twenty-eight negative answers out of 7,900 answers. Now some of those answers didn't need to be answered. It's something about automation and I know SAS pretty well, but you're looking at a .35 percent negative findings out of 7,900 possible questions.

And again, this is subjective and this is just Brian talking, but I do believe there needs to be more heightened awareness or heightened surveillance. Especially in light of this accident. One of the problems with that though and I was going to bring this up anyways, but is the FAA workforce doesn't have the bandwidth to be able to do the kind of surveillance that it needs to do.

The SAS system is a monster. Any broadband would attest it's a, it's a monster that just has just it's hamstrung the inspector workforce. It hamstrung, I watched it, I taught it and for eight years and watched these people struggle in these offices just trying to stay on top of it and it's very difficult to do.

Again, though I say, you know, you can always -- there's a way to make that work and get in heightened surveillance. I mean, I looked in there and I did, I filtered out the enroutes that were done. Let's face it, let's look at this.

Let's say there was an FAA inspector doing the enroutes. And Question 6 on the enroute inspection and there was 35 of them in the last year, Question 6 is the weight and balance within weight and balance and has been determined as answer positive,

but the interesting thing about that answer was written positively and done by Airworthiness and its inspectors 30 times of the 35.

Five of those questions were done by operations inspectors. Airworthiness and it's inspector isn't smart enough to know how to use the wiz wheel and determine weight and balance by just looking at the numbers.

You know, some of them are pretty smart. But as an Airworthiness inspector and formally teaching in SAS, I wouldn't expect a unit's inspector to answer that question. Because you're putting yourself out there as a liability for it.

It should be more of an ops inspector question, but that DCT that random DCT that was built has questions for all specialties. That being said, that DCT could be used at any time. Anybody can use it at any time or they can use it, you could just throw it on SAS and do enroutes all in one.

Just even more of them. But what shows on there shows that we were doing a very good job.

Q.So are you saying that there's too many tasks for the amount of inspectors?

A. Oh, my God, yes. Oh, yes.

Q.So how would you recommend with your experience with the FAA to create more, better oversight? What would that look like, in your opinion, for Bering Air? Which I'm sure it's the last thing you want, but would it be another POI?

A.It would be a better understanding from senior leadership at the FAA to understand that what they've created is completely insurmountable. And they haven't recognized that. When I was at the FAA, senior leadership wasn't listening to us.

We were talking, we were telling them this is too big, it's too big of a monster. We can't do this. And yet, they still built this thing. It's just completely out of control. I mean, let's face it, if you got, go back to 7,900 questions, and like I say, they're some of those questions don't really, shouldn't have even been answered.

There's nuances in there that didn't needed to be taped, but and you find 28 negative findings, it makes it look like -- I mean, they were the gold star and how many times, how many of you have raised kids and as long as you don't, you know, slap them on the butt once in a while, they're just going to keep doing what they're going to be doing.

The whole entire nation, not just Bering Air is going to have a problem. That's probably for a bigger discussion, but --

Q. Yes, so --

A.-- but it needs to come out of this. That thing is going to -- and I'm not trying to knock down SAS, the FAA or anything, but we all have a part in this. And the FAA needs to be doing better surveillance.

We need to be doing, I need to do a better job of Director Safety and former Aviation Safety Inspector. My God, just right here where it all happened. There isn't a day gone by where I haven't kicked myself in the butt trying to figure out what I might have been able to see that was different.

FAA doing more oversight and the NTSB asking the right questions. This SAS thing, what in the hell is going on here? I've run across numerous things. I was doing some research yesterday and one of the things that's happening and I was talking to

my brother who's still at the FAA, a lot of things that are happening that the FAA is now there are a lot of was it the deferred retirement thing that went out.

A lot of the senior executives punched out the FAA. It's getting filled up. And even when I was there, it's getting filled up with these are good people and I'm going to say this tongue in cheek, they're very good people.

But a lot of people that are filling those roles are non-certificated individuals. In other words, like I say, there's a lot of cabin safety inspectors. There's former flight attendants. Not bad people, but I don't think they have the full understanding that how doing risk-based decision making that's going to cause the oversight that needs to be done.

And to develop these tools that the inspector workforce needs to use. Granted and Bering Air has a big part obviously near the end of it that we have to do a better job, better -- the NTSB needs to ask those questions and why these folks are developing this system if they don't have a complete understanding of what's going on down here.

Q. That's a tall order. It's, like you said, it's a monster.

A. It is. It's a gigantic.

Q.So knowing that though, what else could happen right now under SAS to help Bering in this growth period and not having competition?

A. Oh.

Q.And here we are, we are about a thousand pounds overweight. We know that happened. We know TKS wasn't available. We know that flight didn't have glide

distance.

A. Right. I don't have the facts here.

Q.So what kind of oversight do you think would help under the system?

A.Well I guess the only way to tamp that would have been, you know, more enroutes. If you're out here more presence, FAA presence. More I would like to say oversight. It's the only way to do that.

Q.Yes. How do you think we got to learning about there being flights that are overweight? How do you think Bering Air got there when we do have the number of the enroutes whether it's the air worthiness or ops, but how do you think that we got here where the flight was so and regardless of the contention amongst the STC weight and the flight into NOME icing and --

A. Oh, yes.

Q.Let's just like put that to the side. How do you think we got here where as a company that you're flying this over weight?

A.Again, I would only be able to, can only speculate because I wasn't there. I was in dispatch, you know, operation control, but unfortunately that was, could have been an accepted risk. Years and years and years ago we used to joke about the only time you didn't -- you had too much fuel in an airplane in Alaska is if you were on fire.

I haven't heard that statement in forever, but you carried more fuel. Airports are far and few in between here. It's a lot of, it seems small, but it isn't. You've seen the overlap of Alaska or the contiguous United States. It's a massive.

Just the Baldwin peninsula here is, well actually the Yukon Cusco delta down in

south of here is the size of the state of Kansas and there's very few places to land.

MS. BLUM: Okay. I think I'm going to pause there actually.

MR. WECKWERTH: You'll get another turn.

MS. BLUM: Yes, I'll get another turn.

BY MR. SORENSON:

Q. Just a couple of things for clarification if I could.

A. Are you asking if it's okay?

Q. Not really. I'm --

A. I didn't think so.

Q.-- just have a couple of questions. Sorry, Bri. Do I understand correctly the, all of the SMS and the obviousness systems, those, it sounds like those are upward where, where pilots, employee can put issues and to bring that to attention, to your attention?

A. Yes, it was the safety reporting systems. Right.

Q.Okay. They were floating that around at Bering Air. Was that before and/or after the accident? How is emergent safety information disseminated to the pilot community if there's --

A. By bulletins.

Q. Okay.

A. Bulletins through the Baldwin system.

Q. Okay.

A.And some stuff went by emails up until we figured out how to do the bulletin

stuff through Baldwin.

Q.And then so in the Baldwin system that arrives in an email that's --

A.Yes, they'll get an email saying hey, you've got a bulletin to check. You click on the link and then it opens up with your Baldwin and your browser and then you have to acknowledge that the bulletin --

Q.Is there a requirement for them to check that system say at the beginning of the day or anything?

A.Well, we're having to work on and, you know, people are people. Is recognize the fact that this Baldwin email didn't go to their junk in the first place is a valid thing. And we're in that growing pain part of it because we're still integrating and trying to move to that system.

And that they know that and that's sad that when they open it up, bulletin's right there. Oh, cool, yes, I read it and they'll close it up. You have to hit the acknowledge button unfortunately and people are reading it.

A lot of them are reading it going, then we go back, well yes, I did read the damn thing. I read it. They got to hit the acknowledge button to make sure that it checks the boxes in the system to make sure that we did. It could be it.

Q.Well if that was also true, the OMNI system or that's a different system?

A. No.

Q. Okay.

A. We got, we didn't submit bulletins through OMNI. No.

Q.So it would be before that and then before the accident is it fair to say that was

more tribal knowledge or more --

A. Chief Pilot was really good about sending out emails.

Q. Okay.

A. Yes. Fen is really good at typing.

Q.Okay. You talked about the times that you were exercising operational control. Pairing up pilots for flights. And you had made the comment about, you know, making sure they're current and qualified in that aircraft. What about pilot experience?

A.Same thing. Yes. It's good. Yes, it's absolutely going to play into it. If there's going to be a particular day where we might expect that it's going, weather is going to be bad --

Q. Okay.

A.-- in some places. I hate to say the term pilot shopping, but it's we have a requirement we call it a 15 rule. Let's say we have a newer pilot. Visibility and ceiling had to be above 15 so a thousand foot ceiling, ten, and five miles visibility, 15, for a newer pilot until he gets some more experience under their belt before you cut them loose.

When you go to airports, it will be less than that 15 so that being said, let's say the weather up to the northwest here is going to be kind of bummer and send a more experienced pilot up that way and send that pilot, that newer pilot on the 15 route up the coast this way because it's going to be clear.

So yes, you're kind of, yes, experienced life. Exactly. Time at the company.

Q.Okay. And the last question I had was to start asking about when you went to Unalakleet, you understood at that point the availability of TKS like (indiscernible), are there any, is there any program, are there any routine visits by Bering Air management or their designees to the outstations to look for those exact issues?

A. No, there's not.

Q. Okay.

A. It's going to happen though. They've brought it up.

MR. SORENSON: Okay. That's all I have.

DR. WOODS: Paul?

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. Okay. So I'll chat a little bit more about weather.

A. You're a meteorologist. Right?

Q. Yes. That's what I play on TV.

A. All right.

Q.And so I'll ask a couple of questions in those areas and then follow up with a couple of questions that have already been asked. As far as putting on your Director of Safety hat there, have you got any reports that you can recall about weather-related things as far as safe or not safe or weather equipment at certain airports or anything like that which have come through?

A.No, we haven't. What we do is rely on -- if AWOS is down, it's just for reference. And right now we're relying on the fact that that's already in as an notum. So we're not, I would hate like heck to have folks duplicating that effort and putting in

an SMS system or Baldwin system saying that hey, the Shishmaref of AWOS is down.

So no, there's, we have had since the accident a heightened awareness. I have asked people to submit reports if they've had icing scenarios as well as the pilot reports. Because in Baldwin, obviously, those pilot reports at issue the pilot report, more of an unsuspecting incidence of icing. I've asked them to do that.

That's the most, the only really weather-related thing that's in Baldwin right now. Is kind of an unsuspected icing event or something like that.

Q. Okay. And you said that's happened in post-accident?

A.It has. Because well, Baldwin was turned on February 1st. OMNI, we were done with that January 31st. The accident was February 6th. So it's only obviously the post-accident stuff.

Q.So can you give me an example of what you can recall of one of those since the post-accident what that --

A.Yes, one of the helicopters gal went out and she was doing just had no, she -- marginal VFR conditions ran into some light icing. It was light. She came up, talked to me. She was funny. She's a little nervous about it.

It was like well you had no idea it was coming. It was just precipitation that was iced. And she's like report, you know, so that we can know it's a data point. You know? We did report. Another report came out the day of and King Air went out to go look.

He put in a report too as well just documented significant icing event along with -- because that's really the only report that came out outside of the investigation that you all are doing that's been documented.

Q.So with the OMNI system, beforehand, do you recall any weather safety messages at any point in the last year?

A.I don't, no, I don't. I did download the some of the reports at OMNI before it got turned off to see what was open there and I haven't breezed over it. I don't recall weather, again, weather is more of a notam because it's going to be the systems that you have as well as pireps stuff.

And like I say, I don't want, I wouldn't want to see duplicative efforts between that reporting and having it recorded involvement.

Q.So if it is equipment and you are the first company that's flying into that airport and you notice the ice, is that something you would let like flight service know and then you all expect --

A. Exactly.

Q. -- flight service to, okay.

A. Going on enroute the NOTAM service. Yes, exactly.

Q. Okay.

A. Yes.

Q.Okay. So putting on your operational control hat a little bit, can you tell me like some specific weather products that you're looking at that you use while you're doing that?

A.Well Alaska Aviation weather unit, of course, and I'm going to sound like a broken record. I like to use the weather cams a lot on my phone I have AeroWeather app for myself. The icing report that has become quiet -- we use it a lot now.

Windy, I like using Windy. Like seeing what the flow patterns are of the weather. I'm not a meteorologist, but I found that the flow patterns depending on the altitude and stuff can kind of give you a freak or so about what the weather may be like the next day or two, something like that. I may be gunning for your job, Paul.

Q. Go for it.

A. At some point. No.

Q.Is that, are those weather products just what you have is there like a standard that if you if Nome assumes operational control you will be looking at not just, you know, these four weather things, but these three other things or is it just you as an operational control choose those?

A.Well what we've got written is any, any -- what am I trying to say? Any sources approved by the National Weather Service. Right? In our ops specs, to the best of my knowledge the NOAA site, it's the NOAA site that Alaska Aviation Weather Unit designed. Isn't that right?

Q. Yes.

A.Yes. Improved and then, of course, AeroWeather is coming from downloaded from AWOSs. That's a collection of AWOSs. Or the weather that shows up in our iPads which is from the AWOS that being fed from let's see, I'm not a software person, I don't know what's feeding all of this stuff. Phone lines and stuff.

And if you look at anybody's computer, dispatch computer and stuff, you'll see, generally see, all of those same bookmarks open. I see them in the breakroom down there where the pilots are doing most of their work.

Some pilots, I'll be honest with you, told me some things that -- what are you talking about. I have no idea what they're talking about and then I'll go look and see. Some pilots are using other things too as well. There's so much out there nowadays.

Q.So for you as an operational control wearing that hat, what is flight into icing where operational control perspective?

A.Visible precipitation. I'll go with the definition I guess, visible precipitation and temperatures of 5 degrees C or less is what the given definition. I mean, that's what we're going by now. The forecast that icing forecast there.

Again, it's a forecast. Is that telling me? And I'm asking, is that telling me there are going to be icy from four to 8,000 feet? We're using that as flight into zone in icy conditions right now.

We're going to just expect that that's what's happening. Absent the pilot report that maybe went out there, that situation.

Q. So what is visible moisture to you?

A.What is it? It could be -- I'm a pretty basic guy. But rain, snow, ice pellets, you know, anything that's -- fog. I call a fog the visible moisture myself.

Q.So I think you were speaking with either Sabrina or Kat and you mentioned that since the accident, you know, you've seen weather reports more widely used. Is that just within the company you guys were chatting and just chatting either via company radio more often, things like that?

A. Oh, no, they're being recorded.

Q. Being recorded?

A.Oh, yes, you'll see them popping up. Unfortunately, the pilot reports systems when we send it to flight service is taking, it's taking a while for it to dump into the system to be available for whatever reason, something's going on.

I believe maybe it's at ATC, I'm not sure. And the reason that came was a suggestion from you yourself about having pilot reports even when the weather's nice, do a pilot -- because I guess it shortens their and can make the icing forecast area smaller if you put up a report that actually showing nothing.

Q.Okay and so you're hearing that there's an issue on the flight service end or ATC end as far as receiving those?

A.Technically flight services, ATOs, that is the ATC end of things. Yes, it's just not dumping up, uploading in the system somehow. Something's happening.

Q. Okay.

A. I just started hearing that in the last week and a half.

Q. Okay.

A. That something's going on.

Q. Is that there is --

A.To go back to what you had said, if there's stuff word of mouth going to be -- these guys are talking to each other all the time out here too. They're doing stuff out there as well.

Q.Okay. And you heard of this issue just through the word of mouth tribal knowledge from other pilots as they were flying out?

A.Yes. Yes, Fen, the Chief Pilot, he's the one that told me that they were having

some problems. And I do believe that I recall what I think Ben Rowe sent out an email saying that there was something.

Q. Okay.

A.And they both have names over there at even in air traffic control even in, at center in Anchorage that they actually talk to and find out just if something's wonky, something's going on.

Q. Okay.

A.I actually watched, I just happened to see that icon show up on the weather cam website, that little icon that comes up when a pilot report comes up and it's oh, let's just check this out. It came up and then I looked and then the time stamp that the pilot report was issued was like 13 minutes since that actually refreshed on my screen and showed up so.

I can't imagine it could be completely instantaneous, but 13 minutes, that's a long time when you're kind of waiting for an aircraft that may be available to go out there.

Q. Yes.

A.I've heard 50 minutes too and I don't know how they determine that there was a 50-minute lag between the pilot report being issued and it showing up to be available. So something, something's going on.

Q.Are you aware of, since the accident, the GOM has changed. There's been some changes that we've seen there. And as far as icing, you mentioned that just briefly earlier, isn't the AAWU or Alaska Aviation Weather Unit three hour icing forecast

chart.

Do you know how that was determined to be updated in the GOM? Is that some, a conversation you were a part of or is that someone else's company --

A.Oh, that's primarily being done between Ben Rowe, Vice President. He does most of the work on the GOM and stuff with conversations I would imagine with Fen and our Chief Pilot, Director of Operations, David Olson.

Yes, I wasn't -- that stuff was popping up in bulletins and stuff like that and I wasn't completely actively aware of it going on until most of it came out.

Q.Okay. I did see there was a flight brief on pilot reports on the 15th of February. Is that something that you were a part of making? I have it on the screen if you want to refresh.

A. Yes, I do.

Q.Here, so. For the record, I'm showing the 15th pilot reports slightly and then --

A.15th of February, 2025, yes, Ben must have sent that out after the discussion we were having in interviews. I think that's what got prompted by doing pilot reports so that we could, again, it says something in there about and that's what I was talking about earlier about putting a pilot report even if you don't -- if it's a nice day because doesn't it say you can shrink down the forecast area? Some of this --

Q.I was just curious on this particular flight brief. Were you a part of making this or was this --

A. No.

Q. Yes, no, okay.

A.No, that's Ben Rowe, he's the, he's got all of those templates and I don't know where he gets all of those templates, but it looks pretty professional.

MR. SUFFERN: Okay. That's all I know right now, Brian. Thanks.

MR. WECKWERTH: All right.

MR. PECK: Do you need a break yet?

MR. WECKWERTH: No, do you?

MR. PECK: No.

DR. WOODS: Let's do the interview.

MR. PECK: Okay.

BY MR. PECK:

Q.So just to kind of clarify or add on to some of the questions that have already been asked here, so I kind of jump around unfortunately, but are you part of that, the Special Operating Procedures when they're changing those? Is the Chief of Safety involved in those discussions at all?

A. No. Most of that stuff I find out after the fact.

Q. Okay.

A. I mean, like SOPs and stuff like --

Q. Right.

A.-- that. No, I -- Ben will send out an email off and on, but usually I'm finding out and I don't feel that I'm insulted by that, doing that, but they're doing their due diligence. Let's say if there was a safety report submitted for hey, we need an SOP

revision, I'm going to assign -- I hate to use that term, but the investigator I would add the investigator to that.

That's the way Baldwin calls it. Investigator would be the person that would make the changes. I would make that, hand that over to the responsible party anyways. In this case it would be Ben Rowe. Chief Pilot Finn.

Q.So what would be the process then I guess when you're filling that role from operational control of making sure that you're have the latest and greatest SOP or --

A.That's being sent out as a bulletin through Baldwin by Ben. He's got the capability to create a bulletin so I'm doing, I'm at the receiving end of like any of the pilots or anybody else when that bulletin goes out.

And I may have seen a rough copy or rough draft of it before then, but I'm not, I'm not authoring any of that stuff. So then I'll have to do the same thing, go through the process of opening it up the bulletin and acknowledging it.

Q. Oh so you do acknowledge it that you have read it and --

A.I hope I remember to acknowledge it or they're going to be knocking on my door. Baldwin does a good job of, you know, it's a good, it's a real easy report to find out who has, who has and who hasn't --

Q. Is there a --

A. -- watched it.

Q.Is there a process before you, from a pilot perspective, or operational controls perspective that you go in and check to make sure that you have acknowledged the latest?

A. As a pilot?

Q. Or as operational --

A.What we're doing is, that's going out as an email. And to be honest, we're probably not doing the best job of making sure that every pilot has read each one of those bulletins by going in and pulling a report and find out who has and who hasn't read it.

I have to figure out a way better to like -- I now our POI when he was Director of Operations a long time ago, he suggested is you don't even get to dispatch a flight to go on flight unless you've acknowledged that bulletin and stuff so.

We're going to have to do, you know, a better job because it's as easy as just ignoring your email and I know there's people out -- I'm the kind of person that give one of those badges that shows up for unread email, I've got to look at every one of them.

I'm one of those people, but there's a lot of people that run around and just ignore that stuff so.

Q.There was a lot of talk about the POI in reference to previous discussions and stuff, but how about the maintenance POIs. Do you guys ever meet with them to have discussions?

A.Yes, I just met with our PMI for a while here the other day. He was here last week, Dustin Hopkins. Worked with him a little bit too when I was at the FAA as well. Discussing, he had some stuff to follow up for Craig so we looked at my iPad and stuff and EFB failed to validate some stuff so we had some discussions about and a little bit

of discussion about the SMS coming up and all that. Dustin will bring that up a bit.

Eric, our PMI, I haven't talked to him too much. But yes, I'll have some there interface with them. They're spending most of their time, obviously, with maintenance.

Q.All right. With in reference to PMI specifically, you made a comment that like enroute inspections and weight and balance and stuff like that, why would you exclude specifically the PMI because that is, you know, doing weight and balances part of the AMP process and all those and they all have AMPs.

A.Well that, you know, that's doing a weight and balance on the aircraft sitting out there on scales. Right? Not necessarily running the weight and balance and the load and manifest on a loaded aircraft.

That's what the, that's what the question is asking in SAS. And that is actually one of the discussions I was having with Dustin was going back on my FAA things and when I was going and doing SAS training I remember having this exact discussion with some of the inspectors because the inspectors would put in Craig will build the PI instructions at the enroute.

And that enroute goes out to everybody, ops and the air readiness. And Craig wants a specific question, but it's an ops specialty type of question. Think of the liability you're putting out there if you're an airworthiness inspector and your answering yes or no to that question.

So I, again, going back in my educational days in SAS and why not put in because you're violating the PI instructions part of it which you're supposed to address, put in, you know, didn't want to answer this or something because you're not specialty

specific.

And I wouldn't suggest that an airworthiness inspector should be looking at a whiz wheel if they haven't played with a whiz wheel ever and not weight and balance. You're talking about weight and balance on the aircraft determined by, you know, determining the weight and balance of the aircraft prior to even going out in flight on scales.

Q.There's been several questions dealing with weight and balance and those types of concerns. How are Bering Air pilots expected to come up with good weights at your remote locations?

A.We have scales in the airplanes and do an AOS plus 10 on the passenger weights. We have agents there at all of the hand us a manifest and get the weights of the passengers ahead of time too as well. It's the nature of flying here in Alaska.

You know, look at the people on a -- a lot of pilots know a lot of folks out here, you know, they recognize them and look at the names and the weights on the manifest and stuff and you can see if somebody's, same thing you would see if you're checking them in here at the counter.

If they are obviously lying about their weight, we can, we can make adjustments ourselves, but there again, too, we've got the scales in the airplanes for doing that in the villages.

Q.If I remember correctly, they were actually put on scales here though. Is that not true when they come in the door?

A. Folks here?

Q. Yes.

A.Yes, which is cool because it take flight that people that travel with us a lot, their weight's saved. Like a friend of mine, I was just looking at her. She's got reservations here days, days away and her weight is the same in that reservation there too because it's saved in the take flight system.

So she's told us add ten and then that's saved in the system which is really nice.

Q.Were you part or did you have input, I guess, into the development of this new flight release --

A. No.

Q. -- program?

A.I'm not smart enough for that. I had the flight release part of it, no. Up to that point prior to that, we sat here and I had a little bit involvement in stuff. And we were starting to discuss coloring, you know, of all that stuff, but I would just like hey, man, I'm an end user, this is what I would like to see.

That was all. No, that's all Andy. He's a smart dude.

Q.But you guys have the ability to say, hey, this is what we would like.

A.Oh, ask for enhancements, yes, there's actually a link on his system that asks for enhancements or changes and stuff. And that dude will get right to it. He's a code writer. I don't know, stuff's foreign to me.

Q.Well you mentioned Take Flight as that program that they use for scheduling I guess or recording.

A. Scheduling and reservations.

Q. Reservations?

A. Yes, it's, I mean, basically a reservation system.

Q.Right. So would a pilot on his iPad, would he have that reservation for that flight, that take flight, printout that has all the different weights of the people and bags.

A.You do, you when you get the flights handed to you, the manifest gets printed off and sent, given to you. Yes. If that's what you're asking. Yes.

Q. So that's --

A. That's handed to the pilots for each way.

Q. It's handed to them or it comes into the iPad?

A.But it's handed to us in paper, yes. Yes, that can, that's not talking that portion of Take Flight is not talking to the iPads right now. I don't know if they're working on doing that or I have no idea.

Q.All right. Has, well going back, I mean, there's talk about pilots being able to turn down flights and those types of things. Are you aware of there ever being a pilot at Bering Air that has been released because he just was too conservative and didn't want to fly?

A. Released like released at --

Q. Released from the company, fired, whatever.

A. No.

Q. No?

A.No. I don't know of it while I've been here or known Bering Air, no.

Q.We're talking about communication devices and we talked about GCI cell

phones and stuff. Do any of the aircraft have SAT phone capability?

A. Oh, yes. In fact, we've all got SAT phones in our --

Q.And so they can use those or basically anywhere at that point, even in flight.

A.They could, yes. Yes, SAT phone and that's tied into that SAT phone. It's tied into the tracking thing. On the, all the airplanes.

Q.You mentioned rapid growth which is a very valid, you know, indicator of risk. Right? In the FAA system and like you were mentioning, it is, you know, an indication of risk in most cases if not all.

How long would you say that the rapid growth has been going on? When did that start? What would you put a timeline to it?

A.Oh, post-COVID when that other operator went out of business and Bering Air had to take over the post-COVID immediately wasn't as difficult an issue because it was really dismal. People weren't traveling then. But then people started traveling.

And when I got here at the very tail end of that back in October, '22, they were still going through it. They were having to hire pilots and may have pilots that were co-pilots that became Caravan pilots.

And it was a pretty, it was a generally young cadre of pilots that came through all as a precursor to because of the rapid growth. We needed the pilots in the left seat instead of the right seat.

Needed the air frame, we needed the airplanes flying. There was, there used to be a preponderance of people on standby. There was tons of stand-by passengers that couldn't fly. And we got enough pilots, we got to a point where we didn't have

that problem very much anymore.

And that was the part of the rapid growth. Because it basically went from we had scheduled at eight or nine, six or seven schedules to go on to like nine or ten plus charters and everything else and then the extra sections and the cargo only airplanes. Yes, it's exploded.

Q.Did you notice, because you said you came in here right about that time, have you noticed any change or was it noted by any of the people here before or your time before that surveillance that the FAA was giving during that rapid growth?

A.I looked and we got the chat updates from -- Star sent us the chat updates and that risk indicator wasn't indicated in the chat. Rapid growth or expansion, changes in e-management personnel I think is one of the things that I saw in there.

I have to look it up. Because I don't recall seeing rapid growth or expansion in our age of fleet, age of variation or variation of fleet types that's in there.

Q.Just a quick question just based on a comment you made. Do you fly when you have OC duties?

A. No.

Q. Okay.

A.No. That used to be a problem. It is no longer a problem here. Absolutely nobody does that anymore.

Q.Okay. Are you aware of other FAA employees that have done en route inspections other than the Bering Air CMT out of Fairbanks?

A.Oh, yes. Yes, when I pulled that report, yes. As a matter of fact, just prior to

that, one of the guys from Anchorage brought back, did an en route and ironically it was on Flight 830 and 445.

Q.This is change of subject so sorry. But you mentioned the iPads were able to get weather data from the G1000 if you could Bluetooth.

A. Yes, Bluetooth to it.

Q. Can you not pull it up on a G1000 itself?

A. Yes.

Q.So let's say you were out, pick a village, ABC, and at ABC you get nine people that showed up. It was scheduled for seven. But you had received I would assume a text or something from back here saying expect two new or two additional passengers, something along those lines.

How would you or would you expect the pilots working here to deal with that from a weight and balance standpoint of specifically if it put them in a situation where they going to be overweight?

A.Leave whoever behind, stay within weight and balance and we'll figure out another way to make it happen. And from the operational control standpoint, you give Chad credit. God rest his soul, he came up to me not as I was operational control, not a week or two before the accident and couldn't take a flight out of here, out of Nome because he was well over weight.

He couldn't have done it. Had alternate fuel and all that other stuff and I said okay, fine, split it up between a Kinge Air and him. Easy peasy. It's as easy as that. Why we're here now is anybody's guess with that same situation basically.

I and that day in particular I remember that day and specifically because Chad was very adamant, not adamant, you just got to end it. Can't do it. So he was going to take the passengers, the King Air was going to take a couple of passengers and the King Air was going to take most of the stuff.

Both of those flights ended up cancelling. They were taxing out, it started snowing to beat hell so I just called them both back anyways that fucking day. That was very, it was very, it seemed to be to me a conservative. He was very aware of that stuff.

Q. Right.

A. So we'll figure it out. I don't take it personal if a pilot can't --

Q.Wouldn't you agree that it's a little different scenario though that now you're at here it's easy to solve that. Right?

A. Well you --

Q. When it's multiple flights.

A.-- you could solve it in the village too. You leave them behind and you figure out another flight to go get them or during standby the next day. Yes, that's --

Q.So how would that work? Would there be a phone call or I guess a nomenclator for using that as an example, would that, the agent down there talk with the folks up here and figure out who they were going to bump?

A. Sure, should be.

Q. How would they decide --

A.That's the way it should work. Yes, that's the way it's supposed to work.

Q.Is there a pre-emptive data being done or analysis of a flight being done by

your folks that are releasing, not necessarily releasing, but scheduling flights? The people that are putting stuff in to Take Flight in this case where it goes red flag, this is going to be potentially over weight. Is there

any --

A.Take Flight doesn't give us that, won't give us that green, yellow, red for weight. But the weight does keep adding up in there. It's kind of cool. You open up the flight and it actually tabs up the weights for the passengers that have checked in and also the freight that they're putting on a flight.

Tabs up the passenger weights, their baggage weights, the freight, the mail and all of that stuff. It's right there, right on there so it's very easy to see. You can see that growing in Take Flight.

Q.So, but is there any guidelines of generally we can take this much passengers, or this much weight in addition to fuel. Right? To Unalakleet.

A.With the new flight release tool, though when the pilot builds their pilot flight report, it will dump into the flight release tool to tell it, it does the math. The energy load available. Dispatcher can open up that flight release tool or the operation control person can open that flight release tool, see the load available, you can go to Take Flight and see well, we're over. So we start bumping bags.

That's the first thing to go is bumping bags. Baggage usually, oh, it might be freight too I suppose because the freight we can always take that and figure out another flight for the freight so, yes, you have to go to two systems to find the seat difference to see if it's not getting dumped right into the flight release tool.

Q. But they're --

A. That gives me a good idea to tell Andy. He'll figure it out.

Q.But there's nothing done though to prevent, you know, scheduling a night person at a location while the friend says that -- it's easy. Right? When you plan your day out here and you've got seven people from ABC coming home, but then they put nine on at ABC, there's nothing being done.

In turn they go, oh, wait a second. You know? This is probably going to be too much.

A.We can, it would have to be a manual math calculation because the iPad will be outside of service. We'd have, we would again, take flight if the people that are getting on the airplane at say Teller were known and in the system that way it would be intake flight.

I suspect their baggage weights we won't know it specifically. But no, there wouldn't be anything. It would have to be a manual, I hate to say the word assumption, but it's, you know, possible because they would just show up.

That's a unique characteristic. I don't know how we're going to be able to get past that. I think with cell phone service around nowadays, we could probably get there and make that a little more automated. But it's not as automated as what you're asking. Good discussion to have.

Q.You made a comment going back here to the, your, based on your FAA experience, and your experiences here and everything that more surveillance by the FAA. What, in a perfect world, what would that surveillance look like? Would it be

more en routes?

Would it be more DCT custom DCT, as you know, based on --

A.Well random DCT, the en routes. I mean that would, en routes would do that operational control, DCT 331, flight release. Basically all the three-point, for us it's 3.3, 3.3, more 3.3.

I looked at the DCT. If I remember right, I didn't see a whole lot of operation control and I believe that's a high criticality. DCT too as well. Certainly Nome for sure. No harm, no foul in that. Follow-up surveillance of a learning. Craig has been out here doing follow-up surveillance in that respect. Heck, he's even doing it at home too as well because he, flight radar watching stuff.

Q. So you have seen an increase in surveillance --

A. Yes.

Q. -- post-accident?

A. Oh, yes. Yes. Both internally and externally.

Q.All right. Do you think that would be best implemented in a surprise type of notice? I mean, putting your FAA old hat on?

A. I remember --

Q. Or from unannounced?

A.I remember that being done in an operator years ago when they were having their problems and it was actually in this very building you're sitting in right now and the guy that was put in charge of putting that together, I happened to be out here that week as a POI for Bering Air and him and I got together having lunch and he put that

together.

And he told me, what he did is he scheduled an individual to go round trip on the same flight out of here and got to Shishmaref and come back. He went out and came back on the same flight. Everybody knew what was going on there. It was pretty simple.

And I was privy to knowledge I didn't do any of that, but there was where inspectors are doing bought tickets on flights and stuff like that back then. And it's happened and even when tac came out, air taxi was being done by an individual that you folks might know the name of. And he bought a ticket and went up on Talkeetna Air Taxi and actually did it.

Not even addressing himself as a FAA inspector. So it's, there -- it could be an expected, said I half expect us to get a CHEP inspection myself, but I'm not afraid of inspections so it doesn't hurt my feelings at all.

I like to know when I'm being held accountable and need to know or I make -- It can only get better. I believe that. I don't think everybody here shares that. He might not. But I share that sentiment everywhere. I always have.

I have no problem being held accountable or being looked at. Planned enroute inspections? Heck yes, we should be doing more of those. I mean, why not? They're out here, go ahead and do them.

MR. PECK: That's all I have. Thank you.

DR. WOODS: Okay with that, we've definitely been going for two hours so we are --

MR. WECKWERTH: Is it two hours?

DR. WOODS: Yes.

MR. WECKWERTH: Well, you had one round so the second round will take another two hours, be here for four.

DR. WOODS: Entirely possible. But before that, we will go on a break. So we are going to go off record at 12:36 p.m. Alaska time.

(Off the record.)

(On the record.)

DR. WOODS: Okay we are back on the record at 12:48 p.m. Alaska time. And we're going to start with me again. I'm going to bounce a little bit all over because I have some questions that popped up from the questions previous and then I want to continue my line of questioning from before so I apologize if it seems a little disjointed.

BY DR. WOODS:

Q.So in your capacity and then with your experience, how would you define safety culture?

A.Say how about a continuous improvement with let's go back to talking about rapid expansion here. One of the, one of the issues I identified at Bering Air and unfortunately it's been around for -- it's not just Bering Air, was with the statement we've always done it this way like why would we change?

Nobody likes change. Right? And with the rapid expansion there had to be changes. Yes, we were dispatching flights, we were doing the same thing, we're just doing it on a much larger scale. That meant that a building now that's used to be 100

by 100 is now literally an eight of a mile long from where you're at, to going all the way over there.

And they didn't go beyond that with the communication that needs to go into it and the, and the buy in from all of the departments that the way we've always done it kind of thing just kind of hindered that cultural expansion that needed to take place.

That and I don't entirely think that I have it, I have a background that, you know, in safety and risk identification that I don't think has been completely tapped like I said earlier. And, you know, they might dispute this and I hate to think that I'm throwing any of my fellow managers under the bus or anything, but they, like I say, they've done things such a way and they've been very successful for a very long time, but identifying some risks and stuff I feel like sometimes when I bring those things up their culture is like well Brian just kind of getting in the way or, you know, they don't really want us.

And it's not a fault. I don't blame anybody or point my fingers at anybody. It's just that you've got a back ground of success that almost gives validation to that, however, you need to start, you've got to listen to your people and there's people here that maybe can do a better job of interpreting some things.

I feel like I'm like I'm one of them. It puts me in a tough situation. They've asked me to be the Director of Safety and then there's things that I might bring up that sometimes I just feel like I got, like I'm pushing rope uphill sometimes.

Have you ever tried to do that? Rope uphill would be a very difficult thing. One of the other cultural things is a positive safety culture would be where I in a perfect world here and I think everybody would have a real appreciation of everybody else's

job. Right? I mean I would understand cargo more.

I would understand the ticket agents more. I would understand the dispatchers more. All of those folks likewise would understand the operation control site. Cargo would understand what dispatch has got to deal with and I don't think they have that intermeshing understanding of each other's roles like I believe that we should. Everybody is siloed.

And including the executive leadership. At some level, they're siloed too as well in some respects. They've, I don't think they have a complete, have a complete understanding of really what has happened and blossomed here having been the only show in town though.

Q.Hinging off that response, you mentioned a while back that things worked before. Especially dealing with your tribal knowledge and passing of information that people are conservative that it worked before. I have to ask directly does your idea of work before, is that simply because there were no accidents before?

A.That's the way it was equated. If you wanted to put a metric on it, that probably was it. And that's what I'm getting at even right now. The trouble is, it's not growing and expanding into what worked before -- God, I hate to say this, but we've always done this but look what happened on February 6th?

Did we always do this? This is the way it's always been done and then look what happened on February 6th? That's a question. I'm just asking a question in my own mind. So what we were doing, is it now all of a sudden not work or did we just get, you know, did the odds just beat us?

And since then, of course, we've made these massive changes. Changes that I would -- honestly wouldn't think would have been in place even today had there not been an accident. And, yes, I don't think I can say it any better way.

That metric like you mentioned being that there was no accidents. We've got our share of bent metal and there's been accidents with just gear-up landing with the King Air in Anchorage.

There was a Caravan that got completely destroyed at one time in a CFIT accident. And fortunately the pilot and the passenger walked away years ago when I was actually working here before. Right on the very cusp of the first, well it would have been not the first fatality of Bering Air, but it would have been a second and third fatality.

The first one was years and years and years ago from a self-dispatch thing if you go way back. Pilot self-dispatched himself and he died in the accident, but that was back like 1984 or something like that.

Q.So going back to that, the metric for it's always worked is essentially there have been no significant accidents, you also mentioned about it almost seems as though an accepted risk when it comes to weight and balances being overweight essentially.

You've had some time now since the accident to kind of look back through and process having also been previously working for the company and now being both Director of Safety and a pilot for the company. How did we get to accepted risk?

Because at one point, presumably, it was done right and now there's been

deviation over time to where we are. How do you suppose we got like that?

A.I don't think it's any secret that even up to that point and I can tell you from my experience even working in Alaska all these years and I think anybody that has worked in Alaska the airplanes have been flying over groves for hundreds of years for tens of thousands of hours here in Alaska.

Like I said, that joke about being only have enough, too much fuel when you're on fire, there's some truth to that. This airplane in particular flew for 50 minutes well over gross. Flew just fine until it wasn't anymore and that's the answer that we need to ask.

Or the answer that we need to get is what happened at that last moment? So getting to that point is the accepted risk is the fact that airplanes have been capable to fly over gross. As a matter of fact, I mean, that's not an excuse, but going back to when these airplanes are ferried overseas, literally over the water, then that's one of the questions.

They put tanks in the back of them and they get a letter or restricted category certificate that says, yes, you can fly this airplane at 115 or 125 percent over gross because it can. These airplanes are capable of that, but granted we've got the limitations for a reason too. Right?

So we can't we're not supposed to go beyond that. You get to that point because you get lulled into a false sense of security because it's been going on for years and years and years and it isn't just Bering Air. It's everybody. It's been around for as long as I've been around.

Q.You talked quite a bit about some of the changes that have been going on and I think even Paul mentioned that there have been significant changes to SOP and the GOM. And I recognize that this accident happened quite a few months back now.

But still I'm kind of wondering what, on what information is Bering Air making these determinations as to what needs to be changed in the SOP and the GOM?

A. What information can --

Q.What do you have, what information are you making decisions on?

A.Well knowing what came out of the accident and the investigation. And knowing where this, that the aircraft is over gross. You need to fix that.

Q. But that's information you had prior to the accident. Correct?

A.We could go back and find that out. I'm reasonably certain we can go back and, you know, look through databases and stuff and put that stuff together or do the long math and figure it out.

Q.Let me rephrase the question. How likely is it that everyone was aware that there was a tendency to fly over gross prior to the accident?

A. Do you want a percentage?

Q. As, however you would like to answer.

A. There's a likelihood.

Q.Okay. So back to that was aware, you were aware of that before the accident, you were aware of that after the accident. I guess what has really changed to where now there needs to be a --

A. That's easy.

Q. -- updates to the --

A. That's easy.

Q. -- SOP and GOM?

A. I can answer that. We got caught.

Q.So the FAA has released a new rule for Part 5, for Part 135. And you mentioned a couple of times about the development of the SMS for the company. Can you give us a high-level review of where is Bering Air in that in the process and --

A. Size --

Q. -- what is your goal for implementation?

A.Sign the safety policy, you know, that's the easiest part I guess. The Policy Letter updated it with the President's, when Russell became the President subsequently in December of '22 getting the new system because everybody was having such a hard time with OMNI.

I can't, honestly, I can't remember how we found out about Baldwin, but then we looked at it and got a demonstration like oh, shit, this is going to be a whole lot easier. Strike that. It's going to be a whole lot easier to use. It gets more linear instead of just scattered around stuff.

Bob, that really drives me crazy. That you can stop that right now.

MR. RICHMOND: Want some?

MR. WECKWERTH: So the, having that system in place and getting more understanding, more training, we're still getting there too as well. I'm thinking of it in terms of the four pillar safety policy. We've done safety promotion, there's a lot of bulk

to these going out.

The Safety Risk Management, we're going to do a better understanding of that. Especially with the new hazard reporting tool that they've implement and involvement. I just looked at the demonstration the other day. Like I say, it's going to be linear. You know, they need to dumb it down for me for sure. Insulted myself there.

DR. WOODS: (Indiscernible).

BY DR. WOODS:

Q.What are the key roles for the individuals that you have assigned in SMS. Like who are they?

A. The which, say again.

Q. Who are the power players in Bering Air's SMS?

A.I have, and I, like I say, I'm getting pretty new to this. Like I say, I didn't have this kind of training that even at the FAA. Everybody at FAA had, you know, you've got to know this next semester. Are you kidding me?

The training that I had there was less than exemplary. I believe or maybe I'm just a slow learner, but the safety manager role so that the people that can actually manipulate a sign investigators and all that kind of stuff are myself, of course, the Vice President, Ben Rowe, the President, Russell Rowe.

Russell really wants to just look at it. He just wants to be able to see it. Ben is in there actively doing some stuff and like I say, mostly with business type stuff, you know, like he ran a thing to ground, but had a business aspect of it.

How to schedule flights and stuff which was really cool. And then gave that

safety manager a role to Finn committing to as well. Finn's not touching it much at all. So if you wanted to talk about the safety manager role that has all of the tenacles and stuff in there, the ability to do stuff, it's those four.

Q.And have all of you had commensurate levels of training in what SMS is?

A.No. No, I've had the most and it was that one brief conversation that I had with the gal at Baldwin three days before the accident. And then since then I've just on in their tutorials and stuff that they have online.

Q. For Baldwin?

A. For Baldwin, yes.

Q.Okay you seem to be kind of conflating Baldwin and SMS there. I'm talking about specifically for SMS hazard --

A. Oh, I'm sorry.

Q. -- as a system --

A. I'm sorry.

Q. -- as a structure.

A. No, it's SMS training and, no, no, no.

Q. Yes.

A.I'm the only one that's had that I know of. I don't think anybody else is, I took the TSI course Transportation, Security Institute course. I did that course. I would have tried to do it with the FAA, but the FAA didn't put me in the course and I did the SMS courses that were available at the FAA to us because it was assigned.

But no, I still, again, that was at a very high level too as well. TSI was quite a bit

more granular. I'm sorry, yes.

Q.Where would you say the company is in the development of the SMS?

A.Safety policy has been written and safety promotion. We're quite a ways away. If you, if we put the accident post-accident and the changes in the safety risk management right there, I would not use that term with the folks that are involved in that because they wouldn't understand that they're actually doing safety risk management now.

So we're gaining traction there too as well in the safety risk management part. Half way? I would be doing a declaration of compliance in the next few months. I certainly wouldn't be doing that.

Q.Do you feel you're on track to achieve the target date that the ASF is set for?

A.Oh, yes, we'll make it. I would like to, I would hope that we could do it in a year if we can do it sooner than that, that would be great.

Q.I asked you what your definition of safety culture was. What is the company's definition of what safety culture is?

A.It does have some sense of the continual approvement to have a just culture and open reporting.

Q. Is that written down somewhere?

A. Yes, it's in the safety policy letter.

Q. Has something developed in SMS Manual?

A.We have an SMS Manual. We call it an SMS Manual, yes, we do have one.

Q.Is, has that manual, have you worked at all with the FAA on the development

of it or just as overview?

A.No. I don't know if the FAA has it or not. I'm not sure. It hasn't, I haven't sent it to them. I don't know if they have it or not. If it was, it was developed well before I got here. Probably by the previous Director of Safety.

Q.How confident are you in that all of the Senior leadership understands and appreciates what SMS can do for the company?

A.I don't think they have a complete understanding of how, yes, it's going to take either a lot of training and I don't think I'm the guy to do that, but they recognize the fact that they need to sit in the classrooms and do the SMS classes and not just accept the fact that just learning to do a reporting and stuff and maybe, you know, doing an investigation and moving on and making some changes, understanding the full concept of an SMS.

I think they have a full understanding of it. How I would measure that, I don't know. I don't have a questionnaire that I could give them. Again, I'm not an expert in the area at all in order to get to that point of being able to answer, you know, 30 percent, 40 percent, they're ready to go.

The statement that I heard at TSI from -- guy's name is D. Smith, he's very well known. You know him?

Q. I do.

A.He's great. His statement is real simple, it's SMS is something, not something that you have, it's something that you do. Right? Unfortunately, most people when they first talk about having SMS, they got a manual and they've got recording so there,

I've got an SMS.

That's getting to that where you do it, we're not there yet. We still have a long ways to go. They want to, they talk about it, but I don't think they necessarily recognize that they've got the hurdles that they've got, what they've got to get to get there.

Those are conversations that are difficult to have primarily. Honestly.

Q. What do you think your role is in the company's SMS journey?

A.The implementation. Try to implement it and get everybody onboard with it. That's what I'm going to try and do.

Q.This question is speculative, but do you believe that the senior leadership has that same recognition of your role in their SMS journey?

A.Yes, but it's a family run company. And there are -- I'm going to flat out say it. There are micromanagement tenacles in just about everything that happens. So if I decide to go one way sometimes I feel that there's going to be some, there will always be input from the executive leadership in everything that's done here. That's just the way it is in a family run company.

So just to let me go and do it, if that's what you're asking, it's not going to be that easy, no.

Q.Is there any chance that involvement could impede forward progress?

A. Of course it will. Yes.

Q.What is your plan for ensuring that all of the staff underneath you so --

A. All departments?

Q. Yes.

A. Let's do that.

Q. Understand what SMS is and what their role is in it?

A.Safety ownership, safety attribute is what the FAA calls it. Okay sorry, say the -- how did you ask the question again?

Q.How do you plan, what's your plan for ensuring that every -- all the departments understand what SMS is and what --

A.Get them in this room and, get them in this room and do the training at, I hate to say this, at that level, cargo. Get the cargo folks in here, just talk to them about how important it is to manifest correctly the weight, how to get you know to weigh the pallets correctly. Why that is, you know, and how that looks other than just a flat out lecture.

I want to try and come up with something better, more dynamic, more hands on than just sitting here in front of that screen going to death by PowerPoint. That's --

Q.How do you foresee the day-to-day operations changing as a result of the implementation of your SMS?

A. That's to be seen. Yes, I --

Q.What is your hope for how the day-to-day operations might change as a result of your SMS?

A.Maybe it comes up more in conversation in passing. You know, people, right now I'll get people in passing, they'll say something, basically they're filing a report. Like go to Baldwin and file the report. You know?

I'm not going to -- they think that they hand me their phone with a picture or

something and I'm going to go and fix it. Get past that, go to file the report. Expect the process to take into effect to understand that process part. And it's certainly not me.

I feel it's most levels still here, you're the Director of Safety. If I file something, I give it to you, you're going to go fix it. No, God, no. I think at every level they still think that and no, that's -- it's your process. You own it.

I've said that in a safety or the managers' meetings, said it's your process, you have to take it. You own it. Otherwise, you're giving it to me if you want me to fix it. Sure, I'll do my own thing.

They won't like it, you know, they wouldn't like me -- they don't want me changing something in the cargo department or in the maintenance department. It's, I can't do that.

Q.How confident are you that everyone understands how to do hazard and risk assessment identification and assessment?

A.Some folks are doing it without knowing it, that they're doing it. You know? But I can't speak to everybody in this org, there's 150 people assigned to this building. They're not all here because some of them are on rotation schedules.

Q.But, and the reason why I'm asking is because in order to get to a process where somebody is submitting feedback, they have to know what it is they're looking at in the first place.

A. Right.

Q.So what is the plan to tackle how people should engage in hazard and risk

assessment first?

A.I guess we, you know, walk around and just aside from that training here, we could go out, say hey, let's go outside and walk across the ramp, we'll go identify risks and hazards or identify hazards.

Identify and we'll show you how this works. Put it into play. We just answered one of my questions from earlier that I asked myself.

Q. Is that going to be your responsibility to do?

A.I hate to say yes, but initially it will be. But that department head is going to be there and really involved every step of the way because after that, it's going to be their game.

You know, talking about like, again, cargo. It's always, it's an easier way to do it, you know, the cargo folks, you know, weighing up stuff and bringing out the cargo and the freight or they stack the pallets up there on the ramp because then the airplanes have to stack a, taxi run, things like that. Easy so they'll understand that thinking.

Q.We talked a lot earlier about the different reporting, the previous system you have and now you have Baldwin and then how some of that process works. How would you rate the comfort level of your pilots, for instance, in willingness to submit a report or to submit any sort of feedback however it is?

A.That's speculating. I think the pilots are pretty well, a lot of them are good at reporting. I haven't done a poll. There might be some out there that just aren't that -- I still have heard the comments from pilots and fuelers and stuff.

I don't want to submit reports, I don't want to get anybody in trouble. I heard it

from a dispatcher once. Because we're a small enough company, even if they submitted an anonymously they will be afraid of reprisal later.

Which is really sad, it's not a just culture. And that's one of the things that we got to make sure that we are very good at. Making sure there's people that the just culture part. If somebody submits a report, even anonymously, we'll figure it out.

Nobody here is that, you know, it's a small enough company, they'll figure out who submitted the report because something will be happening in an area. There's some lack of confidence in some employees.

The pilots, per se, I think I'm getting reports from pilots on a pretty routine basis. There's 50 of them here. I think they're pretty confident. But there are other departments that are not quite as confident.

Q. Is there cause for concern for fear of reprisal?

A. There has been, yes.

Q. So what is the company doing to address that?

A.Well we talk to the folks that should be involved in making sure that doesn't happen and I hope that it's being handled.

Q. How do you follow up that it's being handled?

A.Well there wasn't a report filed in the situation that I'm talking about and I'll just be very vague. I haven't, there wasn't a report because the person didn't want to file. Wanted to file anonymously, didn't file.

I wasn't going to file it on the person's behalf. There needs to be more executive involvement in that area in order for it to be taken care of like it should be

taken care of. And I don't see that happening right now.

They said executive leadership is getting, well I should say the 119s are moving around and the other director of operations is leaving because it would fall in their purview obviously of Director of Operations and the current Director of Operations or the new Director of Operations, current Chief Pilot is going to take that role so we'll be talking, talking to him about it.

Q.Who should be ultimately responsible for the company's SMS?

A.That's the President. He's the one that should be, isn't that by definition the President is ultimately responsible for accepting all risk assessment? Each department has their own duty to accept the risk and identify the hazards and stuff, but the President ultimately has the end all, be all.

Q.And I know you mentioned it before, for the feedback that is coming it's assigned for lack of a better word to whichever department holds the issue.

A. Right.

Q.Right now, how often does the executive leadership I guess interface with that information? Are they looking at it? Are they reviewing it?

A. Well --

Q. Regardless of what department it goes to?

A.Yes, because the Vice President and President both have access to that. So I'm going to only assume that they looked at those emails. I'm reasonably certain the Vice President because he looks at everything.

The President has or not, I don't know, I haven't talked to him too much about it.

He brings up one or two, once in a while he'll bring up something.

Q. How well did you know Chad?

A.Not very. I didn't, there were people here that call him a very good friend and stuff. I never got to that level of being like a very good friend hanging out after work or anything like that. But I knew him well enough, got along with him.

Always did, he was a good, funny guy. Joked around the day before as a matter of fact, we were joking around out on the ramp about stuff. Good dude.

Q.So is that your first, I guess what was your very first impression of the first time if you can remember meeting with him?

A.He was a co-pilot when I first got here and he was always out there doing his job, getting after it, doing what he needed to do. He was the one responsible for getting the airplane loaded and pre-flight and stuff. He was in the 1900.

And always had a smile on his face. Pretty happy go lucky guy.

Q.Have you ever been made aware or ever witnessed I guess anybody else having an issue with him?

A.No. I don't think, no, I don't think anybody had. I don't know of anybody that had any problems with Chad.

Q. Are you aware of any concerns with his performance?

A.I never had or was put in a position to assess his performance other than operational control that I talked to you about a little earlier ago about his conversation that he had with me coming up and talking to me about it.

About that overweight and that day the weather was crummy. I would have

called him all aces. He would come to me and talk about flights almost to a fault. Because there were days that dispatchable flights basically can release him, but this before the release tool.

He would release the -- nice day. Not maybe quite as nice as it is today, but even marginal where it was just release flight. He would still come up and talk to me. Just get that last conversation. Like I say, almost to a fault. It was like I was thinking of other things because the day was nice. You guys could just lunch and have at it.

Q.Are you aware of his performance I guess if you were to compare it to other pilots, would you rate him average, below average, above average?

A. Like I said, I was never in a position to assess his, yes.

Q.Was his coming up and having those chats over the concerns he voiced, would -- are there other pilots in the organization that were similar? Was it the same kind of interactions or --?

A.Chad stood out a little bit more there. There's other pilots that have. But it would typically be in a situation where and this is pre-accident, pre-release tool situation where he would definitely be expecting to have a conversation.

Marginal weather is more marginal weather conditions and stuff like that. Like I said, Chad was quite a bit more conservative in that respect.

Q.So we have been made aware that Chad in the past had expressed concerns about flying overweight. You yourself have pointed out an example of where there might have been a discussion about that.

Do you happen to know when those past conversations or concerns rose how it

was handled?

A.I have no idea how it was handled. Chad expressed some situations in the past to you as well?

Q. Yes.

A.I, conversation that I don't recall ever having. I don't recall ever having anything with him myself.

Q. So you were not a part of those?

A.Not that I recall. No. Like I said, one time that he came and talked to me that I recall, we split the flight up.

Q.Have any other pilots come to you and expressed concerns other than overweight or weather?

A.Yes. When you do an OC, they do that. Be weather or overweight or something. Like I said, again, if it's overweight or something, we'll figure out something else. They don't like the weather, they know I won't push them out the door.

No, you don't -- I worked for operators that pushed you out the door. It's not a comfortable situation. It only serves to create problems and animosity later on.

Q.And so you were fairly confident that that's not, that's not what's going on in this operation?

A. Not that I know of. No.

Q.Do you ever have conversations with the others that served and I know you gave a list of like the Director of Ops, the CP, the others who serve as OCC, do you

guys ever have like fireside chats about what your experiences when you're doing ops control?

A.Kind of, yes, because if I was to be doing say operation control tomorrow, Finn and I would have kind of a handoff conversation. There's days then when I'm working here as either the line pilot for the day or maybe I'm just working in the office, and Finn's over there doing operations like today.

And we weren't all here, him and I might be having discussions occasionally about stuff, various things. Especially if I was to maybe be handed over to the operation control tomorrow.

Q.Has there ever been a type of conversation like hey, here comes so and so, you know they always have a bone to pick about something?

A.Don't we always have somebody that's in every organization that's like that?

Q. You tell me about his organization.

A.There's always something well and then there's been people that have actually been released from this organization with that have had problems from a safety standpoint actually. So actually going back to what you previously asked about pushing people out the door, and this is a cultural thing, I have been privy to conversations where I've been in the office where individuals, okay here's the term, flying with or at -- giving a low load available. That's the term that's been used before.

People that will take legal field further, destination, alternate plus 45 and have a low-load available and I've heard those discussions occur over there in the office and then people are scratching their head and, oh, God, why can't you take a little more

fuel or why can' you take a little more load because now I'm going to have to figure out how to take the extra 600 pounds, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

I've been privy to those conversations. At the end of the day, that flight would still go where it made the flight as far as I know, the pilot would be comfortable with that load. But you would still have the grumbling going on.

And I've even, I'll admittedly I'll even grumble a little bit about it, but like I say, I refuse to push people out the door. If I thought it was going to be 2,400 pounds and it's 18 for whatever reason, we'll figure out how to get the other 600 pounds out. Those conversations, they're uncomfortable conversations. They have occurred. I'm not going to deny that.

Q. How would you rate the level of occurrence?

A.Those conversations were pretty far and few in between over the years that I've been back since I've been back here. It happened a lot less when I worked here before.

Q. What does it take to get released as a pilot here?

A. On your own?

Q.And what do I have to do to where there's a concern to where I would be released as a pilot?

A. Oh, get fired so to speak?

Q. Yes.

A.There is a preponderance of evidence of people being unsafe and say for poor customer service was the last one. Really poor customer interactions with other

departments and agents, passengers complaints was the last one.

Previous to that, it was somebody that had to, had to just, he was done. He'd lost his metal so to speak. That's a good word for that. And he was getting complaints from other pilots. Drew the line. They accepted his retirement I guess.

Q.I guess what does that process look like without citing specific examples of is there a performance review followed by like a, this is how you get better followed by an assessment of okay you're not getting better? Okay, now you're please find other --

A. You don't --

Q. -- employment?

A.And we're going to my, I served a short stint as a front-line manager when I was at the FAA and there was the table penalties. All right? You know, first written warning depending on what you did. You probably have it at the -- well, all you Federal Government agencies have it. Right?

Well it's an OPM thing is probably the same identical so first offense, second offense, third offense, depending on how egregious it was, you know, and by that I mean get a written warning, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. We don't have that here.

No. There have been table discussions and people put on the hot seat on numerous occasions and you're looking at one of them. And they worked here before that had been on the hot seat several times. There wasn't a formal process.

But it does happen, just not a formal process. Individual that got released for bad, poor customer service had probably been called up on the carpet way more times than he probably should have been and eventually was, it finally came to a head.

Q.So those called up on, if there's no formal process are those called up on the carpets documented anywhere?

A. I don't --

Q. Is someone keeping a record?

A. Yes, I don't know.

Q. Okay.

A. That would be outside of my purview.

Q. Okay.

A.And I don't think that's a personnel thing and I certainly wouldn't put it in a bottle. There's a confidential way to do that and there's a -- I don't know if I would want to have that. Again, it's a personnel issue.

DR. WOODS: I think that's all I have. Let me do a quick perusal through my notes. Yes, that is all I have, thank you. Moving back onto Kat.

DR. WILSON: I think I just have one question.

BY DR. WILSON:

Q.Safety reports, how many do you get whether it's a month, a quarter, every --?

A. Again, it's pretty new --

Q. -- update that? Okay, let's say it's before the accident.

A. It's a --

Q.I mean, we don't have to use Baldwin specifically, but just in general like --

A.One or two a week right now. It's pretty, yes, it's about one or two a week.

DR. WILSON: All right. Like I said, just one question.

MR. WECKWERTH: You're making that up.

DR. WOODS: Starr?

BY MS. BLUM:

Q.So how is Bering increasing, Bering Air increasing surveillance on weight and balance and the over flights, over water flights? To your knowledge or since the accident, are you guys increasing surveillance and how are you doing that?

A.Yes. Looking at Ben published some over water routes and he's been looking. He used the term micromanage. Maybe that's loosely, but in that case, micromanaging kind of something like that, that's operational control so to speak.

It's stuff he's backing up. Us operational control people because this op, actively doing operation control has tenacles beyond I mean it's this whole entire film and so when he's at a computer and has the opportunity to look at that, he's looking at it and watching it.

He's also looking at flights and loads because of the release tool as well and we're looking at it too as we're doing operational control.

Q. Okay.

A.There's, oh, and I'm sorry, there's also an audit thing built into that flight release tool that Andy put together. I can download flights and find out, well there's a bunch of stuff, load available, fuel that was onboard, all of this stuff.

Q. So you guys can go back in?

A. Yes.

Q. Code based. I don't --

A. And even before --

Q. -- understand.

A.-- the accident because it actually started getting built well before the accident. That data's actually available even going back before the accident.

Q.So I know we'll get this document for the leader, but can you just give me the brief exactly what the flight, what's so great about the flight release tool? I'm still trying to understand all the layers of what is happening with that and the protections it's giving.

A.So trying to make it -- so you saw the runway analysis and all that when you first were here before.

Q. Right.

A.And then the flight release tool I showed you briefly. So it's now on that tab that's our window, what's called a window that's opening up. The weather does populate in there. There's calculators in there right now that are just tools right now just to use that eventually may be used for submitting the fuel load requests to the fueler.

He could have an iPad himself and say oh, no, this airplane needs this. Instead of us tracking him down and looking for him, oh, you're supposed to since we might get spread out over this entire ramp, at some point, there's a calculator in there to determine your operating weight empty based on all the criteria, the TKSs now entered in there manually, a fuel course, the empty weight of the airplane.

The nets and carbon nets and all that stuff and the tail stand is all in there now,

entered manually. Or, shit, it's actually entered in the aircraft because it's all pretty well standardized now.

We should hopefully, of course, somebody is going to grab a strap once in a while and that it's a little over, but it should be on them to add two pounds, whatever. All that's been added into that.

Q. Okay.

A. Did that answer your question or did I avoid it?

Q. Yes, I think later you can show me.

A. Oh, yes.

Q. On the screen.

A.Yes, you're going to -- it's, you know, I know you want to try and get this on, but it's going to be, it's much more of a tactile visual thing than trying to explain it on here.

Q.Okay. Only two more quickly. Any talk of what happens when you're POI retires here pretty quick? Do you know what's --

A.Yes, and Rob can correct, but it's because of it's a promotional position, a 14. It can be signed for six months to somebody and they'll give them a temporary 14 that's going to go to an individual that's there now until they can put it up for bid. Didn't you heard that as the same thing?

MR. PECK: That is correct information, but --

MR. WECKWERTH: Yes.

MR. PECK: -- I don't know the answer for Bering --

MR. WECKWERTH: So it's going to get handed, basically just handed over to the other principal that's been in the office for quite some time.

MS. BLUM: Okay.

MR. WECKWERTH: Who is actually then POI even. He was actually doing my OJT when I became the or prior to becoming a POI here at Bering, a guy by the name of Chris Farnell (ph.). So he'd been a POI with Bering Air before.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Okay so --

A. And that would be --

Q. -- there's not going to be any lapse?

A. There, no, no, no.

Q. Okay.

A. They never would do that.

Q. Okay.

A.Maybe paid with a small operator, but no, they usually assign things pretty quickly.

Q. Okay.

A. Yes, please tell me if I'm wrong.

MS. BLUM: Okay, that's all I got.

MR. WECKWERTH: They sure as hell wouldn't do that here.

MS. BLUM: Got you.

MR. SORENSON: I have no questions.

MR. WECKWERTH: Making that up. He's doing better than you did, Kat.

DR. WOODS: Paul?

MR. SUFFERN: Yes, I think I just have one question as well. And it's not the question you've heard in previous interviews.

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q.But for this one for you putting your pilot hat on since you still fly occasionally, do you do anything different weather wise when you fly now than you did prior to the accident?

A.I'll be honest with you. I didn't look at the icing, three-hour icing forecast before. I hadn't. Not as much, I would look at for icing reports, pilot reports, I didn't like pre-emptively, having flown in a -- not to sound, try to back up or make myself sound centered, having flown out here for so long, I can suspect there's going to be icing in some places and all that stuff.

Matter of fact, yes, accident day it didn't surprise me in the least bit based on just walking outside. You know? But I never did look at a forecast before so I do that quite often right now. Have you to thank me for it or thank for it because it came out wrong.

Q.So any day, so that's pre-flight. Anything in-flight? Anything post-flight or --

A.Well in-flight we're only limited, well it's available on the iPad which is pretty much me-Tarzan, the AWOSs doesn't come through on the iPad and stuff. And while I am in the airborne and stuff, I'm trying to get AWOSs in various places that I'm going or at least get a sense of what's going on out there.

MR. SUFFERN: That's all I've got, Brian.

MR. WECKWERTH: Right?

DR. WOODS: Any one?

MR. PECK: Done.

DR. WOODS: Okay.

MR. WECKWERTH: See, two of them.

DR. WOODS: Looking at around three and then I'll say I don't have any questions, but that would be good.

MR. WECKWERTH: Just consider this the third.

MR. PECK: Just keeping you from lunch.

DR. WOODS: If that is --

MR. WECKWERTH: What? Yes, well.

DR. WOODS: Can I make a close please. Thank you. With that if there are no other questions, I do have I guess the last two questions I always ask and one is meaning you didn't go on the first rounds when everyone came out, but the interview now, we appreciate that.

Is there anything that we didn't ask that you thought for sure we were going to ask?

MR. WECKWERTH: No. No, I'm glad it came up about the FAA and NTSB involvement in all of this too. I mean, not to throw anybody specifically under the bus, but I think we all have a part in this whole thing.

DR. WOODS: Well that might set you up for my next question which is usually I ask like what's the takeaway that you would want us to have after this interview with

you? Do you feel it will point us in the right direction to give us better insight, elevator pitch, go?

MR. WECKWERTH: Again, going back to, we've got to have a better look at a very high level and it's Congressional level actually on this SAS thing. If these poor folks I can appreciate have a hell of a time doing their job because even back when we were first deploying SAS in 2014 and 2015, people were running out of the FAA as fast as they possibly could because they were just going to be sitting there doing data entry.

And I think Rob would agree there's entirely way too much of that going on. And the unfortunate sense or the unfortunate term that's come from that in order to clear SAS DCTs is called yes, SAS and that's just manned yes on all on the questions and just move it on down the road.

And go and deal with it still with the operator. And that's not to belittle the FAA at all, at all. It's just that you've got so much that if there's a finding they have to go through the compliance action, process in SAS and it's just a monster.

It really is. It's just gotten, I think, too big. There's got to be, I don't and you're not going to reduce the dadgum thing, but there's got to be a recognition. I think more inspectors and that's why I say Congressional because they're the ones that set the numbers of inspectors that can be hired.

And that's a Congressional thing. So it goes all the way to the top. And you mentioned I don't know, Senator Murkowski earlier. Ironically, her nephew works for us, but not that that has any say or play in the whole thing, but at that level they need to

recognize that there needs to be more numbers.

There's a reason why when the, what was it, the deferred retirement went out and Secretary Duffy was able to get everybody exempted in flight safety because he couldn't look, you can't lose one. No, we need more.

And I think at more, it needs to be operations inspectors, more operations inspectors and what focusing on just filling the numbers with say noncertificated folks. All good people, but we need more operations inspectors. They always have.

DR. WOODS: Okay. Well, with that, no one has anything else? Thank you for your time and we are officially off the record at 1341 Alaska time.

(Whereupon, at 1:41 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

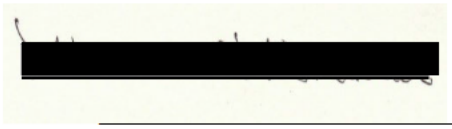
IN THE MATTER OF: FATAL COMMUTER PLANE CRASH NEAR NOME, ALASKA ON FEBRUARY 6, 2025
Interview of Brian Weckwerth

ACCIDENT NO.: ANC25MA018

PLACE: Nome, Alaska

DATE: May 5, 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

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: RUSSELL ROWE, President Bering Air

Nome, Alaska

Sunday,
February 16, 2025

APPEARANCES:

STARR BLUM, Aviation Accident 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

ROBERT RICHMOND, Representative
Richmond & Quinn
(On behalf of Mr. Rowe)

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INTERVIEW

(3:06 p.m.)

MS. BLUM: Okay. Today is February 16th, 2025. It is 30 -- 3:06 p.m., Alaska Standard Time.

My name is Starr Blum, and I'm an operational factors investigator with the NTSB, and we are in the process of investigating the accident on February 6th involving Bering Air Flight 445.

First off, we want to extent our condolences. We're really sorry for what happened, and we're sorry that we have to be here under these circumstances. But as you know, our role is safety, and we're here to figure out what happened and try to prevent this from happening again.

I want to assure that talking to pilots, dispatchers, FAA, management, this is all a very normal process for the NTSB.

And, again, just to reiterate, anything you said in here is not going to be used for blame or any enforcement-type actions.

We will be recording this interview so that it can be transcribed. After we review it, you'll get an opportunity review that also before it goes into the public docket.

And, now, let's just go around the room and introduce ourselves.

MR. SUFFERN: Paul Suffern, I'm a meteorologist with the NTSB. I look at the weather side of things. I've been with the NTSB about 14, 15 years or so.

Before that, I worked up in Alaska for the National Weather Service, mainly in south east and south central areas for about 4 or 5 years or so.

MR. PECK: Rob Peck. Robert, officially. With the FAA about 3 years, an

FLM, Front Line Manager, currently.

Previous to that, I was an inspector and then about 8 years there with Alaska AirTransit flying a PC-12 in the Caravan TKS version. About 21 years with the military flying the C-130 prior to that.

MR. WECKWERTH: Brian Weckwerth, director of safety at Bering Air.

MS. BLUM: Please answer the questions to the best of your recollection. If you don't recall or if you don't know the answer to the question, I don't know is a perfectly fine answer.

MR. PECK: Just for the record, I'm not here for anything other than the safety role, nothing else.

MS. BLUM: And you're entitled to have a representative of your choosing. Is there someone you'd like here to represent you?

MR. ROWE: Bob Richmond.

MS. BLUM: Thank you. Bob.

MR. RICHMOND: No need to point me out.

MS. BLUM: Please refrain from any questions on Russell's behalf. You may direct Russell not to answer a question, or you can say -- ask him to go and confer outside if you need to.

And, again, if you need a break, please just speak up, and we'll do that.

Is there any questions before we begin?

(No audible response.)

INTERVIEW OF RUSSELL ROWE

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. Okay. Can you please state your name and spell it?

A. My name is Russell Rowe, R-u-s-s-e-l-l, R-o-w-e.

Q. And what is your job title?

A. I am the president.

Q. How long have you been the president of Bering Air?

A. Since -- well, we're -- 1 year and 2 months, approximately.

Q. Okay. And when were hired at Bering Air?

A. My date of hire is May of 1995.

Q. What other roles have you, what other positions have you held here at the company?

A. I've been in the janitorial position, been in the Cargo department as a cargo handler and ramp, ramper. Worked as a mechanic, as a mechanic's helper, and then later as a mechanic, as a licensed mechanic. And I've worked as a pilot, line pilot, charter pilot and now as the president.

Q. Okay. What certificates and ratings do you hold?

A. I have an A&P mechanic's license. I have a commercial rotorcraft and fixed-wing license with an ATP instrument rating, multi-engine rating.

I can't think of anything else right now without holding up the card and looking at it, but that's the gist of it.

Q. Okay. If you were going to ballpark your total flight time, what would that be?

A. Fifteen thousand.

Q. And how much of that would you say is PIC?

A. I'd say 14,000 PIC.

Q. Okay. Can you give us a *CliffsNotes* version of your aviation history background?

A. Yeah. So my mom and dad started Bering Air in 1979. I was born in 1980

so I've been involved and around the company since I was born.

I rode around with some of the pilots that are still here today as a little kid and then as time went on, I was taught to fly by my dad, Jim Rowe.

Solo'd at the Nome Airport here on my 16th birthday in 1996, January 1996.

And, then, you know, after I finished high school, I went on to get my commercial -- I went on to get my A&P license and during that time, was also working on fixed-wing ratings.

In 2001 when I was 21, I added a helicopter endorsement. At that time, I was going to school at University of Alaska Anchorage in Anchorage, and did an aviation maintenance technology degree.

I came back to live in Nome full time in 2004 and started in 2004 as a pilot for Bering Air.

Since 2004, I've worked primarily as a pilot for Bering Air up until more recent years when I started taking on more management roles.

My brother, Ben, was the chief pilot of Bering Air for a period of time when I came back to work later. He moved on to go fly for FedEx, and Fen Kinneen became the chief pilot.

Fen didn't have helicopter experience so my helicopter experience was needed more in the office to help manage helicopter charters and evaluate pilot applicants and stuff like that.

Backing up a little bit, previous to Fen taking the chief pilot position, my brother, Ben, who was the chief pilot at the time, was dual rated so he could kind of handle both.

When Ben left, we lost the helicopter expertise in the office and so I was,

at that time, kind of started helping out in the office and was helping manage the Helicopter department for a number of years before, you know, becoming president here a couple months ago.

So that I guess kind of brings us to where we're at today unless you need to --

Q. Yeah, that's great.

A. -- elaborate on any more of that in between.

Q. Does that mean that you are also the chief pilot for the helicopters as well?

A. No. I was the chief pilot for the 133 certificate, which is the external load certificate that we have during a number of those years and still am, but we ran one chief pilot for the overall operation. So Fen was the chief pilot for the entire operation.

And I say was because just in the last couple weeks, that has changed to where we have a chief pilot of the Helicopter department now --

Q. Oh, okay.

A. -- and that is separate from Fen.

Q. I would assume you flew the Caravan and that history?

A. I did, yeah. I never flew the G1000 EX Caravan though. I only flew the booted Caravan, I flew the Pratt & Whitney powered one.

We went through a period of time where we had Honeywell powered ones that were, you know, just had a different engine on them.

So I flew those two versions, but I did not fly the EX.

Q. You know, as we've gotten to see your operation and talk to your dad, if you'd like, you know, this is an opportunity -- it's such a colorful and rich history.

If you want to tell us a little bit about, you know, Bering Air. Love to hear

more, if you'd like to share a little bit of the development, the airplanes.

A. Right. Yeah. You know, when dad first came up to Alaska in the early '70s, he flew for a handful of other operators at the field, and over time, just wanted to run things his own way so I think he got along well with people he worked for at other outfits. There wasn't animosity there by any means, but he always kind of wanted to control his own program and maybe run it a little bit different than the rest of them.

So he bought a certificate that was struggling at the time and had a couple small, you know, 207-type aircraft and then just over time gradually built up to what it is today.

It's always just, it's always been very much a part of our lives growing up, the business and the work was brought home every day. We work with friends and still are friends and very much family with the pilots and the mechanics and everyone here.

So when my brother and I were kids, we would be here a lot, you know, as small kids and hang out in the hangar with the mechanics and stuff. So we got to know everyone pretty well, and it became important to us that we invested everything back into the business and to the quality of the equipment, the training and the safety of the equipment we were -- we are and still are friends with a lot of the people in the communities that we serve. So it's important for us to keep our friends and family safe and flying on the nicest equipment that we can, you know.

Yeah, there is a nice long story about dad's trip to Nome, but it's probably not the appropriate place for it here. Mom and dad, both, they're trip to Nome and how it all got started, but I'd be happy to share that with people individually.

I'm sure he'll tell you the story if you give him the opportunity. That's his story to tell.

Q. Okay. I know that you guys have grown a lot, can you explain, around the

time of COVID, you know, what Bering Air has gone through as a result of that?

A. Yeah. When COVID first came about, there was a dramatic decrease, right, in passenger travel, but the amount of bypass mail and freight going out stayed fairly consistent.

And at one, you know, at some point, it started to increase, right, because people weren't traveling to shop. They were depending on food coming into the villages so our freight volumes and mail volumes were pretty stead.

That was looking like it was going to be a good, you know, course of business until the end of COVID, right, and we were nervous about the passenger levels and whatnot.

But prior to COVID, we were down to two passenger-carrying operators on the field, it was us and Ravn. And Ravn was a conglomerate of several other operators that all merged, you know, first into Hageland and then Frontier Hageland and then into Ravn ultimately.

And so when Ravn ultimately went bankrupt during that early days of COVID, that left us as the only operator here. We bid on some of Ravn's facilities during bankruptcy and ended up purchasing the hangar that you're in today which expanded our footprint on the field a little bit and allowed us to increase some of our fleet size and still feel like we had enough room to get them inside and do the maintenance that we needed to do.

We knew going forward that with the demise of Ravn, there was going to be an increased need in flights and seat numbers. We felt pretty strong that the market would return at some point because people need to travel, and this is the only way that they get around. It's not like people could resort to driving or taking some alternate means of transportation.

So we just kind of built the fleet to accommodate what both carriers were doing at the time and have, you know, done our best to absorb the increased numbers from their fall out.

Yeah. We felt like that we had an obligation, and we still do, you know. We like having the obligation. We're happy to be here and serve the people that we're serving, you know, we never wanted to be the only outfit in town. It's nice for people to have an option of where to go and who to fly with and not feel like they're left with one person, one operator.

But that's where we're at today and so we're just, you know, staffing and making sure the fleet's appropriate to deal with it.

Q. That was going to lead to my next question with the increased demand in capacity, do you feel like you're keeping up with the staffing demands?

A. Yeah. I think we're doing pretty good with that. Yeah. We're still, you know, attempting to staff to where people get sufficient time off and feel like they're not overworked. Yeah. I think to some degree, people are -- you know, people are really happy to have an employer like Bering Air I think to work for, for the most part.

Of course, with any company, there's going to be people that have potential issues in their lives outside of work or issues with personnel at work that complicate their lives and feelings about where they're at, at that point in time in the their life. But for the most part, I think everyone's pretty happy to be working here for us.

Yeah, I think we're keeping up pretty well.

Q. And how many employees do you have?

A. We have -- it, of course, fluctuates a little bit, but right around 200, 215, I think is a real-close number right now.

Q. And that's contractors and employees?

A. Hm-hmm.

Q. Okay. Do you have pilots that are contracted, or are they all employees?

A. No. They're all employees.

Q. I guess we got your helicopter side but specifically talking to the president hat, what are you roles and duties as president?

A. On a day-to-day basis, or just kind of an overall? Both.

Q. Both. Yeah.

A. Just to oversee the entire operation as a whole from the -- the president manages the managers, essentially, and then helps or makes sure that they're fulfilling their roles properly to oversee their people.

And, then, I deal with acquisition, you know, of new aircraft and determining where we can spend money on facilities, deal with our accounting and financial people as to where we want to put investments, decisions on health care, decisions on 401(k), employee benefits, you know, adjustments to pay scales, adjustments to employee benefits packages, stuff like that.

So on a day-to-day basis, not directly involved with operational control of flight operations, but we are a pretty tight knit group in the office that we work in so at times do assist in helping make decisions throughout the day.

We also have -- I do sit in on interviews with pilots, mechanics. Most applications for any position in the company are run through my computer. Some of them more vetting by me than others, but I do get to see all of them and approve, you know, comment on them if needed.

Q. And you said you did sit in the interview, you're present for some of those?

A. If you say the interview, I don't know which one you're talking about specifically.

Q. A -- just in the process of, whether it's pilots or mechanics.

A. I don't sit in on all of them, no. But I do sit in on some of them.

Q. Okay.

A. Yeah.

Q. Which ones would you choose to sit in on?

A. I sit in on the majority of the pilot interviews.

Q. Talking about, you know, making sure the management's fulfilling their responsibilities, how do you interface with them and make sure that they are doing what you -- or is expected of them?

A. We have a management meeting every Wednesday so it's all verbal that we just get together at 10:30. It's an assigned time every Wednesday, and if someone's going to be out of the Center or the majority of people are going to absent, we reschedule for later in the week. But we have a management meeting every week --

Q. Every week, okay.

A. -- and discuss projects as needed. A lot of the -- and if there is more follow up that needs to happen with managers on certain projects, we can meet individually, but it's all done just in house verbally.

Q. Okay. Going, like, whether it's pilots or maybe boots on the ground, you know, whether it's a village agent or a mechanic, other employees, how does any news, concerns, how does that get to you at your level?

A. Everyone who works here has a direct line to me. We make it pretty clear from the beginning that if they want to talk to anyone in the Rowe family, they're more than welcome to email or call anytime.

Otherwise, we do have a safety report system where they can file a safety report; there's a link to that right on the website. So every customer, every employee can use that same link and post concerns there. Pilots have that link of their iPads so they can file them there as well.

Q. Do you feel like the pilots, for instance, would feel comfortable just to call you up and talk to you about it, would they -- do you feel like it's a pretty open-door policy culture?

A. Yeah. I feel like they would feel comfortable talking to me about it.

Q. I think, I can't recall how many, somebody told us how many flights a day you have, I don't recall what that number is.

Like, approximately how many scheduled flights do you have a day, and also like a month?

A. For the record, I prefer to look at a given day, you know, to give you a number that's going to be on the transcript.

Q. Okay.

A. We operate scheduled flights out of Nome and Unalakleet and Kotzebue, and the combination of those can vary, like, drastically depending on if you're talking about departures from our

26 village destinations or if you're talking about just from the hubs. So that number is quite a bit different depending on how someone looks at the flight.

I mean, one flight might do, you know, five destinations and sometimes the way you see that number reported as a departure from each destination.

So it's a lot different.

Q. Okay. I see. Is it -- is there a busy season?

A. No.

Q. Is it the same, summer, winter?

A. It's pretty much the same year round for the fixed-wing operation. Helicopters are definitely busier in the summer.

I can tell you that on the given day, on February 6th, we flew, I believe we flew 83 segments in Caravans that day.

Q. Really? Wow. That's a -- that paints a picture. Yeah, that's a lot of segments.

If you -- since we're there, let's go back to that day, can you walk me through your day and what you did?

A. Yeah. So the day started out fairly routine. I actually came to work a little bit later that day because I -- because of the school drop-off schedule for my children that day got switched around. My wife runs a veterinary clinic here in town, and she needed to be at work earlier so I took the -- the kids go to school at different times so I took the one that goes in a little later, he gets dropped off at nine. So I dropped him off and then came into work. So I didn't get into the hangar 'til 9:00.

And, then, what I did throughout the course of that day, it was just pretty routine, you know, it was answering a handful of emails about business-related stuff to different vendors we use and whatnot. There was nothing really too exciting to report.

As -- where it starts to get a little more interesting, right, is around the time that the aircraft goes missing.

So, then, I can say that I was in the office at that point with David Olson. I can't remember if Fen was in there at that time, or if he was around somewhere else in the facility. But David told me that, brought it to my attention that the tracker had stopped moving on the accident flight, and that Dispatch had -- isn't able to get ahold of the aircraft.

So, asking for some more information and gathering some more information, we found -- I found out that at the time I was notified, it had been about 20 minutes since last contact with the aircraft.

At that time, I knew that was odd and where the aircraft was located enroute to Nome, it should have been here by now or taxiing in. The fact that no one could get ahold of him kind of just put me into, like, a little over-drive mode to get to an emergency response going to that.

So, several of us at that point started kind of pulling the emergency response plan information and making sure we knew what to do from there.

I didn't spend a whole lot of time reading that at the time because I wanted to get the helicopters mobilized. Our POI was in the process of interviewing our new helicopter chief pilot, and so they were over here in the hangar we are in now doing that interview in an office.

I came directly over here. I met one of our guys that helps a lot with our helicopter missions in the hangar on the way and just made sure he wasn't about to go home. Said, stay here, do you have all your winter gear here. And I went into the office with the POI and our helicopter chief pilot and just said, we have an aircraft that's overdue, we need to start looking at mobilizing some helicopters.

We have -- we usually store our helicopters with the blades off of them because that's how you can fit more of them in the hangar, and they're designed to do that, you can take the blades on and off. It's not a big deal.

So we have one helicopter that we leave with the blades on. I instructed him to get the other helicopter pulled forward and have the blades installed, and I would take that one. I was going to go home and grab a few survival things to bring with me in the helicopter, personal stuff, in case we end up out there for a while. So I

left and got in my truck and drove home, grabbed some of my winter gear.

Meanwhile, they were getting the helicopters ready and got the helicopters outside and fueled. By the time I got back, you know, there was still no word from the aircraft.

I went up to the office. It was becoming a little more clear that we weren't going to be able to get to them with the helicopter with the weather that was around.

So I kind of just hung up my winter gear at that point and started helping with the emergency response plan, printed off the pages that were appropriate for the different managers.

There's, you know, a page for the Maintenance department, one for the director of operations, one for ground service manager, one for the customer service manager. Each one has a checklist that they would go through in the event of an emergency, and I made sure all of the people had it and were getting started on their list of things to do.

And, then, yeah, that was, you know, around 4:00, approximately 4:30, probably by then, an hour maybe or so had passed and then we spent the next, the rest of the night and the evening just going through the process with the state troopers who showed up and coordinating with Search and Rescue. We dispatched a King Air to go attempt to search in the area.

So staying in touch very closely with all of those operations.

I had to make a few phone calls to some of the families, members and stuff that were involved. Our pilot, in particular. The state troopers were actually handling all of the passenger's phone calls.

Yeah, there was a lot of busy work, obviously, being done until very late at night. And, then, we kind of recessed to rejoin up in the morning and be ready to go

out first daylight the next day, to hopefully get out there and find the aircraft.

MS. BLUM: Okay. I think that's going be all for my questions right now so I'm going to pass it to Paul.

MR. SUFFERN: Yeah. Thank you, Russell, for that. It's very helpful a lot. I don't have too many questions, and you did a great job kind of explaining what you do day to day.

BY MR. SUFFERN:

Q. As day to day as wearing the president hat, do you review any type of weather forecast or weather, or anything like that, or that's kind of out of purview?

A. I don't review it in any official capacity that it gets signed off or anything like that, or there's not a checklist or anything that I sign every day to review it, but just by the nature of the organization, we look at weather constantly from home, from work, from anywhere we're at.

Yeah, I'm reviewing the weather, the webcams, the TAF, the METARs, you know, every day as habit more than anything, but not necessarily as an official capacity for operational control.

Q. Okay. And, then, I guess, so do you still fly occasionally, anything like that?

A. Yes.

Q. When you're flying, what kind of weather resources do you review before your flight and things like that?

A. Sure. We look at a lot of different angles, you know, just try to use everything we can to paint our own picture of what happen.

So, personally, I like to use Alaska Aviation Weather Unit's page. I like to read the maps myself a little bit for 24/360 hour map, kind of come up with my

conclusion of what that might mean for the day.

And, then, I like to go to Windy.com and see what they -- how they interpreted that. And on Windy.com, I like to use the cloud ceiling one which is the icon with the little helicopter on it, you know, and you can see if it's -- what the ceilings, the cloud levels, are supposed to be.

And then, you know, area forecast is important to review.

I use AeroWeather as an app on my phone, and I have the whole west coast essentially. I have it broke down into different groups on AeroWeather so I have Nome base, which has all of our Nome-area destinations. And, then, I have Kotzebue, all of the Kotzebue-area destinations. And, then, I have the Yukon River as a group, we do end up on the Yukon River a lot with the helicopter side of the house.

You know, I can kind of scroll up and down those and see which ones are VFR, IFR and then if you got the low IFR ones then you can kind of hone in on that.

I use ForeFlight, and I put the weather on as a background layer so that you can kind of see the whole state, and, then, see where it's pink and blue and red. And that kind of gives you backup to what you're seeing on the 24/360 hour maps as well.

There's the forecast at Icing charts that we do look at, but not -- I guess I haven't found that one to be terribly accurate or useful. I mean, I think we kind of make our judgments on some of the icing based on some of the other charts. But that one, we do look at it too.

Q. What do you find challenging or not -- that's a terrible way to phrase that, I apologize.

What is about the Icing chart from the Aviation Weather Unit there, is it the difficulty, is it because of the accuracy, what you find when you and/or the pilots are

flying around as its (indiscernible)?

A. The Icing chart is like large segments of the Seward Peninsula, Unalakleet, there's large blocks, right, that categorize levels of icing in that area.

It's just that the State of Alaska and the sort of peninsula is so large that it can be completely different in one portion of that forecast area than it is in a different portion of it.

You could have waves of icing going through the middle of that forecast area. There could be an area of that that's affected by open water on the ocean, a large area of that's inland that's not getting icing.

I think -- there's nothing really challenging about it, I guess that's -- I wouldn't consider the chart challenging. It's just, I think -- it's a valuable tool to add to the list of things you're looking at, but you don't look at it all by itself and try to make a decision if there's going to be icing in a specific area.

Q. Would you say getting pilot reports of icing and weather there, Flight Service, whether they're on ForeFlight or anything like that, or what you're hearing via company radio, do you find those more valuable than the chart necessarily as far as --

A. I don't think any one piece is necessarily a whole bunch more valuable than the other. You just take every piece of information you can get from pilot reports to the Icing chart to the area forecast, and you put that all together and make your evaluation based on all of them. They're all important.

Q. In any of the weather resources that you, or that you discussed just in the last few minutes, any of them, could they be improved from your perspective as a pilot and, if so, how would you like them improved?

A. Well, I think everyone here's heard it from everyone that you've -- I imagine every you've talked to said the same thing, that we have issues constantly with

runways and AWOSs and
weather-reporting stations that are in-op.

So, that's the biggest challenge I think that we face with the weather-reporting systems is that they're just so consistently down for maintenance or maintenance issues, and that the resources and the funding doesn't really seem to be there to keep them operated consistently. We can't do instrument approaches or file instrument flight plans to places that have AWOSs that aren't operating.

As far as the webcams go, I mean, they face the same, you know, they face the same challenges. They're down a lot. The webcams are very useful and when they're not working in combination with the AWOSs aren't working, it kind of shuts us down for those destinations a lot, a lot of times.

Q. Outside of maintenance and things being kept up for what equipment is out there, is there any weather tool that you wish that you or your pilots had around the state that would be helpful, like, tons of weather radars, heart-beat information of turbulence or icing, you know, anything like that, you can of?

A. I don't know about heart-beat information for icing so I don't really know what that would look like or what it does, but I would hate to add more stuff to maintain when they can't maintain the current equipment.

So, yeah, I think we have a lot of awesome tools and a lot of good information on all these websites when the equipment's working, and the biggest ask that we would have would be to attempt to maintain them better and keep them working.

I don't know of any additional tools that we would need. I feel fortunate that we have the tools we have when they're working.

MR. SUFFERN: Thanks, Russell. That's all the questions I have.

Appreciate it.

MR. ROWE: Okay.

MR. PECK: I've only got a couple.

MR. ROWE: All right.

MR. PECK: It should be fairly easy here.

BY MR. PECK:

Q. You were talking about the safety reports, I think they're -- you get submitted, right, do you see many of them? Is there -- do you see quite a few?

A. Yeah, lots of them.

Q. Yeah.

A. Yeah, I get all of them, and I review all of them. And, then, we work with the different departments to make sure they're handled appropriate.

Q. So let's -- can you give us an example of, I don't know, if somebody slipped and fell or something like that, how would that go throughout the company in general?

A. So depending -- well, it shows up in an email so it shows up from the safety reporting system and an email, and you can set, in the parameters of the program, who gets the emails.

So if it's a maintenance-related safety report, it may go to certain people; and if it's a flight operation safety report, it goes to certain people, and so on.

And, then, upper levels of management are included in all of them. So I have just, you know, I wanted to be included in all of them so I can see the overall safety of the outfit, of the company.

Yeah, it just shows up as an email, and we check our emails constantly so that's where you see them.

Is that what you're asking?

Q. Yeah. Is there, like, accountability to get to an end, right --

A. Right.

Q. -- type of deal?

A. Yeah. I mean, the safety reporting program is -- always been -- it's a work in progress like everything, and accountability to the end is just the responsibility of the manager of that department.

So seeing it through and then our -- the program is supposed to be that the safety manager would follow up with department heads to pressure them to follow through, if needed, if they weren't doing it on their own.

Q. Just more of a curiosity thing when you guys are running your overdue checklist, emergency checklist for the overdue aircraft, was there anything you guys learned because they don't get run very often?

A. Yeah. We learned a lot.

Q. I bet.

A. We had all been a part of reviewing that when it was written. But, you know, you -- it's different than implementing it.

We learned that we were very thankful to have it. It really, really helped in those times of stress when you're trying to make sure you do all the right steps, right.

So, yeah, I think everyone was super grateful that we had that in place and knew where it was and knew to start implementing it right away.

But we certainly will have a few revisions to make to it. Nothing that was detrimental to the evening or the days following, but there's little tweaks and revisions that we can make now that we've had to go through it, for sure.

MR. PECK: Okay.

MS. BLUM: Brian.

MR. WECKWERTH: No. I don't have any clarifying or any questions for Russell.

BY MS. BLUM:

Q. So along that same vein of Rob's question, it doesn't have to be about the emergency response plan, but since the accident, have there been any discussions or changes in policy, in safety, has there been any discussion since the accident?

A. There's certainly been discussion about policies and reviewing policies, but we -- as far as related to the accident, the policies and procedures that we have in place, we feel are pretty robust and have worked for us for many years.

We'll continue to evaluate them and see if there's gaps or places that we can improve on them, but nothing, nothing to report really in regard to changes at this point.

Q. Okay. And prior to the accident, it doesn't necessarily have to be policy or anything, was there any goals or projects or next steps that you were already talking about taking as a company that you'd like to share?

A. I'm trying to think. We have recently been implementing a new safety reporting system just because we're trying to improve the system we had.

We had been working with an outfit that was kind of hosting our safety reporting system, and we've changed to a different one, different platform. And that was to streamline -- so the one that we switched to, we also work with in other capacities in the company, and we're looking forward to the safety reporting system being easier to follow through on all the follow-up afterwards.

Other than that, we are working through SMS processes, building those

manuals to be prepared for implementation of that when the time comes.

So we're doing a fair amount of SMS-type stuff already, but that's kind of a big project that will be ongoing. The FAA's, you know, made that to where it's going to be required for Part 135 operators in the future so we've been working through that process.

Q. Are working through that internally, or are you seeking outside --

A. Internally.

Q. Internally?

A. Hm-hmm.

Q. Do you plan on sourcing outside? I know there's, I don't know, other companies that help streamline that. Do you think you'll bring somebody in?

A. Yeah. There are safety reporting system that, or the company we're using for our safety reporting system, also does, do SMS programs and help with that. Part of our safety reporting system will get incorporated into the SMS program.

Q. I guess my second to last question here, you know, as a leader, a president, a family-owned business, what is your leadership philosophy that you try to impart to your employees?

A. I guess I would just say that we try to encourage all of our employees to show up to work with a positive attitude and impart a positive impression on your co-workers throughout the day, support each other in your operations.

We like to keep an open door to the management group so that we all feel like we're one big team here together.

We don't have a specific policy, per se, a phrase written down or anything that I can tell you, but just that we're all kind of in this company together as a big family and that we try to support each other on our day-to-day activities and come up with the

best possible outcome for our customers and the company as a whole.

Q. I guess also along the lines of fostering, how do you foster a culture of safety, especially with unique challenges that are in Alaska?

A. Right. Yeah. Fostering the culture of safety is definitely very important for us, and I think we do that by showing that we care about the company. We're here working every day, and we involve ourselves with interviews and discussions early on.

We do extended IOE periods with our pilots so that we get to know them a lot better, and they get to know what's expected out of the company. That's always been a unique thing at Bering Air is the extended IOE period for the pilots.

As far as the rest of the company goes, they see that, and they hear about that in the break room from the pilots and from management that that's what we're doing. And the reason we're doing that is to -- is for the safety of the operation.

The Maintenance department does something similar where they, you know, spend a lot of time and oversight on new mechanics when they come in. We have a maintenance apprenticeship program where we're building our own mechanics, right, where we have mechanics that are mechanic's helpers for a period of time until they have enough documented experience that they can go out and test for their licenses on their own.

By, I guess, what you would say, building your own mechanics, building, or helping bring pilots up through the ranks, we can instill the culture that we want them to experience at an early age and an early stage in their career so that by the time the get to be the experienced mechanic, line pilot, dispatcher, they've been here and worked in close contact with other experienced people that are helping us foster that culture or helping us build that culture.

So I think in talking in circles around to get there, we try to bring people

up from -- we try to keep people here for a long period of time, I guess. We try to keep the turnover levels lower. We do that by paying well, giving good benefits and, you know, there's just a lot of value in keeping people here for

10, 15, 20 years as opposed to having the turnover that happens so often in Alaska.

It seems like when people come out to these remote communities, it's hard to get people to live and work in Nome, Alaska or in Kotzebue, you know, it's kind of off the road system. It's a little bit off the beaten path.

But when we try to show them the beauty of where we live and the things that there are to do outside of work, give people enough time off to where they can go out and experience the outdoors out here, and hire people that we think are going to like it out here, and try to limit the amount of people that we have on rotational schedules, try to get people that actually want to live in these communities.

We do have programs with the high school and University of Alaska Fairbanks where we encourage local hire. We've been fortunate that with local-hire types, they stick around a lot longer. So if we can hire from our villages and our surrounding communities, we've had really good luck with those people sticking around a long time.

All of that I think contributes to the overall safety of the operation when you get people that feel like they're invested in the company, feel like they're part of it and not just a number. That helps them care more about the outcome at the end of the day.

Q. Is there anything that we didn't ask you that you wish we would have, or you'd like to share with us?

A. No.

Q. Okay. And do you think there's anyone we should talk to help us that we, that you already know who we talked to or we're going to tomorrow, is there anything else you suggest to help, you think would aid us in this process, whether it's a person or --

A. I would just say that I hope as the process goes on that Bering Air has access to the information that's on the FAST box and the SIM card that were in the aircraft, and that we are, at some point, asked to help decipher some of that.

We have pilots here that have over 20,000 hours in the Caravan. We have mechanics that know the aircraft, I would say, better than anyone at Textron knows the aircraft.

The engineers know the aircraft at Textron at some level, and then we know it at an operational level for the environment that we work in.

So going forward, that would be a request of ours. And I think you might have heard that from others is that there just might be some angles on the G1000 information and on the FAST box information that I feel like we could connect some dots there to see what happened where it might get overlooked if it's someone with less experience in the aircraft.

So at some point down the road, I hope we get to see some of that information so we can see what the engine was doing and different parameters that would be interesting there to help make a conclusion.

MS. BLUM: Okay. We really appreciate your time, and we're going to conclude this interview at 3:57 p.m.

(Whereupon, at 3:57 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

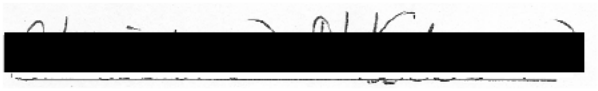
CERTIFICATE

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 Russell Rowe
ACCIDENT NO.:	ANC25MA018
PLACE:	Nome, Alaska
DATE:	February 16, 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:	*	
FATAL COMMUTER PLANE CRASH NEAR NOME, ALASKA ON FEBRUARY 6, 2025	*	Accident No.: ANC25MA018

Interview of: DONNA ERICKSON, Unalakleet Village Agent

Bering Air - Unalakleet

Bering Air
Unalakleet, Alaska

Tuesday,
March 18, 2025

APPEARANCES:

STACIA JOYCE, Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)

BRIAN WECKWERTH, Representative
(On behalf of Donna Erickson)

I N D E X

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I N T E R V I E W

MS. JOYCE: Okay. This is Stacia Joyce with the NTSB interviewing Donna Erickson --

MS. ERICKSON: Correct.

MS. JOYCE: -- about Bering Air accident, ANC25MA018.

INTERVIEW OF DONNA ERICKSON

BY MS. JOYCE:

Q. Donna, can you spell your name?

A. D-o-n-n-a, Donna, Erickson, E-r-i-c-k-s-o-n.

Q. And how long have you been with Bering Air?

A. 28 years maybe. I can't remember. Going on 30.

Q. And what's your title?

A. I've been the village agent for Unalakleet for the entire time, and several times I've been given the title of station manager --

Q. Okay.

A. -- but I just manage everything here and make sure we keep our schedules, somebody's always at the counter.

Q. Okay. What are other duties and responsibilities that you do in regards to the airplanes and the other agency?

A. I just make sure that everyone -- that the counter is always covered with workers, and --

Q. Do you train the new --

A. Yes, I train, I train all new employees.

Q. And how do you train them? What guidance do you have for

training?
A. I teach them how we operate and how to answer the phone, how to take reservations, how to use Take Flight, how to do manifests?
Q. Is there a manual that you follow, that Bering Air has for you?
A. We do have an agent manual, yes.
Q. Okay.
A. We go -- I give them a manual when they first are employed and to study it and follow it, yep.
Q. Okay. And then you kind of do their onboarding like supervise them until they get --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- on their feet?
A. Yeah, for 30 days.
Q. Thirty days.
A. Um-hum.
Q. Okay.
A. And then they have a 3 month trial period and then -- and if they are good to go, they're good to go.
Q. Good to go?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. And one of the other responsibilities, you guys help check the weather for the pilots. Is that right?
A. Every day.
Q. Every day.

A. Um-hum.
Q. And what sources do you use to do that?
A. We use FAA and NOAA --
Q. Okay.
A. -- on the computer.
Q. Okay. Do you ever check -- what pages do you kind of know off the top of your head?
A. I always use the webcams every day, look at weather in the villages, and then we look at the forecast in the past --
MS. ERICKSON: Oh, I want Brian in here, my -- are you supposed to ask?
MS. JOYCE: Oh, yeah. I'm sorry. Thank you. Do you want a -- did I say -- I thought I did.
MR. WECKWERTH: No.
MS. ERICKSON: No.
MS. JOYCE: Do you want a representative here?
MS. ERICKSON: Yes.
MS. JOYCE: Yes. Thank you for reminding me.
MS. ERICKSON: I would like Brian Weckwerth in here.
MS. JOYCE: Thank you.
MR. WECKWERTH: I'm not so bad.
MS. ERICKSON: You left him out.
MS. JOYCE: Yeah. Thank you for reminding me.
MS. ERICKSON: Yeah.
BY MS. JOYCE:

Q. Yeah, okay. The weather. Sorry. What other pages? Do you know like off the top of your head?
A. I mostly use the webcam and then we look at the forecast, for example, for Saint Michael. We go to the NOAA, minute by minute weather observation.
MS. ERICKSON: I forget what that's called Brian. It's just a --
MR. WECKWERTH: Surface observation.
MS. ERICKSON: Yeah, surface ops.
BY MS. JOYCE:
Q. Okay. Surface observation.
A. Yeah.
Q. Yeah. Do you check icing forecasts?
A. Yeah, we look at the icing if there's any pilot ice reps on the map --
Q. Okay.
A. -- every day.
Q. Um-hum.
A. And then we read those.
Q. The PIREPs?
A. Um-hum.
Q. Yep. And then do you help make like go, no go -- like you guys can switch the routing of the planes based on weather.
A. Um-hum.
Q. What is the weather criteria for you to make those changes?

A. As far as weather for making changes, if it's blowing over 40, we often -- and we won't go to a certain town or visibility is less than about I would say -- I know it's a mile, but with the younger pilots, I usually say if it's 2 miles or less, I don't think you should go there and then I call dispatch in Nome and we talk about it with the dispatcher.

Q. Okay. And then those weather calls, you talk -- so that's before the pilot gets here.

A. Um-hum.

Q. If you're kind of already --

A. We're planning the day. We're planning flights.

Q. Yeah.

A. The upcoming flights for the next few hours.

Q. Um-hum.

A. If the weather's bad and if we need to cancel, we'll cancel.

Q. Okay.

A. And we'll tell them, you're going to sit here or we're going to have you go on a different -- we're going to change things around and you're going to go north instead of south.

Q. Gotcha.

A. Because down south it's foggy.

Q. Um-hum. Okay. Is that -- are those standards in the manual that you were talking about, the training manual that you use? Are those listed, you know, those weather --

A. They're in our safety manual. We have a safety manual in

this -- what is this thing right here? This --

MR. WECKWERTH: Gray cabinet.

MS. ERICKSON: Cabinet. That cabinet. We have a safety manual, and we have the agent manual in there.

BY MS. JOYCE:

Q. Okay.

A. And then when we get new memos, we print them out and put them in there.

Q. Okay. And so the weather minimums are in the safety manual or are they in the agent manual?

A. We learn that by our job. I don't know if they're in there. I can't remember.

Q. Okay.

A. Just by doing it daily.

Q. Right.

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. When passengers come in with their -- like let's say somebody's been here for a few days. They come in to check in for their flight, what's that process like when somebody comes to check in?

A. They come into the counter. We weigh their bags. We get their body weight, enter them in the computer and tell them your flight leaves at this time, and they can either stay here. If it's many hours away, they have to be back at a certain time.

Q. Okay. Do you weigh just their bags that are going to be in

the pod?
A. No, we weigh their hand carries and their bags --
Q. Okay.
A. -- together.
Q. So they're --
A. And we put that down in Take Flight as their weight.
Q. Okay.
A. And then we charge -- if there's excess, we charge them.
Q. Okay. And what is the excess of --
A. 100 pounds. Each passenger is allowed 100 pounds. If you're over that, you have to pay.
Q. Okay. And then who determined the weight and balance for the airplane?
A. The pilot.
Q. Do you know how they do that?
A. They have -- they know how much fuel they have when they get here that's on board, and then they give us a number. It's usually, for a Caravan, if they're full of fuel, they usually can take 2800 pounds at the maximum.
Q. Okay. And is that a standard load then?
A. Usually. It's lower when they have more fuel, if the weather's bad or if it's iffy --
Q. Um-hum.
A. -- they'll have more fuel on board and then it's a lighter load. If they have freight on board that they're going to the

next village, that takes a big chunk off, too.
Q. Um-hum.
A. So.
Q. So like on this particular day, on this particular flight, that flight would have landed here straight out of Nome, right?
A. Um-hum.
Q. And so what would be the typical load that that airplane would take from here to do the --
A. 2800.
Q. 2800.
A. Um-hum.
Q. Okay.
A. It can be 3,000 but we always go by 28.
Q. Okay. So -- and so when he got here, it was slight atypical because he first went to Saint Michaels [sic].
A. Um-hum.
Q. So -- and then what's the flight time between here and Saint Michaels?
A. 20 minutes.
Q. 20 minutes. What's the flight time between here and Nome?
A. 45 minutes, 45 to 50 minutes.
Q. Nome. Okay. What is the flight time from Nome to Saint Michaels?
A. From Nome, 45 minutes.
Q. Same distance then, or same time from Nome.

A. Yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. When I heard Chad on the radio, he told Flight Service that he had 2 hours of fuel left.
Q. Two hours of fuel.
A. I think. I was listening to him on the radio at home.
Q. Um-hum.
A. And I was going to -- butt in and tell him, come back, but I changed my mind. I thought that wasn't wise.
Q. Come back for more fuel.
A. No, come back to Unalakleet because the weather in Nome was -- the runway had closed.
Q. Oh, okay. Gotcha. Yeah. That's right because you were listening to Flight Service.
A. Well, it was just on my radio at home?
Q. Uh-huh, yeah. Yeah. So you heard him file on line or --
A. I heard him on my radio. I don't know. Usually -- I just have a company radio --
Q. Yeah.
A. -- but I can hear Nome. My house is so tall, the antenna's so high --
Q. Yeah.
A. -- I can hear.
Q. So do you -- are you able to hear the pilots --
A. We can't here, but at home I can.

Q. Oh, gotcha. Yeah, because you have the birds nest.
A. Yeah.
Q. Yeah. Can you -- what other frequencies do you listen to? I'm just curious.
A. I just listen to Bering Air.
Q. Just the 22.9?
A. Yeah.
Q. Yeah. But you heard him on Flight Service that day?
A. I don't know if he was telling person dispatch that he talked to Flight Service. I just heard his conversation on his side, not the other side.
Q. Right, yeah. Because -- so you heard him on Bering Air's frequency?
A. Yeah.
Q. Report that he had 2 hours of fuel.
A. Yeah. He was telling -- I think he was talking to Chris. I'm not sure.
Q. Okay. Okay. And that was when he was told -- do you know why he said that to Chris?
A. Because they closed the runway in Nome.
Q. Okay. So he called Chris at Bering Air and said, hey, I'm going to circle or what did he say?
A. Yeah.
Q. So.
A. I just heard him say, I'll go in a pattern here for a while.

Q. Okay. And then he ended and he said he has 2 hours of gas at that point?
A. Um-hum. I just heard him say 2 hours --
Q. Okay.
A. -- of fuel.
Q. Okay. And then that was right before they lost contact with him?
A. I think so.
Q. Yeah.
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. So I just turned my radio off after I heard him say that. I don't know why. I honestly had a bad feeling.
Q. Did you?
A. Yeah.
Q. Yeah.
A. I turned my radio off, and I went in the kitchen and I was making dinner, and I got -- I don't know why I got really mad. I wanted to go back to the radio and tell Chad to come back in my instinct.
Q. Yeah.
A. It was really bizarre, and my husband was like, what's wrong with you?
Q. Yeah. That sixth sense.
A. Yeah.

Q. Yeah.
A. Because I didn't like the weather in Nome.
Q. Yeah. What was the weather in Nome?
A. It sounded like it was icing, but I don't really know because I was not working, and I never looked at the computer.
Q. Right.
A. What I did do was I stopped on the road and saw the plane here, and I called Allie (ph.) and I said, who's here today? I saw the -- was it 321, yeah. I saw 321 sitting up here.
Q. Um-hum.
A. And she told me Chad was hanging out for the day.
Q. Do all of the pilots take the same route between Nome and Unalakleet? Do they all go direct or do they --
A. It depends on the flight.
Q. Okay.
A. Flight 830 is direct. Flight 810 goes Nome, Koyuk, Shaktoolik and Unalakleet.
Q. And then when they -- when the flights that leave Unalakleet for Nome, do they all go the same?
A. No, there's schedules.
Q. No, I mean just the flight path. Like, you know, do they ever follow the coast versus going across or do you guys monitor that or --
A. Well, our flights, we accommodate passengers at Ravn. So our flight 812 brings Shaktoolik passengers home on the way to Nome.

So they go the north coast route.
Q. Okay.
A. And then flight 450 now, it used to be the other number, we accommodate Saint Michael's passengers back home.
Q. Okay.
A. Like we have a passenger out here going waiting for his flight to Stebbins. That plane goes to Nome.
Q. Okay. He's the guy that's asleep?
A. Yeah, yeah. Yep.
Q. He's got a long wait.
A. Um-hum.
Q. Okay.
A. Our direct flights are in the morning on 810 to Nome.
Q. Okay. What documents do you -- do you print out the weather or do you give anything to the pilots before they depart or --
A. We get them their manifest with all the weights that we put on.
Q. Okay. That little paper one, right, that you showed me?
A. That's a handwritten one.
Q. That's handwritten. So do you print it off of Take Flight?
A. Um-hum.
Q. Okay.
A. And when they're stopping in a village, we handwrite what we put on because -- we always handwrite flights that start with 8. Our station flights start with 4, Unalakleet Station. So we print

all four flights and then the ones that originate in Nome, we handwrite --

Q. Okay.

A. -- even though it's on Take Flight.

Q. Okay. And, do you know -- well, that weight -- the weights on that day, those don't -- those are just passengers. They don't include Chad's weight.

A. No.

Q. Okay.

A. And Allie's very accurate. She's a very good worker. She always weighs hand carries. She's very accurate on her weights.

Q. Um-hum.

A. She's a real stickler on that.

Q. Yeah, you guys are obviously very organized which is great. It's obvious. And then when the pilot calls in for the load, you guys know already what the passenger load will be, right?

A. Um-hum.

Q. And so then you let Arctic know --

A. Um-hum.

Q. -- what he can get together, what can they take that flight.

A. Um-hum.

Q. And then how does he prioritize what goes --

A. Well, he puts Saint Michael, Stebbins in different pods, like if we're going on Flight 4-5-0 to Saint Michael, Stebbins, Nome, pod 1 will be Saint Michael. Pod 2 will be Stebbins. Pod 3 and 4

will be Nome.
Q. Gotcha. Makes sense.
A. Um-hum.
Q. Okay. Gosh, I think that's --
A. And he knows what can go behind the net and --
Q. Oh, yeah. He --
A. Yeah.
Q. Yeah. In the inside.
A. Um-hum.
Q. Is there anything else that you think would be helpful for us to know that I haven't asked you or that, you know, maybe we don't know to ask you or anything you can think of?
A. Well, safety's been our priority since Bering Air, since I started back in the day.
Q. Okay.
A. We've always made it very important, you know, this maintenance crew, top notch. Everything very safe.
Q. Yeah.
A. Yeah.
Q. That's good. Good group.
A. Um-hum.
Q. Great. All right. Well, I'm going to stop this.
(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

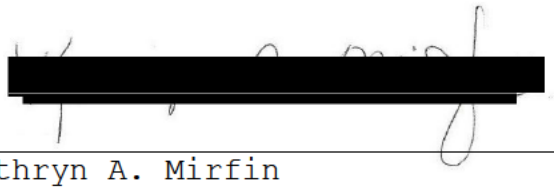
CERTIFICATE

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 Donna Erickson
ACCIDENT NO.:	ANC25MA018
PLACE:	Unalakleet, Alaska
DATE:	March 18, 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.



Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	*	
FATAL COMMUTER PLANE CRASH NEAR NOME, ALASKA ON FEBRUARY 6, 2025	*	Accident No.: ANC25MA018

Interview of: ARCTIC IVANOFF

West Coast

Bering Air
Unalakleet, Alaska

Tuesday,
March 18, 2025

APPEARANCES:

STACIA JOYCE, Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

BRIAN WECKWERTH, Representative
(On behalf of Arctic Ivanoff)

I N D E X

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I N T E R V I E W

MS. JOYCE: All right. This is Stacia Joyce with the NTSB here talking with Arctic Ivanoff in regards to the Bering Air accident, ANC25MA018. Today is the 18th. And, Arctic, do I have your permission to record this interview?

MR. IVANOFF: Yes.

MS. JOYCE: And would you like a representative here?

MR. IVANOFF: Yeah.

MS. JOYCE: Who is that?

MR. IVANOFF: Brian.

MS. JOYCE: Thank you. Brian -- do you know his last name?

MR. WECKWERTH: Weckwerth.

MR. IVANOFF: Weckwerth.

MS. JOYCE: Okay. All right. Thanks, Arctic.

INTERVIEW OF ARCTIC IVANOFF

BY MS. JOYCE:

Q. Arctic, can you just tell me about the day of the accident, kind of just what, just what -- just about the day? What happened. How the day started. Everything.

A. From my recollection, it was fairly nice from the start, and then it kind of -- it was like this off and on snow squalling throughout the day.

Q. Okay. How long have you been with Bering Air?

A. I'm not under Bering Air, but I'm with West Coast. So I help Bering Air flights.

Q. Okay.
A. This is -- I've just been with West Coast for about a year now.
Q. Okay.
A. A little over a year.
Q. So you work with all the other operators. Is that right? You work for NAC or not for, but you help --
A. Yeah, we help turn Bering, NAC, Everts, Ravn.
Q. Okay. So you work for -- yeah, solely basically.
A. Yep.
A. Okay. So that day -- so when you're here, what are the things that you do to help turn airplanes? What kind of jobs do you do? What are the things you do?
A. My job mostly is just help with Bering Air pilots loading up planes, getting their loads ready for them and --
Q. What does that entail? When you say getting a load ready, what is that?
A. Loading up like bypass. If they can take bypass. If it's passengers, then load up passenger bags and maybe some cargo stuff.
Q. Okay. So when the pilot's inbound, you've already -- you have all of the stuff --
A. Usually, yeah.
Q. -- your customer service folks weigh that and put it on the carts.

A. Yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. For the passengers anyways, and then usually with the bypass and stuff, that's usually pre-weighed already.
Q. Okay.
A. And so there's a weight on them already. So we get all the numbers and stuff from the bypass, on the big stickers.
Q. Oh, on the boxes themselves and things.
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. And then how does that work? How do you know what to load?
A. So I usually wait until they call in, and they'll -- the pilots will tell me a load, and --
Q. What's a typical load that they would tell you?
A. Mainly it's been I'd say about 26 roughly, like depending on how much fuel they have.
Q. But like a flight like today --
A. Um-hum.
Q. -- that day, when they come from Nome to here, what's a typical setup?
A. Their first load is usually pretty light.
Q. Light being?
A. 20.
Q. Okay.
A. 24, 22.

Q. Okay.
A. Around there.
Q. Okay.
A. And then usually they -- if they can take more, they'll bump it up, but it all depends on how much fuel they have on board.
Q. Okay. And then -- so you get that information.
A. Um-hum.
Q. And then what do you do?
A. Once I get that information, I go into the back, depending if there's passengers on the plane for that routing anyways --
Q. Um-hum.
A. -- if there's no passengers, then I just go in the back, get all of my bypass numbers, double check them.
Q. So let's say they say 2600.
A. Um-hum.
Q. And then you get the passenger manifest?
A. I don't get the passenger manifest. I just ask if there's passengers on board or not.
Q. Okay.
A. And then from there, I get the load, like bypass that meets under -- I usually go lighter. So I go lower but --
Q. I guess I'm just wondering how -- so they say there's passengers.
A. Um-hum.
Q. Do they tell you how many?

A. Yeah, they'll how much and like what his load's at already with the passengers weights and bags.
Q. Okay.
A. And then I kind of -- if there's enough to add a small pallet --
Q. Okay.
A. -- then I'll add a small pallet.
Q. Okay.
A. But --
Q. And then when the plane gets here --
A. Um-hum.
Q. -- you go out and offload the plane?
A. Um-hum.
Q. With the carts.
A. Yep.
Q. Is that right?
A. Yeah, depending on how much they get, then usually I bring like a pallet with me out there, too --
Q. Okay.
A. -- and put it on the pallet.
Q. Gotcha.
A. It all depends.
Q. Um-hum. And then once you offload the plane --
A. Um-hum.
Q. -- and the pilot's kind of checking the weather --

A. Um-hum.
Q. -- and then what do you do now?
A. I get all the -- their -- the bypass and bring it over to the plane and just stage it for now, and then I tell them what their loads at, and they say, okay, sounds good.
Q. Okay.
A. And then we just -- the pilots will tell me what pallets to load on first and then we go from there.
Q. Okay. And where do you -- so the pilot tells you that it's good, and they tell you -- when you say they tell you which pallet to put on first, what does that mean?
A. Usually, pilots vary between their loads, like what -- some of them like to have heavy stuff on the bottom, and then put lighter stuff on top. Some people like to have the heavy stuff first and so we get --
Q. When you say on the bottom, what do you -- when you say bottom, what do you mean?
A. Up top where all the seats and stuff are.
Q. In the airplane or --
A. Um-hum.
Q. Okay.
A. In the airplane.
Q. Okay. But when there's passengers there.
A. Then we got -- there's -- the pilots know this, but it's like the second railing is typically how far you want to go out, and

they it can't exceed above the windows.
Q. Okay. And so you're talking about the very back of the plane. Is that right?
A. Just the whole plane. So, from behind the pilot's chair back all the way to the end of the plane.
Q. Okay.
A. Does that make sense?
Q. I think so. And then there's that very back part. So if you had full seats, if every seat was full like that, like Chad's plane --
A. Um-hum.
Q. -- every seat was full --
A. I -- in that case, I don't even put anything else on there. I just had the passengers and bags on there because --
Q. Okay. No cargo.
A. Yeah, no cargo.
Q. Okay. Okay. So in that instance, who -- where do you put the -- how do you know where to put the bags? Like if there's no cargo, and it's just people, how do you know where to put everything?
A. All the bags will just go in the pods.
Q. Okay.
A. And so, from there, usually it's -- I don't know. I just -- as long as all the bags fit in the pods and behind the net, it should be it.

Q. Okay. And then so --
A. That's from my understanding.
Q. Okay. No. Yeah, that's, that's all you speak to, right. So if it's just passengers, and it's just bags --
A. Um-hum.
Q. -- then you just put them in the pod or in the back. Do you like -- is there one -- or things that you would put in the pod that you wouldn't put in the back or vice versa?
A. As for that, like if we're sending meds to Nome, I -- there might have been meds on that flight, but I'm not -- I can't remember. That would just go behind the net because if it's in the pods, it would just freeze, and then meds get --
Q. Gotcha.
A. -- discontaminated or whatever.
Q. Yeah, right, right, right.
A. So.
Q. Okay. So, do you remember that flight? Do you remember loading that flight?
A. A little bit, yeah.
Q. Yeah. It's been a long time.
A. Yeah.
Q. Yeah.
A. Chad and I were both out there. We were just loading up his plane, and then he, he -- looked at his wings and stuff, and he was like -- yeah. He like scraped off some snow, and he was like,

it's not sticking. So that's good. And then -- yeah. Well, it's been a minute but --

Q. Do you remember if Chad, and I think you've been asked, do you remember if he checked the TKS fluid that day?

A. He said he had enough TKS. He said he was good on TKS from what he told me, but he did ask if we had a TKS fluid on hand, and I told him we have TKS fluid around if he needed it, but he said he was all set on TKS.

Q. Now, you had mentioned when you were showing me things that the -- you do not have a pump here that -- to pump fluid like handy. It's here but it's over in the other hangar. Is that right? Or can you just talk --

A. So we have -- so West Coast, we have our own set of barrels, but we don't have a pump for those barrels.

Q. Okay.

A. Bering has their barrels and the pump on with theirs.

Q. Okay. And where is that?

A. So our -- West Coast's TKS is in the warm storage in the back. It's in the tin building, and then the TKS with the pump is down at their new hangar that they're building.

Q. Okay.

A. And so it's also inside.

Q. Okay. So, would a pilot have to taxi the airplane down there?

A. What would happen is I would jump in the loader. The pilot

would come with me to open up the door, and I would grab the TKS --

Q. Gotcha.

A. -- bring it down and then pump it in.

Q. So it would take a little bit?

A. Yeah.

Q. Yeah.

A. I mean even with like deicing, it would take a minute because we have deicing fluid, deicer in the back, and we also have like a -- we call it egg. It's a small like 50 gallon tank with a garden hose.

Q. Okay.

A. With glycol in it.

Q. And do you use that on the jets or --

A. Usually just anything -- it's just on hand.

Q. Is that something you use on Bering Air planes or --

A. Not most of the time.

Q. Okay.

A. A lot of times we ask the pilots first if they need deicing, and they'll usually let us know, too, hey, I might need deicing.

Q. Okay.

A. Is there deicing on hand? And it's like, yeah. So.

Q. Let's see. Do you know how Chad determines where to put bags, the weight and balance? Do you know how -- or not just Chad, but how any pilots do that? Do you know?

A. As for the weights and stuff, I'm not too sure. Usually they'll tell us to load 1 and 2 first with bags.
Q. What's 1 and 2?
A. So, the front pod like underneath the pilot's seat.
Q. Under the -- okay. Gotcha. Because there's the pods in two different --
A. Yeah.
Q. Gotcha.
A. So.
Q. Okay.
A. Usually I get Nome bags in one and then like if you have another stop, in like Saint Michael or Stebbins, two, three.
Q. Okay. What do you normally put inside the plane? Like is there -- are there certain items, like you mentioned the meds and stuff like that?
A. Um-hum.
Q. What else would you put in behind the net?
A. If there's just other bags that are -- that can't fit underneath. Like if there's a big tote that can't -- some totes could fit in 2, but not all of them.
Q. Um-hum.
A. So most of the times totes will have to go up top.
Q. Okay. Is there a weight limit to the pod?
A. There is.
Q. Do you know how much it is?

A. Pod 1 is like 230, yeah, 230. Pod 2 is like 320 or something like that.
Q. Okay.
A. But usually bags don't weigh that much --
Q. Okay.
A. -- usually.
Q. Okay. Let's see. I -- so do you weigh the cargo or do you weigh any of the bags or anything?
A. I don't weigh the bags, but I'll help just load up the carts and make the job easier for the girls --
Q. Okay.
A. -- because sometimes some of the stuff are pretty heavy.
Q. Yeah.
A. So.
Q. Okay. But -- and the bypass mail already comes weighed?
A. Yeah, that's pre-weighed.
Q. Okay. And then any of the cargo -- does anybody ship cargo on the planes?
A. Yes, DSSD occasionally comes by and drops stuff off and I -- yeah, I weigh it up in the back.
Q. Okay. And that's the Bering School District?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. And so you'll weigh, if they bring something to put on a flight?
A. Um-hum.

Q. Okay. Is there anything that I haven't asked you, Arctic, that you think might be valuable that I haven't thought to ask you about or that you want to mention?
A. I could probably mention the broom that Chad used, it was outside. It's been outside, and I don't know like if -- I don't know. It's just been outside, the broom that he used anyways.
Q. Did he have quite a bit of snow accumulated on the wings?
A. There was some snow that I like briefly saw it. I like -- I thought he was right behind me when we walked in, but he like -- I like walked in, used the rest room, walked back out and then I saw that he was -- he had the broom in his hand and I was like, oh, shoot.
Q. Would that be something that you normally help with is sweeping off the wings?
A. At that point, I would have just grabbed the ladder and helped, you know, move it around for him, but --
Q. Yeah. But do you think there was -- was there an accumulation of snow on the wings?
A. I can't say for certain, but -- because I -- like I said, I just briefly saw that he was brushing a little bit.
Q. How much snow would there have to be for a pilot to want to sweep it off or --
A. I'm not too sure.
Q. Yeah. Is that -- I mean they obviously use the broom because it's --

A. Yeah.
Q. -- it's outside.
A. Yeah. So. Yeah, as far as anything like that, we would leave it up to the pilot-in-command.
Q. Makes sense. Is there anything else?
A. No, that would be it.
Q. Okay.
(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

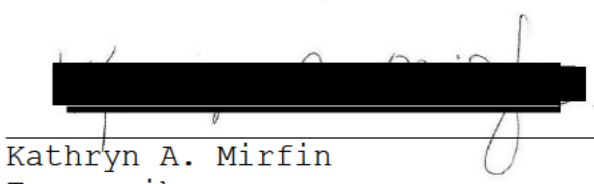
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This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	FATAL COMMUTER PLANE CRASH NEAR NOME, ALASKA ON FEBRUARY 6, 2025 Interview of Arctic Ivanoff
ACCIDENT NO.:	ANC25MA018
PLACE:	Unalakleet, Alaska
DATE:	March 18, 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.



Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	
FATAL COMMUTER PLANE CRASH NEAR NOME, ALASKA ON FEBRUARY 6, 2025	Accident No.: ANC25MA018

Interview of: Erin Sookiayak, Customer Service Representative

Bering Air

Bering Air
Unalakleet, Alaska

Tuesday,
March 18, 2025

APPEARANCES:

STACIA JOYCE, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)

BRIAN WECKWERTH, Representative
(On behalf of Erin Sookiayak)

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I N T E R V I E W

MS. JOYCE: This is Stacia Joyce, investigator with the NTSB and we are talking to Erin Sookiayak. Did I say that right? No, I didn't. Concerning an accident with Bering Air ANC25MA018. Erin is a customer service rep with Bering Air. Erin, I'm going to have you spell your name again. So if you could go ahead and just spell your name.

MS. SOOKIAYAK: (Indiscernible).

MS. JOYCE: Yeah.

MS. SOOKIAYAK: E-r-i-n S-o-o-k-i-a-y-a-k.

MS. JOYCE: And Erin, we're interviewing you about this accident. Do you -- is there a representative that you would like to be -- to have present? Just say --

MS. SOOKIAYAK: Brian.

MS. JOYCE: And then Erin, is it okay if I record this conversation?

MS. SOOKIAYAK: It's okay, yeah.

MS. JOYCE: Thank you.

INTERVIEW OF ERIN SOOKIAYAK

BY MS. JOYCE:

Q. Erin, how long have you been with Bering Air?

A. I started January 2020.

Q. January 20, 2020?

A. Four.

Q. 2024?

A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. And you were working the day -- on March 6th?
A. Yeah, I was working.
Q. Okay.
BRIAN: February 6th.
MS. JOYCE: February, thank you. February 6th.
Q. On that day, can you just tell me about the day? Tell me how that day went. What did you do?
A. I was on the check-in computer, I was the assistant for that day. So I didn't really do much. I was just answering the phones, checking weather. It was a slow day. There wasn't much going on. We were just looking at weather the entire day until they left.
Q. And what do you -- what websites do you use to check the weather? What kind of weather were you checking, like, what are the things you were looking for?
A. I was looking at FAA weather cams and surface observations.
Q. Okay. And you said it was a slow day?
A. Yeah. We call those weather days.
Q. Okay.
A. (Indiscernible).
Q. And that day, correct me if I'm wrong, Raven cancelled their flight from Anchorage, do you remember?
A. Yeah. They were (indiscernible) mainland (indiscernible).
Q. Okay. And then do you remember how many people were

scheduled for that flight originally from -- Chad's flight from Unalakleet to Nome?

A. Four to five.

Q. Four to five? And then the other passengers?

A. They were already listed on that flight.

Q. They were already --

A. They were listed, manifested.

Q. Okay. So the -- so how many did you have manifested for that flight? It's a big ask, I know, because that's --

A. I'm trying to remember.

Q. Yeah. Is there -- would there be a document that would -- that you could look at to say that this is how many were originally manifested and then this is --

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. All right. We can probably find that. How do, how do you get the passenger weights?

A. We ask them.

Q. Okay.

A. Or sometimes they step on the scale.

Q. Okay. And then what bags -- who weighs the bags?

A. We do.

Q. You do? And do you weigh all the bags?

A. Yeah.

Q. What if somebody has a personal backpack on their back, do those get weighed?

A. Yeah. They can -- we let them carry them if they're small but if they're too big we tell them to check it in.
Q. Okay. So do you just weigh the checked bags?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. And then those weights -- are the weights -- the cargo weights or the bag weights -- the checked bag weights, do those go through Takeflite in the computer?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. And then as well as a written -- you guys do both?
A. Yeah, the body weights and the bags we check.
Q. Okay. And when do those get -- so just talk me through how a normal flight, like today, a normal flight would come in, what would happen? Like, they land, the people disembark and then what happens? Like, just walk me through a normal flight.
A. When they call in and we have them (indiscernible) ask for a load.
Q. What does that mean?
A. Like, how much weight they can take.
Q. Okay.
A. And then we'll get a load together and (indiscernible) we'll load them up and we'll send them on their way.
Q. Okay.
A. We'll call the agent and tell them they just took off and -- sorry, I'm real nervous.
Q. Oh, that's okay. You're good. You're doing great.

A. We'll just wait for them after that and when they call in. If we have any more mail we'll send them again to another village.
Q. Okay. Now, you guys help check the weather for the pilots before they get here, is that right? When you were saying that you checked the surface observations and then you guys might change a flight based on that observation?
A. Yeah, yeah.
Q. How does that process work?
A. Like, if they have to go Shaktoolik-Kodiak-Nome, we'll look at Shaktoolik weather and then Kodiak weather. If it's not far, we'll skip that village, we'll go Shak-Nome --
Q. Okay.
A. -- or Kodiak-Nome or they can just (indiscernible) Nome.
Q. Okay. And what are the weather -- how do you make that decision? What guidance do you have to make that decision, like, when wouldn't they go to -- when would you take a destination off?
A. It depends on the ceiling. If it's foggy or (indiscernible) rain or (indiscernible). Yeah.
Q. Okay. And then what do you do at that point? When you look at that weather and then what do you -- what's your next step?
A. You call the agent, tell him what's happening, tell him if we're going to skip the village.
Q. And the agent is the person in the village?
A. Yeah.
Q. Like, in Shaktoolik?

A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. So you call the agent, tell him you're cancelling their flight?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. And then what else do you do?
A. I think that's it.
Q. That's it?
A. Yeah.
Q. And then that agent -- or I guess then -- oh, never mind, yeah, that's fine. Okay. So you ask the pilot for the load, okay, and that's when they're in route here?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. And then you put together whatever -- do you know what a standard load is, like what they normally take?
A. 25 to 27.
Q. 25 to 27? And that's coming -- that would be like this morning, like, they come from Nome here and they would take 25,000 to 27,000 pounds to, like, St. Michaels, Shaktoolik. Is it normally that route? Is that a normal -- the schedule?
A. We have flights down south first St. Michaels, Stebbins and then during the afternoon, we'll go up north Shak and Kodiak. That's if we have mail for the villages.
Q. So that flight, I understand it was a little bit unusual because he went to St. Michaels first.
A. Yeah, he had to pick up, pick up people.

Q. Okay. And bring them here because they were maybe going to (indiscernible) or whatever, who knows. But so but normally he would come here?
A. Just here, yeah.
Q. And then would he go to St. Michaels, Shaktoolik, and then back or what's a normal -- I think there's a normal route?
A. First flight is flight 440, St. Michaels-Stebbins. (Indiscernible) St. Michaels-Stebbins back here.
Q. Okay. And that would have been, that would have been that day? That would have been his normal route?
A. Yeah.
Q. So he would have left Nome, gone to here --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- and then St. Michaels, Stebbins, here?
A. Yeah.
Q. And then do you know, do you know if that's when they would -- he would normally refuel is here?
A. No.
Q. No? How does that work? Do you know how that -- when he gets fuel?
A. No.
Q. Okay, that's fine.
A. (Indiscernible) or Ally might be able to help you more with that.
Q. Okay. Let's see. Do you ever check icing conditions for the

pilots? Do you look at icing charts and things like that?
A. No.
Q. Okay.
A. (Indiscernible) keep an eye on that.
Q. Say again?
A. If it's mentioned, I'll keep an eye on that.
Q. And what do you, what do you look at to keep an eye on that? What would be something you would look at for icing?
A. Probably the weather again and the winds.
Q. Okay.
A. No one ever really (indiscernible) until an accident.
Q. Okay. And do you know -- well, that's -- never mind, I'll ask (indiscernible) that question. I mean, that's basically it, Erin, I think. Is there anything that you want to share, that you think I should ask you or that you know that might be helpful to us in this?
A. I can't think of anything.
Q. Okay. Well, for now that's it.
MR. WECKWERTH: Can I ask a clarification question? Is it still recording?
MS. JOYCE: Yup.
MR. WECKWERTH: For when you weigh the bags, you weigh bags and if they have a backpack it all gets weighed right there?
MS. SOOKIAYAK: Yeah.
MR. WECKWERTH: Okay. And that gets added on there.

MS. SOOKIAYAK: Yeah.

MR. WECKWERTH: But they may take that backpack and take it with them?

MS. SOOKIAYAK: Yeah.

MR. WECKWERTH: Okay.

(Whereupon, 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 Erin Sookiayak
ACCIDENT NO.:	ANC25MA018
PLACE:	Unalakleet, Alaska
DATE:	March 18, 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.



Christy Behlke
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	*	
FATAL COMMUTER PLANE CRASH NEAR NOME, ALASKA ON FEBRUARY 6, 2025	*	Accident No.: ANC25MA018

Interview of: ALLY TAKAK, Customer Service Representative

Bering Air

Bering Air
Unalakleet, Alaska

Tuesday,
March 18, 2025

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National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)

BRIAN WECKWERTH, Representative
(On behalf of Ally Takak)

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I N T E R V I E W

MS. JOYCE: All right, this is Stacia Joyce and I'm here interviewing Alison (phonetic sp.) --

MS. TAKAK: Takak.

MS. JOYCE: Takak.

MS. TAKAK: Yup.

MS. JOYCE: And we're discussing the accident with Bering Air Caravan ANC25MA018. And Alison, first, do I have your approval to record --

MS. TAKAK: Yup.

MS. JOYCE: -- this conversation?

MS. TAKAK: Yup.

MS. JOYCE: Thank you. And would you like a representative present?

MS. TAKAK: Yeah, Brian Weckwerth.

MS. JOYCE: Thank you, okay.

INTERVIEW OF ALISON TAKAK

BY MS. JOYCE:

Q. So Alison, can you just tell me about the day, February 6th? Can you tell me just how that day started, what you did?

A. So I usually come every day at 8 and we were kind of on a slight hold because of weather but it kind of lifted and Chad got here. He was supposed to do a scheduled flight 440 down south, both St. Michael and Stebbins, but his passengers didn't want to go anymore. He was supposed to go to Stebbins but he offered them

to take them to St. Michael because he couldn't get into Stebens.
Q. Okay.
A. But we just cancelled that. And then we didn't have anything else to do that day. There was no mail. So kind of just sat around trying to discuss when he should leave because there were people trying to catch a jet and we were just sitting around talking. We went to the store. We were just talking.
Q. Just hanging out?
A. Yeah.
Q. How long have you been with Bering Air?
A. Since 2021.
Q. 2021.
A. September 2021.
Q. Okay. So then what happened after you guys did all that, then --
A. He was like, when should I go, did you call Nome yet. And I was like, try calling them. So he called them and they said that he could leave at 2:30. So went to the store again because we wanted to go. Came back. All his passengers were checking in. And got his plane all loaded up. Went over the weather really quick and I double checked with him with the weather, the load, everything. He just wanted to go.
Q. Yeah. When you say you guys looked at the weather, did you guys look at that together?
A. I looked at it and he was looking at it on his iPad.

Q. Okay.
A. And he was on the other computer when I was doing something else.
Q. On the computer next to you?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. Was he looking at the weather, you think?
A. I think so. I wasn't, like, right by him.
Q. Okay. Does he ever call -- do you know if he ever calls the flight service station to get weather, or does he just check weather on the computer?
A. Like, flights before this one he would call them, but I don't know if it would be about the weather, I don't know if it was just for his flight plan and stuff.
Q. Okay.
A. But he'd call them and I'd hear him talk to them.
Q. Okay. And you guys were saying that there three people manifested --
A. Um-hum.
Q. -- for that flight.
A. Yeah. So he was supposed to go Unalakleet, White Mountain, Nome, there was two for Nome -- or I think there was three for Nome and two for White Mountain, but we took White Mountain off.
Q. Gotcha.
A. So they weren't going anymore.
Q. Okay. And then the other six -- six?

A. Um-hum.
Q. Yeah. Seven. Six.
A. Six.
Q. I can do math. The other six you mentioned came from the cancelled Raven flight.
A. Yeah, they were already checked in on Raven.
Q. Okay.
A. And Raven was en route and we were just waiting to leave.
Q. Okay.
A. And then all of a sudden Raven called and said they're turning back around and they all came to our site. We had people on standby for that flight, so there was more than six wanting to go.
Q. Gotcha. Okay. And how do you make the determination on who goes?
A. Just whoever check -- whoever makes reservations first.
Q. Okay. So the folks that were on standby for you, those folks got precedents, I would assume.
A. Um-hum.
Q. Yeah. Do you have -- you mentioned that you will look at the weather and sometimes change flights, you know, like, from Unalakleet to St. Michaels or Stebbins. Can you tell me, just that process again that you mentioned?
A. Like, so we usually -- like, I know if I'm uncomfortable dispatching that flight, so I talk to the pilots and then they'll

give me -- they'll go, no, I'll stay. It's just usually like that. But then Donna is usually working with me Mondays and Tuesdays and I kind of get her second opinion. Yeah.

Q. And then again, what were some of the criteria that you use to make those weather decisions?

A. Like, what do you mean?

Q. Ceilings, you mentioned ceilings or fog.

A. Oh, usually it's 400, don't go if it's under 400.

Q. Okay.

A. And just, I don't know, just if the visibility is under, like, 2 miles, I get the okay from the pilots.

Q. Okay. To cancel the flight?

A. Yeah. If they want to go or not.

Q. I see, okay.

A. Yeah.

Q. So you just tell them that that's what the weather is and then you let them make that decision?

A. Um-hum. Because they kind of, like, remind me that it's at their discretion.

Q. Okay.

A. I don't make them feel uncomfortable doing it, so I ask them to.

Q. Okay, okay. Do you know do the pilots -- do you know, when they make their decisions on their routes that they fly, you know, whether or not they go straight across the water or they follow

the coast or -- are you -- do know if there's any of those -- how they make those decisions?
A. They usually don't tell me.
Q. Okay.
A. Yeah.
Q. Yeah. When people come in with bags, how do -- how does that happen, do you guys weight the bags?
A. Like, for someone going onto the flight or coming off of the flight?
Q. Going onto the flight.
A. Yeah, they come check in. I get their body weight and then we weight all their bags including their carry-ons.
Q. Okay.
A. And put it into the flight -- into their reservation and then it shows on the manifest.
Q. Okay. And then do you know does the pilot help load the airplane?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. And are they the ones that determine where things go?
A. Yeah, basically, yeah.
Q. Okay. So, like, on that day -- so -- or today, for example, these flights that are going out, there's bags that are kind of ready to be loaded, and then the pilot comes in and checks with you guys and then does he take them out and put them in the airplane or --

A. The cargo guy usually does that.
Q. Okay.
A. And basically it's whatever could fit in those pods, like, small stuff go down there. And the cargo guy just tells the pilot where everything is pretty much.
Q. Okay.
A. Especially in the pods so they don't get mixed up.
Q. And then I assume, because you have to do different stops --
A. Yeah, that's why.
Q. -- and so they kind of have to load it backwards, right?
A. Yeah.
Q. Like, the first stop will be pretty accessible?
A. Uh-huh, like in the back of the plane.
Q. It's probably like playing Tetris, right?
A. Um-hum.
Q. Yeah. Okay. Do you know how the pilot determines the weight and balance of the airplane?
A. No, but we usually just ask for a load.
Q. Okay. And that's when you mentioned that you ask them that as they're approaching, correct?
A. Um-hum. But Chad was already here.
Q. Oh, yeah, right.
A. So, like, I got everything all weighed up and everybody was checked in, saw the load and I double-checked with him twice to make sure it was okay. And he was like, yeah, it's fine.

Q. Okay. Yeah, gosh, I can't think of anything else. Is there anything you can think of to share with me that would help us?
A. I didn't know that he brushed his plane because I wasn't here. But he did, and there's a broom, it's outside hanging.
Q. Yeah.
A. It just stays outside.
Q. And that's what they use to brush off the control surfaces, kind of?
A. Yeah, like, it just stays outside all the time.
Q. Yeah. I just thought of something else. Do the, do the passengers get to sit wherever they want to sit in the airplane?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. Yup.
Q. So they just kind of get in and have a seat and --
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. Well, I think that's it, Ally. I'm going to go ahead and stop this.

(Whereupon, 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 Ally Takak
ACCIDENT NO.:	ANC25MA018
PLACE:	Unalakleet, Alaska
DATE:	March 18, 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.

[redacted]

Christy Behlke
Transcriber