

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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SIKORSKY S76B HELICOPTER N72EX

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CRASH NEAR CALABASAS, CALIFORNIA,

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ON JANUARY 26, 2020

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Interview of: ANGEL PEREZ

Ground Operations Manager

Island Express Helicopters

Island Express Helicopters
Long Beach, CaliforniaMonday,
February 3, 2020

APPEARANCES:

DUJUAN SEVILLIAN, Ph.D., Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

FABIAN SALAZAR, Operational Factors Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

GARRET DALTON, Director of Operations
Island Express Helicopters

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I N T E R V I E W

DR. SEVILLIAN: Okay, on the record.

Good morning, Angel. My name is Dajuan Sevillian. I'm the human performance investigator with the NTSB. Thanks for coming in today and interviewing with us.

Just to give you a brief overview. The mission of the NTSB is not only to investigate aircraft accidents, but to come up with safety recommendations for the safety. So we have you here today because you're the expert and we want to hear from you and get to understand policies, procedures, things like that.

MR. PEREZ: Okay.

DR. SEVILLIAN: We'll have -- the interview process will consist of us going around the table. You'll have folks interviewing you as part of the party system. So the NTSB has parties to their investigation and they help with providing data and support. So that's what you're seeing around the table. You'll have a company representative and a couple of NTSB investigators that will interview you.

We'll have two rounds of interviewing, and then if there's any time you need clarification of anything just ask for clarification. If there's something that you don't know, just say you don't know.

MR. PEREZ: Okay.

DR. SEVILLIAN: All the things that we talk about are going to be recorded so it's not confidential, but the transcript will

1 be part of the public docket.

2 MR. PEREZ: Okay.

3 DR. SEVILLIAN: You're allowed one representative. And for
4 the record who would you like to represent you today?

5 MR. PEREZ: Don.

6 DR. SEVILLIAN: Okay. So let's go around the table so you
7 can get to know who will be asking you questions today.

8 MR. PEREZ: Okay.

9 DR. SEVILLIAN: We'll start with Fabian.

10 MR. SALAZAR: Hi. Fabian Salazar with the NTSB. I'm looking
11 into the operations side of things.

12 MR. PEREZ: Okay.

13 MR. DALTON: Hi, Garret Dalton, director of operations with
14 Island Express Helicopters. I've got expertise on our operations
15 and the aircraft.

16 DR. SEVILLIAN: Absolutely. So thanks. Anything before we
17 get started?

18 MR. PEREZ: No.

19 DR. SEVILLIAN: Okay.

20 INTERVIEW OF ANGEL PEREZ

21 BY DR. SEVILLIAN:

22 Q. So for the record could you please state your first and last
23 name with spelling?

24 A. Sure. Angel Perez, A-n-g-e-l, P-e-r-e-z.

25 Q. And what's your job title?

1 A. Ground operations manager.

2 Q. How long have you been with Island Express?

3 A. For 7 years.

4 Q. Okay. And could you explain your brief aviation background?
5 Kind of a brief background?

6 A. Okay. So for Island Express I'm actually a ramp agent and a
7 flight follower. As a ramp agent I need to check people in, weigh
8 them in, weigh their luggage, do a safety briefing and then do a
9 manifest. And then pretty much I follow the aircrafts wherever
10 they go.

11 Q. Do you have any certifications or ratings?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Okay. And how long have you been with Island Express?

14 A. Seven years.

15 Q. Seven years. And what got you involved in the flight
16 following aspect of your job and (indiscernible)?

17 A. Peter. He's the GOM and he pretty much trained us on how to
18 do it. We have a training every year that we do.

19 Q. What does that training consist of?

20 A. Pretty much for how to work around the aircraft. Pretty much
21 what we need to do when we fuel the aircraft, and then we also,
22 for flight following, he teaches us Spidertracks on how to use it
23 and All Pro, which we also use as a flight follower.

24 Q. So give me an example of how you would conduct flight
25 following on an aircraft using Spidertracks.

1 A. Spidertracks, so there's a light that comes up. It's green
2 whenever the aircraft is turned on and then it pretty much resets
3 every 1 minute. So it's wherever they go.

4 Q. So if there was an aircraft that would need to be -- to have
5 flight following, how would you track the aircraft's progress?
6 What would be your role in that tracking?

7 A. Pretty much looking at the Spidertracks and see the direction
8 that it's going every like maybe 1 or 2 minutes.

9 Q. Okay. Do you ever get involved with looking at weather or
10 communicating weather to the pilot?

11 A. Only when we're -- since we operate from Queensway to
12 Catalina, that's the only way we give our say on how the weather
13 is. For example, weather can be good where we're at and then it
14 can be bad in Catalina or vice versa. Or let's say it's good on
15 both ends, but the channel itself might be foggy. So if that's
16 the case, then we ask the pilot to do a weather check.

17 Q. Has there ever been a situation where the pilot checked the
18 weather and it was maybe not the most optimal?

19 A. Of course.

20 Q. And how is that communication back to you?

21 A. They call me or text me and tell me that it's not good so we
22 don't fly (indiscernible).

23 Q. And what source of -- do you get recurrent training, initial
24 training for the flight following?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Okay. So as far as the -- how many flight followers are
2 there?

3 A. So when we start working there, they pretty much just show us
4 how to, how to use it. So we have four rampers in Queensway, so
5 we all pretty much are just familiar with the Spidertracks.

6 Q. Okay. How would you say the workload is as far as flight
7 following?

8 A. I mean, it's not too bad. We have a few things to do like
9 check people in, do -- lower the luggage, weigh in the luggage,
10 weigh people in, show them briefing, lower the aircraft, give them
11 fuel and then pretty much flight follow, as well.

12 Q. And what's your understanding if something -- how the company
13 handles safety hazards, reporting? What's your understanding of
14 that?

15 A. They're very big on safety, actually. We even have a safety
16 meeting every 6 months.

17 Q. And what's that safety meeting usually consist of?

18 A. We talk over on how to improve things. For example, the
19 safety officer will tell us like to keep wearing our headsets
20 because over time with the high volume of the aircraft making a
21 noise it could damage our hearing. So, but we always tried to
22 improve safety and we all gave our opinion on how to improve it
23 every 6 months.

24 Q. And if something were to come up where you needed to report a
25 hazard, is there a certain process you would use to fill out

1 information?

2 A. Yeah, so we use a program called SMS.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And if we ever need to file a report we could do it there.
5 We could say who it is or we could leave it anonymous, as well.

6 Q. Have you ever had to fill out one of the reports?

7 A. No.

8 Q. And as far as, how would you rate the safety culture here at
9 Island Express, from the scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the best?

10 A. I'd say 10.

11 Q. Anything that you think that could be improved in the
12 company?

13 A. Not off the top of my head.

14 Q. All right.

15 A. We're all pretty good in trying to keep our safety to its top
16 priority.

17 DR. SEVILLIAN: Okay. Those are the questions I have for
18 right now. Fabian?

19 MR. SALAZAR: Okay, give me just a second.

20 BY MR. SALAZAR:

21 Q. You mentioned refuel the aircraft. Do you guys refuel the
22 aircraft?

23 A. We do, yes.

24 Q. Okay. Who taught you how to refuel the aircraft?

25 A. Peter, as part of our training that we do, and we do

1 retraining every year with that, as well.

2 Q. Okay. What are some of the things he tells you with regards
3 to refueling the aircraft?

4 A. Make sure that the pilots aware that we're fueling. Make
5 sure we have pretty much communications. We have certain hand
6 signals let them know when we're going to start fueling, or we
7 also use our headsets, which is a radio, and we tell them over the
8 radio when we're going to start fueling and when we need to stop.

9 Q. Can you talk to them on the radio while you're refueling?

10 A. I could, yes.

11 Q. Okay. Let's talk about weather and helping the pilots with
12 weather.

13 A. Okay.

14 Q. Now we're just going to talk about from Queensway to
15 Catalina or from Catalina back. Okay?

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. Do you help -- does the pilot ever call you and ask you about
18 the weather, like what are you seeing?

19 A. They do, yeah.

20 Q. Okay. How -- here's a question for you: If you can see
21 Catalina, what's the visibility?

22 A. Well, from where we're at, visually I can't see Catalina
23 because it's 26 miles away. But what we really go based off of is
24 certain points.

25 Q. Okay. Tell me about those certain points.

1 A. So Freeman is about half a mile away from where we're at, and
2 then we also have the cranes which is about 300 feet, and then we
3 have the breakwater that's just about maybe 2 miles, 2 to 3 miles
4 away. So we go based off on that, the visibility, and then how
5 high weather can be, like the ceiling.

6 Q. Okay. So you have the cranes?

7 A. Cranes, yeah.

8 Q. Do you know who measured the cranes to make sure they're 300
9 feet?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Okay. You can't see Catalina from the shore?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Okay.

14 MR. DALTON: From in the air. Not on the ground.

15 MR. SALAZAR: Can you see the mountains of Catalina?

16 MR. DALTON: Not on the ground. From Queensway you can't.

17 MR. SALAZAR: Oh, okay.

18 MR. DALTON: You'll see (indiscernible).

19 MR. SALAZAR: Okay, very good. And the only reason I
20 question that is that I've ridden my jet ski from San Pedro and I
21 can see Catalina.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He's bragging now.

23 MR. SALAZAR: Yes, (indiscernible), but I'm just asking
24 questions. All right, very good.

25 BY MR. SALAZAR:

1 Q. So they'll call you and talk to you on the phone and you tell
2 them I can see the top of the cranes and I can see the breakwater,
3 so they know they got at least a 300-foot ceiling?

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Okay, very good. You talk to them on the telephone. Now
6 let's go to talking to them on the radio. Do you have a radio
7 that you can communicate to the pilots with?

8 A. We do. It's 122.85.

9 Q. From Queensway to Catalina can you maintain radio
10 communication with them?

11 A. We can, yes.

12 Q. All the way, all the way to the island?

13 A. Yes. Sometimes when they're on the island we can't hear
14 them, but then they have radio communication with the rampers over
15 in Catalina.

16 Q. Okay. When they're involved in the charter flights, like
17 when they take off from John Wayne Airport, can you talk to them
18 on the radio from John Wayne?

19 A. No.

20 Q. Okay. Do you talk to them at all when they're taking off
21 from there?

22 A. Yeah, sometimes they'll text us or call us.

23 Q. So you do communicate with them by text or phone call?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Hang on. Do you ever talk to the pilots at John Wayne

1 Airport about the weather like you do at Queensway?

2 A. No.

3 Q. All right. I don't have any more questions, but I would like
4 to do now --

5 A. Okay.

6 Q. -- is have you tell us about the day of the accident. I
7 understand you were working. Tell us about your day and all the
8 activities or phone calls or anything that you had with Ara that
9 day.

10 A. So with Ara, I actually didn't communicate with him that day.

11 Q. Not at all?

12 A. Not at all.

13 Q. You were working that day?

14 A. I was.

15 Q. Were you doing -- were there charter flights going out to the
16 island?

17 A. Yes, we had flights that day.

18 Q. Okay. So your day was spent working with the aircraft that
19 were going out to the island?

20 A. Correct.

21 MR. SALAZAR: Okay. That's all I have.

22 DR. SEVILLIAN: Okay, thank you.

23 Garret?

24 MR. DALTON: I just have one or two questions.

25 BY MR. DALTON:

1 Q. Just kind of for clarification, you were asked about who
2 provided you with flight following training. So who actually
3 provided you with your flight following training?

4 A. So we don't have like an actual flight following training,
5 but they teach us how to use it --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- with Spidertracks, and that was Peter.

8 Q. And then how often do you get that training?

9 A. Every 6 months, I would say.

10 Q. Okay. Have you ever received a training on ERP, Emergency
11 Response Plan?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And action checklist?

14 A. Um-hum.

15 MR. DALTON: Okay, that's all I got.

16 DR. SEVILLIAN: Okay. So we'll go through the second round
17 of questions. I'll start. I don't have many.

18 BY DR. SEVILLIAN:

19 Q. You stated the no actual flight following training, but you
20 were taught how to use it by Peter. Was this on-the-job training?

21 A. Yes, they teach us how to use Spidertracks.

22 Q. And how -- do you feel that's enough training for you to
23 conduct your job?

24 A. Yes, but it could possibly be better, but I -- from my
25 perspective it's a good training.

1 Q. When you say it could possibly be better, in what areas do
2 you think?

3 A. Maybe just consistently letting us -- telling us to check
4 Spidertracks more often, even though we're sometimes busy doing
5 other stuff with working and checking people in.

6 DR. SEVILLIAN: Okay. That's all I had.

7 Fabian?

8 MR. SALAZAR: Few more.

9 BY MR. SALAZAR:

10 Q. Angel, you're in your office over on Queensway. The
11 helicopter launched out -- this is a scenario here -- and after 15
12 minutes he hasn't called you, do you have to do anything?

13 A. Is this from Queensway to Catalina or --

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. I have to call or check the radio.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Check if it's working. If I can't hear him on the radio,
18 then I would have to call the Catalina office, which is in
19 Catalina, and ask them if they've heard the radio. Maybe he's too
20 far from me and I can't get him on the radio. And ask if they've
21 landed.

22 Q. Okay. So you call and tell them you haven't heard from him.
23 You ask if he's landed and they say no, he hasn't. What's your
24 next step?

25 A. Check the tracker and see where was his last location, and

1 then I would probably go through the emergency response checklist.

2 Q. Okay. He's not on the tracker. You go into the emergency
3 response checklist -- is it a checklist or a guide or a handbook?

4 MR. DALTON: It's a -- well, we have an emergency response
5 plan and then we have an action checklist.

6 BY MR. SALAZAR:

7 Q. Okay. Which one of those two are you going to go?

8 A. The action one, (indiscernible).

9 Q. What are some of the things -- and they don't have to be in
10 order, but what are some of the things it's telling you to do?

11 A. On (indiscernible) check the radio frequency, try to get in
12 contact with the pilot, whether it's the radio or text or phone
13 call. And then I would go to the -- call 911 if I still haven't
14 heard from him.

15 Q. You haven't heard from him, you're calling 911 and they say
16 "911 may I help you?" What do you tell them?

17 A. I would let them know that we have an aircraft missing and
18 they haven't reported.

19 MR. SALAZAR: Thank you.

20 DR. SEVILLIAN: All right, thank you.

21 I just have -- Garret?

22 MR. DALTON: I don't have anything.

23 DR. SEVILLIAN: Okay. I just have one follow-up.

24 BY DR. SEVILLIAN:

25 Q. You said that there's an action checklist and an emergency

1 response plan, are two -- is this online manuals or --

2 A. It's an actual manual.

3 Q. Okay. And who, within management other than Garret, is
4 someone that you contact?

5 A. The safety officer, which is Josh Beck, or I could call Ara,
6 which was the chief pilot.

7 Q. And that -- how is that communication? Is it easy to get in
8 contact with them?

9 A. Yes, it is actually.

10 Q. And that's just via cell phone or --

11 A. Via cell phone.

12 DR. SEVILLIAN: Okay. All right. That's all I had. Any
13 other questions?

14 (No response.)

15 DR. SEVILLIAN: All right. That concludes the interview.

16 Thank you. Are there any questions that we should have asked you
17 that we didn't?

18 MR. PEREZ: No.

19 DR. SEVILLIAN: Anyone you would like us to speak with?

20 MR. PEREZ: No.

21 DR. SEVILLIAN: Okay. Thank you. Appreciate it.

22 Off the record.

23 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: SIKORSKY S76B HELICOPTER N72EX
 CRASH NEAR CALABASAS, CALIFORNIA,
 ON JANUARY 26, 2020
 Interview of Angel Perez

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA20MA059

PLACE: Long Beach, California

DATE: February 3, 2020

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



Christy Behlke
Transcriber