

DCA24FA017

OPERATIONAL FACTORS/HUMAN PERFORMANCE

Attachment 6

FAA Personnel Interview Transcripts

January 24, 2025

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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RUNWAY COLLISION AT THE WILLIAM

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P. HOBBY AIRPORT IN HOUSTON,

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Accident No.: DCA24FA017

TEXAS ON OCTOBER 24, 2023

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Interview of: SCOTT LAMBRECHT, Principal Operations Inspector
Federal Aviation Administration

Chicago, Illinois

Wednesday,
July 17, 2024

APPEARANCES:

SHAWN ETCHER, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

KATHERINE WILSON
National Transportation Safety Board

TODD GENTRY
Federal Aviation Administration

BENJAMIN WADE, ESQ.
Office of the Chief Counsel
Federal Aviation Administration

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I N T E R V I E W

(12:37 p.m.)

MR. ETCHER: All right, good afternoon. It is July 17th. It's 12:37 local time. My name is Shawn Etcher, I'm an Operational Factors Investigator with the NTSB. All that means is I look at forward of everything, forward of the cockpit door and how it interacts with the crew.

You're here because you interact with the operator and maybe you've had interactions with the crew, maybe you haven't, that's okay. But we're here to get your perspective of how things go for you and any interactions you have had, things along that line.

MR. LAMBRECHT: Sure.

MR. ETCHER: We're here strictly to help the IIC as well, to learn from this event, make change if we need to, to keep it from happening or something worse happening.

But thankfully, I don't have to come up with all the questions because I don't have that much depth in my brain, but I got some smart people here with me, I'll have them introduce themselves as well. But they're the ones that always ask the really good questions. So, and we'll start with Katherine.

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

MR. LAMBRECHT: Okay.

MR. ETCHER: Todd?

MR. GENTRY: I'm Todd Gentry, Accident Investigation and

1 Prevention. I'm here only in a safety role. As you know, as you
2 may not know, I don't have any enforcement responsibilities
3 whatsoever. So anything you tell me will never get to that kind
4 of, you know, investigation or look into, or anything else about
5 your employment. It's strictly a safety role.

6 If there's anything we can do in the nine areas of
7 responsibilities or outside of that in the FAA, that's why I'm
8 here to make those changes.

9 MR. LAMBRECHT: Understood.

10 MR. GENTRY: So that's about it. Thank you.

11 MR. ETCHER: So that is everybody that's going to be talking
12 with you today that you're going to be educating.

13 MR. LAMBRECHT: Yes.

14 MR. ETCHER: Is there any of us you don't want here, and if
15 you say me, I'll just go get me a pizza somewhere?

16 MR. LAMBRECHT: No, that's fine.

17 MR. ETCHER: Man, one of these days. All right, perfect.

18 Well, as part of our process, we do record our interviews.
19 Those recordings, we do send off, they will be transcribed by a
20 transcriptionist. We get them back in about two weeks. We'll go
21 through just to make sure of typos, acronyms, things like that,
22 but we will not change anything you say.

23 They'll recertify it, if there is, any changes need to be
24 made from typos. We will send you, your transcript so you can
25 review it. If there's something you see, it's like, oh, that's

1 not exactly what I meant, or oh, let me add to that, or whatever,
2 feel free. You can write it down, put it on a piece of paper,
3 we'll attach it right to that transcript. We can't amend the, you
4 know, we can't change the transcript, but we can attach that to
5 it.

6 MR. LAMBRECHT: Understood.

7 MR. ETCHER: Are you okay with us recording and having that
8 transcript?

9 MR. LAMBRECHT: Yes.

10 MR. ETCHER: And, for your reference, that transcript will
11 end up becoming part of our public docket whenever we open up this
12 event, but the recordings do not.

13 MR. LAMBRECHT: Sure.

14 MR. ETCHER: All right?

15 MR. LAMBRECHT: Understood.

16 MR. ETCHER: Also, as part of our regulations, you are
17 entitled to have a representative, if you wish, of your choosing.
18 Do you wish to have a representative with you?

19 MR. LAMBRECHT: Yes.

20 MR. ETCHER: All righty. And, I assume Ben, you'd like to
21 have as your rep?

22 MR. LAMBRECHT: Yes.

23 MR. ETCHER: Excellent. Ben, for the recording, would you
24 please state your name and your affiliation?

25 MR. WADE: Of course. Benjamin Wade, FAA, Office of the

1 Chief Counsel.

2 MR. ETCHER: Thank you very much. So, before we get started,
3 there's always a few rules. We're government, right, we got to
4 have rules.

5 MR. LAMBRECHT: Sure.

6 MR. ETCHER: There are always two rounds to our interviews.
7 So when you get through with Round 1, that's usually the longest.
8 The second round is usually follow-up questions, somebody might
9 have asked a question, you gave answer, oh, I want to find a
10 little bit more out about that.

11 MR. LAMBRECHT: Understood.

12 MR. ETCHER: Round 2 is always quicker. So, when you make it
13 through Round 1, you're more than half way through any interview.

14 But like I said, I shouldn't even call it an interview, it's
15 a discussion. We just, we want to learn, I always say I like to
16 be a fly on people's shoulders. I want to just kind of know what
17 you do, how you do it, and what resources you need or don't have.
18 And that way it helps us understand.

19 MR. LAMBRECHT: Sure.

20 MR. ETCHER: If you need a break during this interview,
21 education, don't hesitate, just say so, whether it's to confer
22 with counsel, whether it's just to use the restroom, to get a
23 drink, it's fine. I will try and ask throughout, sometimes I
24 forget so forgive me in advance if I do, but I'll try and ask
25 throughout if you need a break. Don't hesitate because typically

1 by the time you need a break, I need one and others do to so
2 you're not going to offend any of us.

3 MR. LAMBRECHT: Okay.

4 MR. ETCHER: All righty. If I ask a question that makes no
5 sense, ask for clarification, please, because I'd rather learn
6 everything I can. And sometimes it sounds good in my brain, but
7 it's not connected to my mouth as typical for me.

8 Because I guarantee you, you give me an answer I don't
9 understand, I'm going to ask for further clarification. So we'll
10 just keep that as a two-way street, how's that?

11 MR. LAMBRECHT: Sure.

12 MR. ETCHER: And the last one and, to me, it's probably just
13 as important as any of them. It's not a checkride. So if you
14 don't know an answer, I don't know works perfect. If you have an
15 opinion and you want to state your opinion, just say it, my
16 opinion or something so we know when we're reading these later
17 it's not a law, a regulation, a fact, it's your opinion.

18 All righty. Sometimes we even ask for your opinion, but we
19 just want to make sure we note it so when we we're reviewing these
20 later, we can remember that.

21 MR. LAMBRECHT: Sure.

22 MR. ETCHER: But before we get started, any questions?

23 MR. LAMBRECHT: No.

24 MR. ETCHER: All righty. So, with that, we'll start with the
25 harder questions first, and we work down easier from that point

1 on.

2 MR. LAMBRECHT: Okay.

3 INTERVIEW OF SCOTT LAMBRECHT

4 BY MR. ETCHER:

5 Q. So can you please state your full name and spell your last?

6 A. Sure. Scott Lambrecht, it's L-a-m-b-r-e-c-h-t.

7 Q. Perfect. And what is your job title?

8 A. Principal Operations Inspector, Aviation Safety Inspector.

9 Q. For?

10 A. The Greater Chicago Flight Standards District Office, the
11 FAA.

12 Q. Perfect. And how long have you been in that role as a
13 Principal Operations Inspector?

14 A. Principal Operations Inspector, approximately two years.

15 Q. Okay. How long have you been with the FAA?

16 A. Almost five years.

17 Q. All righty. So, as a principal, do you have to have any
18 airmen certificates or ratings, or anything along those lines?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And what do you have?

21 A. I have a commercial pilot's license. How in depth do you
22 want me to go?

23 Q. How in depth you can go, how's that?

24 A. Commercial pilot's license, airplane single multiengine land
25 instrument rating, certified flight instructor, airplane single

1 multiengine land instrument airplane. I have a ground
2 instructor's certificate, and I have a remote pilot's certificate.

3 Q. Okay. See, I told you, these are the toughest questions.
4 They do get easier after a bit.

5 Any type ratings?

6 A. I have a CL-65 SIC-type rating.

7 Q. All right, perfect. Now these are usually the really
8 toughest questions. How much flight time do you have total?

9 A. Approximately 3,800 hours.

10 Q. And, just for the record, do you have any flight time in the
11 Hawker?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Can you kind of give us a broad CliffsNotes' version, if you
14 will, of your aviation career? What got you into it? What got
15 you here, things along that line?

16 A. I started flying in 2001, flight training through Mercy of
17 Illinois, graduated with a degree in aviation human factors. Part
18 of that program, I was able to get all my ratings.

19 After graduation, I went to a local university here to flight
20 instruct for four to five years approximately.

21 From there, I went to the airlines, Part 121. I flew for two
22 different Part 121 carriers for approximately three years. I got
23 out of the industry for personal reasons but wanted to get back
24 in. So I got a job flight instructing to get current again and
25 then applied to the FAA, this position, and been here ever since.

1 Q. Perfect. Do you have an assistant in your current role?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Okay, that's kind of an odd yes, but we'll go with yes.

4 A. There is an assistant, she's assigned to a couple of us. So
5 it's, she's not my full-time complete assistant, but she does
6 assist in certain things.

7 Q. That makes sense. The way you made it, I was like, oh, wait,
8 okay, I'm going to dig here. Perfect.

9 So, kind of help me understand the chain of command here at
10 the FSDO. Who would be in your chain of command going up?

11 A. Going up, it would be my frontline manager, James Lobash, and
12 then up from there would be the office manager, Luanne Wills-
13 Merrell, and then -- how far up do you want me to go?

14 Q. That's a good start, unless you want to take it all the way
15 to the top of the administration --

16 A. No.

17 Q. -- then that would be called a test so I'm not going to do
18 that to you.

19 A. Okay.

20 Q. All right, perfect. And, besides your assistant that you
21 share with others, do you have anybody that you oversee, or maybe
22 you don't even oversee your assistant?

23 A. I recently have a trainee, as of three days ago so that. No
24 managerial oversight, if that's what you're asking.

25 Q. I would have tried to say it that way, but I would have

1 messed it up again so thank you for clarifying that.

2 A. Sure.

3 Q. How long have you been on the DuPage certificate as their
4 POI?

5 A. Approximately two years.

6 Q. Okay. And, how many other certificates do you oversee?

7 A. As of today -- are we talking 135?

8 Q. All certificates you oversee. So if there's more than 135,
9 if you got schools, if you got, whatever you have to oversee.
10 What's your responsibilities, how's that?

11 A. Yeah. Of my certificated operators, I have approximately 18,
12 approximately 18.

13 Q. Okay. And how many of those are 135s?

14 A. Seven.

15 Q. Seven. And the other one's are flight schools, are they --

16 A. 133, 137, 141; flight school, agricultural spraying and 133,
17 lifting.

18 Q. Okay, perfect. I told you, these are the toughest questions,
19 they do get easier now.

20 So, to me, 18 certificates sounds like a lot, but maybe it's
21 not. Kind of walk me through a day in the life of your job, kind
22 of help me understand what you do, whether it's every day, whether
23 it's a course of a month, a week, a year. Kind of just walk me
24 through how you do what you do, and how often.

25 There's a lot of questions there, I know.

1 A. Yeah. That's a very loaded question.

2 So I guess first thing I do in the life of a day of Scott is
3 I would get up and I will create a mental checklist of what I have
4 to do. I'll revisit what I've done the days prior, what I have to
5 finish up, and what I'm looking forward to that day.

6 I'll then write that list down and start working from that
7 list. That list contains several different aspects of the job as
8 we wear many hats, so that list will include me wearing many hats.

9 And then I, basically, will take that list and create a
10 priority list and prioritize down the most important or most
11 safety sensitive down to least important, least safety sensitive.

12 So broadly put, that's me in a day. It can, will often
13 repeat for a week, month, year.

14 Q. All right. Let's start looking into, you have 18
15 certificates?

16 A. Uh-huh.

17 Q. And like I said, to me, that sounds like a whole lot.

18 A. Sure.

19 Q. And maybe it's not. Maybe it's super small, maybe it's super
20 easy, I don't know. But, in your opinion, is it a lot of
21 certificates to oversee? Is it manageable? Is it manageable but,
22 yeah, it's challenging?

23 A. There's definitely ebbs and flows. So in my opinion, there's
24 times where it's manageable. And in my opinion, there's times
25 where the workload is increased. That's the nature of the beast

1 of this job.

2 Q. Kind of help me understand what increases your workloads?

3 A. Several factors lead into that. Simply put, you know, the
4 season of the year. More people fly in the summer than they do in
5 the winter so that will increase workload there.

6 Then individual needs of operators. Some operators will put
7 in a request for, to have something completed, an authorization of
8 some sorts. Some take more work than others. So, it's very task
9 dependent, but there's a lot of variables that go into each and
10 every aspect.

11 Q. Okay. So you said it's, every operator's, some require more
12 work, we'll go with that.

13 A. Sure.

14 Q. I'm trying to paraphrase what you said. But what would cause
15 an operator in your mind to make more work? Is it they're a
16 trouble child? Is it they just have a lot of rewrites? Kind of
17 help me understand what you classify that at.

18 A. Sure. There's definitely, in your words, a trouble child;
19 those will require more work. There are operators who are the
20 exact opposite who, by default, will have many rewrites because
21 they're trying to better themselves.

22 Again, I don't know if I can necessarily pinpoint it down,
23 but there's many aspects to this that would create more and/or
24 less work depending on what they're looking for, you know. Yeah.

25 Q. Okay. So, I know you said you have some trouble children, and

1 you have some that are, wanted to improve all the time, again, I'm
2 paraphrasing. Don't ever let me put words in your mouth.

3 This operator, DuPage Aerospace, where do they fall in your
4 book on that scale?

5 A. On the latter side.

6 Q. Okay. So they're not a terrible child. Just for the record,
7 I want to make sure they're not a trouble child, but they are,
8 they want to better themselves, improve themselves?

9 A. Yes, I agree with that.

10 Q. All right, perfect. How big of a geographical footprint do
11 you cover for all 18 of your certificates?

12 A. East of the Mississippi out to roughly South Bend, Indiana.
13 Wisconsin border down to just north of Peoria, Illinois. So,
14 northern Illinois, northwest Indiana.

15 Q. Sounds like a pretty good size area.

16 A. Sure.

17 Q. How challenging is it to get to your operators that live
18 further away than around the FSDO?

19 A. Other than typical traffic around Chicago, it's not
20 challenging.

21 Q. How often do you get to each and every one of your operators?

22 A. It depends on the operator themselves and what they're
23 requiring. Some operators require more surveillance and just some
24 require less.

25 Q. What triggers it in your brain that an operator needs more

1 surveillance or less?

2 A. The size, scope and complexity of their operation.

3 Q. Okay. So, since we're here talking about the event that
4 occurred in Houston involving DuPage's aircraft, how would their
5 size, complexity and scope, how would that range, typically their
6 operation, in your workload?

7 A. They're one of my larger operations. Now, granted, they're
8 in the 135-certificate realm so by nature, they will have more
9 complex than other, more complex work items than other parts. But
10 they are one of my largest 135 operators by number of aircraft and
11 number of employees.

12 Q. All righty. And, being one of your larger ones, does that
13 make you, well, first let me ask. How often during a year do you
14 do onsites with them, or do you go fly with them?

15 A. I think through the work program, I am assigned to go out
16 there at least twice a year. I probably visit them, I would say,
17 twice a quarter just given the work nature, or just the nature of
18 their work and what they're needing.

19 Q. And just because I'm sure somebody reading this might think
20 you visit twice a quarter and you only have to do it twice a year,
21 is there a certain, specific items you're looking for? I know you
22 said it was because of what they do.

23 A. Sure, yeah. So, you know, they may need checkrides so I'll
24 go out there and do those; they have several pilots. I will do
25 those checkrides.

1 The natural, twice a year, and then just any ancillary things
2 that may come up where accomplishing work in person would be more
3 beneficial than meeting in individual offices.

4 Q. You go out there to do checkrides?

5 A. Uh-huh.

6 Q. Do you check all their pilots, or do you just check a few?
7 Do you go to the SIM? Do you go into the airplane?

8 A. When you say do I check their pilots, like I actually provide
9 the checkride?

10 Q. Yeah, when you provide a checkride, are you doing it to, are
11 you doing that checkride with all their pilots?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Typically, are there certain pilots you're going to give a
14 checkride to?

15 A. Those pilots that need a line check that can't be checked by
16 the check airmen that they have at the company.

17 Q. Okay. Now is that in all of their aircraft that you give
18 potentially a checkride to, or is it just in the Hawker or the
19 Gulfstream?

20 A. All aircraft.

21 Q. Now I know you said you weren't type rated in those?

22 A. Uh-huh.

23 Q. Does that you give any challenges when giving their
24 checkrides?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Okay. You're comfortable, I mean, let me rephrase that,
2 that's a terrible way of starting a question.

3 When you're giving a checkride, are you seated in the left
4 seat, the right seat, the cabin seat?

5 A. I'm in the jump seat or the most forward-facing chair in that
6 aircraft.

7 Q. Just off the top of your head and if you don't know the
8 answer, remember, I don't know works just fine. How many
9 checkrides have you given in, let's just say, the last 12 months,
10 or you can pick whatever time you know the number?

11 A. For them specifically?

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. I don't recall.

14 Q. All right. Do you recall how many check airmen they have on
15 their certificates?

16 A. Company check airmen?

17 Q. Yes.

18 A. They now have two.

19 Q. Okay. Are they in both the Hawker and the Gulfstream, is one
20 in one, one in another, or do you recall?

21 A. I know one is in the Hawker. The other, I don't think he's
22 in an aircraft. I don't recall, I'd have to double check the LOA.

23 Q. The one in the Hawker, has he, has that individual been a
24 check airman for the company the entire time you've been their
25 POI, or have you had to check him out since becoming POI?

- 1 A. The entire time.
- 2 Q. Okay. Do you interact with that check airman often besides
3 that once-a-year checkride or whatever it is?
- 4 A. Yes.
- 5 Q. How's that interaction? Just --
- 6 A. Very proactive.
- 7 Q. All right. Have you had the opportunity to sit through any
8 of their ground schools, or any of their training events, or have
9 seen any of their training?
- 10 A. No.
- 11 Q. Is that something that's hard for you, I mean, judging by the
12 fact you have 18 certificates, is that something that would be
13 hard to work into your schedule? Is it a budgetary issue that you
14 can't attend it? I'm just trying to figure out what would hinder
15 that?
- 16 A. No, it's not budgetary, and it would not be difficult to put
17 into my schedule.
- 18 Q. All right. So, I'll ask because I'm sure somebody will ask
19 me later, why haven't you sat through their ground school or any
20 of their training events?
- 21 A. Any of their training events? I would, I guess, much of
22 their training is done online by a reputable vendor. And then
23 when they go away to the more specific, aircraft specific
24 training, that's at a certificated training center.
- 25 Q. Okay. Do they do any in-house training, that you're aware of?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. And --

3 A. I will --

4 Q. Go ahead.

5 A. No, that's all right, go ahead.

6 Q. I was going to say in a broad scope what is their in-house
7 training? Do you look it over, do you look over their training? I
8 don't want to, do you approve their training, or maybe there's
9 another phrase, I don't know.

10 A. Yes, it is my job to approve their training manual which
11 outlines how they train their pilots. The in-house training is
12 more to pick up the odds and ends that were left out from that
13 online training and/or the more company-specific things that they
14 want their employees of their company to do.

15 Q. All right. Let my brain chew on that for a little bit. I'll
16 have another question here in a little bit, but I'm going to let
17 my brain chew on it for just a moment.

18 Since you have 18 certificates, is that all your job has you
19 do? And I don't mean that to belittle, is that all, or do you
20 have other duties assigned? That always famous government saying.

21 A. I have other duties, yes.

22 Q. Approximately, ballpark, how much time are you able in a
23 given month, year, whatever you want to break it down as, to be
24 able to spend on your certificates versus these other duties?

25 A. I don't know if I could put a number to it. It's dependent

1 on the workload that they are providing to me.

2 Q. They being?

3 A. Certificated operators.

4 Q. Okay. Let's just talk about the last month, kind of fresh in
5 your brain maybe, or maybe even just last week, can you give me a
6 ballpark how much percentage, no, you don't have to say, oh, two
7 hours and 13 minutes, but just a ballpark? Do you spend half your
8 time looking at your certificates, half the time doing other
9 stuff, 90 percent of the time looking at your certificates?

10 A. That's a very relative question. So if we took last week, I
11 would say approximately half of my time was certificate
12 managements. But I don't know that's a true representation that
13 can be extrapolated out to weeks, months, years.

14 Q. And we'll just leave it just as that, last week, about half,
15 that's ok. I'm just trying to get an idea of how much time you
16 feel you can budget looking over your 18 certificates versus
17 whatever other duties you get assigned.

18 And I assume, and assuming is always the worse thing I can do
19 in my business, but I'm going to assume that you approve manuals
20 and things like that but being on a certificate doesn't mean you
21 go there to approve it, they send it to you electronically, via
22 snail mail, some version to do annual --

23 A. It's electronic, yes.

24 Q. When they send you an electronic change, I know every change
25 can be different, but approximately how long does it take for you

1 to look at that change, give them feedback of okay, I see your
2 changes but suggest this, this and this, or whatever you need to
3 do, or approve their changes?

4 A. Is this specifically with this operator?

5 Q. Let's go specifically with DuPage, yes.

6 A. It's a good question. It depends on what the change is.
7 Generally speaking, I will know that the manual, or the change is
8 coming. They'll submit it, and I'll give it a 30,000 foot look
9 down to see what we've got.

10 I will usually then speak with the DO on the phone, like,
11 this is what we've got, what are we looking at here, where's our
12 thought process on this just to make sure we're on the same page.
13 And then after that conversation, we kind of come up with a plan
14 of action as to when this needs to be done by and that way I know
15 how to budget my time appropriately to accomplish that task.

16 Q. So working with DuPage, you're talking about this operator?

17 A. Uh-huh.

18 Q. How receptive are they to your suggestions, your changes?

19 A. Very.

20 Q. Okay. Does it happen very often, never, when they send you a
21 change and want you to make this the highest priority you have?

22 A. That can be said about every operator.

23 Q. So they're kind of along those same lines as everybody?

24 A. Uh-huh.

25 Q. I just want to make sure they weren't like, oh golly, I'll

1 use the phrase high maintenance, that's my term.

2 A. They are not high maintenance. I feel they respect my time.

3 Q. Since you've taken over their certificate, have they had any
4 full manual rewrites or large portions of their manuals needing to
5 be rewritten? Or is it just, I don't want to call it little
6 because little just makes it seem like it's not important.

7 A. They're training manual was changed either right about the
8 time I became their principal. I was the assistant to the
9 principal that had them previous to me. So, I worked with them
10 then as well so around that transition I knew that happened. And
11 I know there's a current GOM rewrite going on right now.

12 Q. Now you're going to have think back, probably knock of some
13 cobwebs, I would anyway, but go back to when that training manual
14 rewrite occurred. Can you recall, just some areas that you recall
15 that were getting rewritten or why it was getting a full rewrite?

16 A. I don't know the exact reason. I know it was to update their
17 training manual. I don't know the full exact reason. Yeah.

18 Q. That say's a lot because if you're like, oh, yeah, here's
19 why, well, that tells me something too. So I'm glad nothing comes
20 right to mind. So that's okay, I appreciate that.

21 I know you said they do some of their training online?

22 A. Uh-huh.

23 Q. Is that from a reputable source too? I know you said they do
24 -- and you've not looked at any of their training online that they
25 contract with?

- 1 A. Meaning like have I done the training?
- 2 Q. Done, looked it over.
- 3 A. No, I have not seen that.
- 4 Q. And also, just for the record, we understand that shortly
5 after this event had occurred back in October of last year,
6 they've had mandatory training for all pilots. At some point
7 after that, did they reach out to you and let you know that they
8 were doing that, or have you preview it, or anything?
- 9 A. I did know about it. I was given the opportunity to preview
10 it, but it wasn't relevant to the accident. I don't know if that
11 necessarily pertains to this.
- 12 Q. No, that's okay. If that's what you've got, that's fine. I
13 just wanted to make sure I'm understanding. Let's jump into the
14 event itself that occurred. Did you know either of those pilots?
- 15 A. No.
- 16 Q. Had you heard of any of those pilots before that event?
- 17 A. Maybe. Yeah.
- 18 Q. I know it's been a while ago when, you know, names fly. I
19 forget my name every day so I understand that. How did you find
20 out about the event?
- 21 A. I was there performing surveillance at the time when the DO
22 came in and said that we just had an accident.
- 23 Q. And for the record, there being?
- 24 A. DuPage Aerospace.
- 25 Q. Okay. Was the surveillance you were doing at that time

1 standard surveillance, planned surveillance, surprise?

2 A. Standard and planned, necessary for what they were trying to
3 have authorized. Yeah.

4 Q. So it's wasn't --

5 A. It wasn't part of my annual plan. It was an ad hoc
6 surveillance as result of something they were asking for.

7 Q. So it was something they asked for, it wasn't something that
8 your management or above or some program told you, you need to go
9 provide surveillance. It was something --

10 A. Oh, correct, yes.

11 Q. I just wanted to make sure I had understanding of that. So,
12 when the DO said they had an accident, what did you do?

13 A. So I immediately ended what I was doing, and I asked them if
14 they had any questions for me. And then I got a brief run down of
15 what happened. I told them I'm here to help if they need
16 anything. Otherwise, I let them be because they have their own
17 policies, procedures and protocols for that situation so I didn't
18 want to impede their process.

19 Q. Did they ask for your help after you offered it?

20 A. Don't recall.

21 Q. Did you stay around there a little while longer? And I know,
22 a little while, that's a subjective term.

23 A. I mean, 10, 15 minutes subjectively, approximately. Yeah.

24 Q. How did their, acting out their protocol that they already
25 had in place, did it seem like it worked seamlessly? Did you see

1 them having challenges getting things going that was on their plan
2 for such a case?

3 MR. WADE: At least that you saw while you were there.

4 MR. ETCHER: Yeah, sorry, I should have clarified while you
5 were there.

6 MR. LAMBRECHT: Nothing raised a red flag while I was there.

7 BY MR. ETCHER:

8 Q. All right. So, after the event, you left, at 10, 15
9 subjective minutes later, did you have to do any follow ups with
10 them because of that event?

11 A. Can you expand on that?

12 Q. Sure. You left, you came back to the office, I don't know,
13 whatever you did, went home for the night, whatever. The next
14 day, or the next few days, did you have to reach out to them and
15 ask okay, what'd you learn, or did they voluntarily call you and
16 say, you know, we had our accident yesterday?

17 A. I didn't have to do anything, but there were many
18 communications between the DO and myself about the event that took
19 place, communications both ways.

20 Q. What did they tell you happened, or did they know?

21 A. When you say what happened, like what --

22 Q. Good question. Did they enlighten you on here is what we've
23 learned thus far from our crew, from FAA on scene?

24 A. Yeah, they were very open about everything, yes.

25 Q. Perfect. I'll get off that subject for a little bit.

1 The crew had said, when we interviewed them, that they had
2 issues with the FMS dropping off line. They also had issues, they
3 got an elevator out of trim light illuminated, and they said that
4 typically they just roll that trim forward a little bit and it
5 clears the light. Have you seen that? Have you heard them doing
6 that before?

7 A. When you say --

8 Q. Whenever you get on their aircraft whenever you visit them,
9 did you ever have pilots call and say, hey, we had this elevator
10 trim light?

11 A. No.

12 Q. So is that something you'd never heard of before, the light
13 illuminating on takeoff?

14 A. Them specifically, no. In general world aviation, that's
15 what those lights are for so I know that that happens. I also
16 know that FMS numbers sometimes drop out. I've never seen it
17 specific to them, but also know that in real world, that occurs.

18 Q. Okay. This is not a checkride so if you don't know, you don't
19 know, but I know you do review their manuals. Is there any policy
20 or procedure in place for flight crews if they're on an active
21 runway, on a takeoff roll, and they got a light illuminated, is
22 there any policy or procedure in place of what they should do?

23 A. I don't recall off hand. I know it's a pretty standard
24 briefing item.

25 Q. What is a pretty standard briefing item?

1 A. Well, I don't, I haven't seen it in a manual, but I do know
2 it's one of their briefing items, to address that situation if it
3 happens on the runway.

4 Q. Is it takeoff, elevator out of trim light illuminating, is
5 that the procedure?

6 A. I don't know if that's specific.

7 Q. Or any light?

8 A. Any light.

9 Q. Okay. I just wanted to make sure I understood.

10 A. Yeah, any -- yeah.

11 Q. And what are they supposed to do? I know it's a briefing
12 item, but is there any guidance of this is what you do, or is it
13 if you get a light illuminated, take it in the air, or is it,
14 maybe not even have to --

15 A. There's too many variables for that, aircraft specific,
16 airspeed specific, phase of takeoff. I don't know if I could give
17 a this is the right answer.

18 Q. No problem. We also understand that during their preflight,
19 they had a little bit of fuel dump out on the ramp because they
20 were fueling. Is that something they would notify you of since
21 it's a, I don't know, whatever, hazardous material leak or
22 something?

23 A. Not necessarily.

24 Q. Would you expect them to?

25 A. Not necessarily.

1 Q. I know you had sat in the jump seat or in the row 1 on their
2 flights, giving them checkrides or whomever you're checking out,
3 have you ever given them an en route inspection?

4 A. What do you mean by en route inspection?

5 Q. Do you go out to wherever that airplane is, whether it's out
6 there in DuPage or maybe it's somewhere else, and knock on the
7 door, hi, I'm here, I'm going to come along on a jump seat on this
8 flight to see what they're like flying a normal revenue or
9 repositioning flight?

10 A. So that's part of a 135, 299 check, the line check. It's
11 scheduled. It's normal work process.

12 Q. Is that something you do as part of their 299?

13 A. Uh-huh.

14 Q. So, considering DuPage's job, that they don't necessarily,
15 and maybe they do, have scheduled flights from Point A to Point B
16 regularly like an airline, but I'm guessing they probably don't.

17 A. They do not.

18 Q. How do you get onboard one of those airplanes for their en
19 routes when you have to give them one, or is it just something you
20 go out to DuPage and they provide you an airplane to give a en
21 route?

22 A. What do you mean, how do I get on the plane?

23 Q. I told you, sometimes in my brain it sounds really good, my
24 mouth doesn't connect, so I'm glad you asked.

25 You were a former airline, so you knew every now and then

1 you'd get a knock on the door of the cockpit and, hi, I'm with the
2 FAA, I'm here to come along for an en route, and you're going from
3 Point A to Point B, the FAA's coming along with you.

4 A. Sure.

5 Q. For a 135 operator, they don't always go from Point A to
6 Point B to do that en route inspection, en route observation,
7 whatever you want to call it. How are you able to do an en route
8 observation of them, of their operation?

9 A. We schedule this and then we mimic a 135 flight. We'll go
10 from Point A to Point B.

11 Q. So you're not necessarily doing that en route with Mr. and
12 Mrs. Passenger at the back?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Is that typically when you do those simulated en routes? Is
15 that typically two regular line pilots, or is it a line pilot and
16 a line check airman?

17 A. Depends on the purpose of the check. It's usually tied to
18 the checkride. So they're not random ad hoc flights that we're
19 doing, it's a scheduled checkride that's needed.

20 Q. So it's not, you know who you're going out to observe?

21 A. Correct.

22 Q. Okay. Have you ever had to give them an unsuccessful
23 checkride in the past? Anybody at DuPage, I'm not saying a
24 specific person, just anybody.

25 A. I don't believe so.

1 MR. ETCHER: Let my brain sit here and chew on this stuff for
2 a little bit. I know Kat and Todd always ask really good
3 questions and that'll probably make me think of some other ones.
4 But my brain will, I'll say, smoosh it all together for a little
5 bit and think about it.

6 Before I pass you off to them because I know we've been going
7 almost 40 minutes. Do you need a break?

8 MR. LAMBRECHT: I'm okay if you are.

9 MR. ETCHER: Does anybody need a break? I see everybody
10 shaking their head no, so if you're good to go, I will pass this
11 on to Kat.

12 MS. WILSON: Thanks.

13 BY MS. WILSON:

14 Q. I just have a few questions. I might jump around a little
15 bit to clarify some things from what Shawn asked you. If you said
16 this before, I apologize, who are you in contact most with at
17 DuPage?

18 A. The director of operations.

19 Q. That's who I was thinking, but I didn't want to assume.

20 You mentioned that DuPage does a little bit of in-house
21 training. Is any of the training that they do required training,
22 or is all the required training done by FlightSafety?

23 A. Are you talking aircraft-specific training?

24 Q. Anything to meet the regulations of what's required for
25 training for 135, is there, does DuPage themselves do any in-house

1 training for that?

2 A. Yes. I don't know what --

3 Q. Is this considered formal training that's documented
4 somewhere --

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. -- or is this like informal training where they're just
7 talking with --

8 A. Formal training that's documented.

9 Q. Okay. And how and where is that documented, do you know?

10 A. In each individual pilot's training record.

11 Q. Let me go back to what you said because I don't want to --
12 you said in-house training that covers more company-specific
13 documents and other things that might not be covered by
14 FlightSafety.

15 I guess I'm trying to get a better understanding of what
16 they're doing and what's required and what's being documented. So
17 what are they providing that then gets documented? If it's just
18 reviewing manuals, are they giving a test at the end of it?

19 A. I mean, all training is followed by testing. What are they
20 doing specifically? Like I had said earlier, they are, there's
21 company specific, this is how this company operates, and then they
22 fill in the gaps of what wasn't covered via the electronic
23 training, if you will. And then the aircraft specific is handled
24 by the Certificate 142 Center.

25 Q. Okay. Is it considered like a basic In Doc training or

1 something? Does it have a name, the training that they do?

2 A. Yeah, basic In Doc recurrent training.

3 Q. This one, and I have to go back, you said you have seven 135
4 operators. How does DuPage rank in terms of size to their other
5 135 operators?

6 A. They're one of my largest in both personnel and aircraft.
7 They may be the largest. They're -- okay.

8 Q. Do you ever receive any, either verbal or written, concerns
9 about the company or its operations from pilots?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Have you ever received something, either with this operator
12 or other operators?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. But nothing you can recall for DuPage?

15 A. Never had one from DuPage.

16 Q. When you've done checkrides, have you ever failed anyone at
17 DuPage?

18 A. I don't believe so.

19 Q. How are you ensuring that the training they're doing is in
20 compliance with their training manuals?

21 MR. WADE: Again, just focusing on DuPage for this one?

22 MS. WILSON: Yes.

23 MR. WADE: Okay.

24 MR. LAMBRECHT: Can you expand on that a little bit?

25 BY MS. WILSON:

1 Q. Well, if they have, I guess I could say basic In Doc, that
2 one's, because that's what they're doing, but how do you know that
3 they're doing what the manual says they're supposed to be doing in
4 terms of that?

5 A. So then I reference the training manual to see what is
6 required. From there I'll go to the individual pilot's training
7 record. And in there, there are records of what was covered and
8 when, who did it, how long it was and who it was signed off by, or
9 who it was certified by, I should say.

10 Q. Have you ever gone and reviewed their training records and
11 found something that hasn't been documented appropriately?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And then how was that resolved to know that, did we just
14 forget to maybe do a signature, or how do you know that the
15 training was actually completed the way it was supposed to be
16 completed? Is there some kind of --

17 A. Are we talking before the accident or after the accident?

18 Q. Well, I was just going to say in general, but is there
19 something that's been different before the accident versus after
20 the accident?

21 A. Yeah, there was that event that took place in December that
22 you had mentioned earlier. Can you ask the question one more time
23 and then --

24 Q. Well if you were to review the training records and something
25 was amiss, what would you do to ensure that they were meeting the

1 training requirements?

2 A. So first thing I would do is I would tell them, this is what
3 I'm finding right here. From there, I would follow up with
4 written correspondence. And from that written correspondence, I
5 would ask for documentation showing that this was completed. Yeah.

6 Q. Okay. And when that's happened and you've seen that at DuPage
7 and you've asked for that documentation, have they been able to
8 give you the documentation needed?

9 A. Without question, very open and very proactive.

10 Q. Since the accident, have you changed your surveillance at all
11 of them?

12 A. No.

13 Q. They mentioned that they have an SMS program which is not
14 approved. Are you, have you reviewed that at all, have you looked
15 at their SMS manual that they have?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Have they had any discussions with you about making it a
18 formal program?

19 A. Yes, but they are, they have to now by regulation so we've
20 been in communications about that process.

21 Q. If they -- scratch that. When we talked with the DO, he said
22 they have monthly safety meetings. Do you ever attend those?

23 A. No. I haven't attended them would be a better way of saying
24 that.

25 Q. Do you get informed of trends that they're seeing, and safety

1 reports that they're receiving, or is that something that would be
2 brought to you attention at the --

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Is that something that's done on the regular, or it's just if
5 they see something?

6 A. As needed, as they see fit.

7 Q. Can you recall the last time that they let you know of
8 something that was going on?

9 A. I don't recall.

10 Q. When we were doing, again, talking with the DO, he mentioned
11 that with new hires, they have a sort of progress in terms of just
12 sitting in the right seat to then being able to fly legs without
13 passengers and then flying legs with passengers and then
14 eventually getting to the left seat. Is that something that's
15 formally documented? Is that something that you're aware of and
16 that's a, is that a standard procedure that they follow, or is
17 this sort of like, not a technique, but this is just -- is that
18 documented anywhere I'll guess I'll just leave it at that?

19 A. It's not required by regulation. It's their choice to do that
20 to help better the individual pilot's progression, get them
21 comfortable, more familiar with what's going on.

22 When you say it's not documented, what do you mean? Is this,
23 are you asking if it's their policy?

24 Q. Correct.

25 A. Are you asking if they have --

1 Q. Yeah, so, if I'm new hire pilot, do I know that that's going
2 to be that I've got these different checkpoints that I have to
3 meet as I'm, in order to progress?

4 A. I don't know.

5 Q. What do you think of, in your opinion, they only have
6 captains, two captains in the cockpit. Is that a good thing? Do
7 you think that that creates any sort of, could that create any
8 tension in that, you know, we're both captains, how do we defer to
9 one captain versus another? How do you think that hierarchy sort
10 of works?

11 A. Again, I think that question might be subjective. The term,
12 captain, and the responsibility of captain and who's doing what in
13 that situation, and they may use captain broadly as just somebody
14 who can act as captain.

15 To answer your question, it could have zero effect, but it
16 could also create tension. It's circumstantial.

17 Q. Yeah. Have you ever noticed it creating any tension when
18 you've done rides with them?

19 A. No.

20 MS. WILSON: I appreciate it. I think that's all the
21 questions I have for now, thanks.

22 MR. ETCHER: Thanks, Kat. Todd?

23 MR. GENTRY: Kat asked some very good questions, half of them
24 were mine. So that's very good, we're on the same thoughts.

25 BY MR. GENTRY:

1 Q. You mentioned that you didn't, you'd never seen their SMS
2 program which I understand is not an approved program. Have you
3 seen it in work, though? Have they ever talked to you about the
4 program itself other than the fact they're going to have to do it
5 regulatorily here soon? That's a word isn't, regulatorily? I
6 don't know.

7 But have you seen it in work, let me ask you that? Have you
8 seen where somebody filed an anonymous safety concern and the
9 conclusion of that?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Okay. Have you had any conversations with their safety
12 manager, and I know there's not a 119 person, but have you had any
13 conversations with that person?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Have you had any conversations about their data analysis or
16 their FOQA program?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Do they share any trends that they see in the FOQA with you?

19 A. I don't recall.

20 Q. You mentioned, we talked a little bit about takeoff briefings
21 and standard takeoff briefings and stuff which I'm very familiar
22 with, I know you are as well. Do they have that written down as
23 an example anywhere, SOPs, GOM, training manual?

24 A. I'd have to look at the manual. I don't know offhand.

25 Q. Fair enough. When you do the checks that you're doing, 299

1 rides or whatever you've done, are you, you're also listening to
2 those takeoff briefings as well?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And are you on a headset?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Okay. So you can communicate with the crew?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Excellent. Crew pairing, do you know how they decide crew
9 pairing? I'm just asking if you know how they do it. I know
10 that's not your responsibility. Let me clear that up. But do you
11 know how they decide who to put in the airplane?

12 A. It's a loaded question. I could answer yes, I could answer
13 no. I guess, can you be more specific?

14 Q. Do they have what's called training captains? Are you
15 familiar with that term?

16 A. They do.

17 Q. Are those listed somewhere in their training manual or
18 training documents, that you know of? If you don't know, you
19 don't know.

20 A. In their training manual and their training documents, no,
21 not to my knowledge.

22 Q. Okay. Do they have, have they talked to you about how the
23 crew pair with a younger, and that doesn't mean young age wise,
24 but a less --

25 A. Experienced.

1 Q. -- experienced pilot with a training captain?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And is there, do they use a generic number that they look for
4 saying we want this person to fly with this person for so many
5 hours or missions or anything like that? Have they ever spoken to
6 you about those kinds of things?

7 A. Yes, they have spoken to me about them. I don't know if
8 there is in our requirement and if there is, I don't know what
9 that number is.

10 Q. Right, and it would be under our regulation anyway, it's not
11 regulated and we know that.

12 A. Perfect.

13 Q. I didn't know if they were even asking about those kinds of
14 questions.

15 A. Uh-huh.

16 MR. GENTRY: That's all I have for now, Shawn.

17 MR. ETCHER: Okay. Thanks, Todd.

18 MR. GENTRY: Thank you.

19 MR. LAMBRECHT: Uh-huh.

20 MR. ETCHER: Well, you went through Round 1. Been going
21 about an hour, do you need a break?

22 MR. LAMBRECHT: I could use a break now.

23 MR. ETCHER: Well now that you need one -- no, just kidding.
24 We will take a break at 13:37.

25 (Off the record at 1:37)

1 (On the record at 1:42)

2 MR. ETCHER: And we are back on the record at 13:42 local.
3 Again, you made it through Round 1 so, phew. Round 2 is always
4 quicker. You've really helped a lot understand a day in the life,
5 if you will, what you guys do. It's not you just sit around and
6 collect a pay check. You do stuff, and that's great to hear. And
7 it's good to understand all that it takes for you guys so I
8 appreciate that.

9 MR. LAMBRECHT: Sure.

10 MR. ETCHER: I know I have a few questions but not very many.
11 A lot of them are kind of dovetailed off of what they asked, and I
12 just either want a little clarification or maybe a better
13 understanding. It jarred something loose in the cobwebs above.

14 BY MR. ETCHER:

15 Q. I know you had said that there is no formal SMS program and
16 anything like that required for them yet. Do they have an ASAP
17 program at all?

18 A. They do not.

19 Q. Is that something that they've mentioned to you? Have they
20 not?

21 A. We have brought it to their attention, and they have shown
22 interest.

23 Q. All righty. How much work will that add to your workload
24 from managing their certificate?

25 A. Through them specifically, almost zero. I'm removed from

1 that situation.

2 Q. Okay. Do you have any of your 135 operators that have an ASAP
3 program?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. How's that working for those operators?

6 A. Well. Yeah.

7 Q. Good. And it's somewhat, it's not new, but it's kind of new
8 in the 135 world so it's always nice to hear how the program works
9 around.

10 Doing all you do, all the certificates, all the geographical
11 miles you have to get to see some of them, is it hard to get
12 overtime approval to go do your job from your management here,
13 whether it's to go to DuPage or go to --

14 A. I'm not eligible for overtime.

15 Q. So, do you have to work more than 40 hours a week to get all
16 that is done accomplished?

17 A. Sometimes.

18 Q. All righty. Do they compensate you anyway for doing that?

19 A. Compensatory time.

20 Q. Is that hard to get approved for?

21 A. No.

22 Q. I know we talked about you being DuPage's principal. Do you
23 have anybody else that oversees that certificate with you, like a
24 maintenance inspector or avionics or maybe all of it?

25 A. Both, yes.

1 Q. How do you guys, how do you all work together as a team? Do
2 you interact well? Is it challenging?

3 A. No challenges. Very well.

4 Q. Okay. And how long have, is it just you, a PMI and a PAI?

5 A. Correct.

6 Q. How often do you guys get together to discuss DuPage
7 Aerospace?

8 A. There's no set schedule. As needed depending on, it's task
9 dependent, I suppose.

10 Q. All righty. When you go out to DuPage to do an onsite visit,
11 do you take the rest of your team with you? Is it just you by
12 yourself? Does it vary?

13 A. It varies.

14 Q. Mostly is it with the team, or is it mostly by yourself?

15 A. I would say mostly by myself.

16 Q. If one of your other teammates went out there and they saw
17 something that was more ops related, do they, is it required,
18 encouraged to bring that back to you to look into, or can they
19 automatically start looking at it while they're there on scene, or
20 onsite?

21 A. I guess it depends on the situation. They are a
22 representative of the FAA so they do have certain duties and
23 responsibilities, but they don't necessarily have the skill set.
24 If it's an operations-related thing, they would let me know. So
25 they would do what they can to help me out but then I would then

1 take the reins from there.

2 Q. Okay, perfect. And for DuPage has that ever occurred?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Can you give me an example why? I know I'm digging away back
5 to the cobwebs, I can tell.

6 A. Yeah, I don't recall.

7 Q. Can you kind of give me an idea how long ago that occurred?

8 A. I don't remember.

9 Q. It's okay, I don't know works fine too.

10 A. Not as of late, I can give you that.

11 Q. Heaven forbid, but if a DuPage crew got violated or had some
12 kind of, who knows what, enforcement issue, how would you be
13 notified of that? Or would you be notified of that, let me ask
14 that question first.

15 A. I should be notified of that. What do you mean by
16 enforcement?

17 Q. I can only imagine. I always feel if I just stop with a
18 violation it's like, oh, well, they didn't have that. If they
19 ever had something like, I don't know, lining up on the wrong
20 runway or something where, you know, maybe it's something you guys
21 have to look into.

22 A. Yeah, okay. So something, what you're describing, yes. I
23 would actually be running point on that, if you will, yeah.

24 Q. How would you get notified of that, let me rephrase that.
25 How would you expect to be notified of that?

1 A. I'll give you two answers. I would get notified of that by
2 way of management. But within a short period of time, I would get
3 a phone call from DuPage Aerospace letting me know what happened.

4 Q. Has that happened in the past while you've been on their
5 certificate?

6 A. Yes. Not due to a violation but, for example, they had a
7 near miss with a drone. ATC still had to file all their paperwork
8 and it came back to me. But I was notified shortly after the
9 flight by the company.

10 Q. I know you had mentioned, I believe to Kat, that they share
11 their safety reports with you, maybe not share, that's the wrong
12 word, but they provide you trends analysis of reports coming in.
13 Did I get that right in my brain?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. You kind of paused, like, maybe I quite didn't have it right.
16 So I'd rather have it right in my brain.

17 A. What they feel is necessary for me to know has always been
18 provided to me voluntarily.

19 Q. Do they, have they shared with you how many safety reports
20 they get?

21 A. Not to my knowledge.

22 Q. Have you asked?

23 A. I have not.

24 Q. Okay. Do you, do they provide you with the bulletins they
25 send to their crews? After the event, I know they had to some

1 training, we were told. But any bulletins they send to crews, do
2 they send to you as well? I realize bulletins are bulletins are
3 not necessarily FAA required for approval.

4 A. Yeah. I don't believe that they do. Bulletins seem rather
5 company specific. It's outside by purview.

6 Q. I know Todd asked about check pilots, I'm sorry, training
7 instructors, instructor pilots. Do they have a mentor program?
8 Like if I was new there, do you know would they pair me up with
9 somebody and kind of let that person mentor me through their
10 policies, procedures, how to fly, how they fly?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Is that --

13 A. I don't know if it's paired with a specific person, but they
14 have what you are describing, yes.

15 Q. And how does that work? I know you said they may not pair
16 you up with specific person, but if I'm new, how would they
17 necessarily, maybe you don't know, pair me up with the right
18 captain or the right captains, depends on which the case may be?

19 A. Are you looking for experienced base, are you looking flight
20 hours base, are you looking for personality, I guess, can you
21 expand on the --

22 Q. Sure, great clarification. It's not necessarily experienced
23 based. I'm sure they probably have specific captains that they
24 want to mentor, maybe the new ones, maybe they don't. Do they
25 have a formal process where they, yeah, I know, they don't have to

1 come to you for a certificate or for a letter of authorization, or
2 anything, but say, this is our mentor group, these are our
3 captains, I hate using the word better, but these are our captains
4 with the experience we need in the aircraft with, you know, they
5 know what they're doing, they know the manuals, they know the
6 procedures, they're almost as good as a check airman but they're
7 not. Do they have a program in place like that, that you're aware
8 of?

9 A. They do operate that way, yes.

10 Q. Do you know who some of those instructing captains are? I
11 don't need names yet.

12 A. No.

13 Q. So it's nothing they've come to you and said, hey, we want
14 Pilot 1 and Pilot 2 to be our mentor, unofficial mentors, or
15 however they would call it?

16 A. Correct, they have not done that.

17 Q. All righty. In your opinion, we'll ask it this way, what
18 kind of caliber of pilot do they have? I know aviation has been a
19 little crazy in the past couple of years with hiring. Airlines
20 are taking everybody that they can so it's leaving maybe smaller
21 operators having some challenges getting what would they consider
22 maybe a high caliber pilot, or maybe they've lessened their
23 standards a little bit. Have you seen that with DuPage?

24 A. I have not seen a lessening of their standards.

25 Q. I hate comparing pilots to pilots because it's not apples to

1 apples. But with the pilots you interact with at DuPage and
2 you've seen, and how ever you've interacted with them, how would
3 you classify them in your mind? As normal, great pilots, maybe
4 they could use a bit more experience, or oh my word, how'd they
5 this guy, he has a lot of experience?

6 A. The majority of the pilots that I have seen have been
7 phenomenal pilots.

8 Q. We understand DuPage uses Electronic Flight Bags like a lot
9 of people do. Did you have to approve that?

10 A. Uh-huh, yes.

11 Q. How was that process of approval? Was it, did they train
12 their pilots well? Did you have to approve their training for the
13 EFB, first of all, let me ask that?

14 A. It is in their training manual, yes.

15 Q. Okay. So, did you oversee this, or that training, or did you
16 go through some of that training?

17 A. I reviewed their training manual. I didn't see in person how
18 they're going to teach that. Yes.

19 Q. So when you do your en route observations, simulated en route
20 observations, have you done it since the EFBs have been --

21 A. No.

22 Q. You have not, okay. So how long ago did they put EFBs into
23 their aircraft, or give them to their pilots?

24 A. I don't know that I could give an exact date, but a couple of
25 months ago.

- 1 Q. So it's been since the event?
- 2 A. Yes.
- 3 Q. All righty. Have you had any pilots complain about the EFBs?
- 4 I know me and electronics, they hate me, I don't like them either.
- 5 So being a pilot, I'd complain, but that's just because I don't
- 6 like them. But have you ever heard any complaints come to you
- 7 about the EFBs? For some reason, I'm letting the crews down, or
- 8 not working well, or hard to get information.
- 9 A. No, I heard no complaints.
- 10 Q. I know Kat had asked you if you had had any pilots from them
- 11 reach out and talk to you, could they? Do they have your number?
- 12 A. Not all of them, but some do, yes.
- 13 Q. Along that same line, has there been any whistleblower
- 14 complaints about them?
- 15 A. Not to my knowledge.
- 16 Q. Have you had any of your certificates get whistleblower
- 17 complaints, or would they even let you know if you did?
- 18 A. I don't know.
- 19 Q. All right. No worries. Last few questions I have --
- 20 A. Well --
- 21 Q. Excuse me.
- 22 A. You had two questions there. I don't know if anybody has had
- 23 it. And then would they come to me? Yes, I think they would.
- 24 Q. And I just want to clarify they. Your management?
- 25 A. Operators that I oversee.

1 Q. Okay. So by whistleblower complaints, I'm talking like
2 somebody picks up the phone and calls 1-800-TELL-FAA or whatever
3 that number is, would an operator know that they had a
4 whistleblower complaint on them?

5 A. Are you, like, safety hotline?

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. Is that what you're -- I guess I was thinking whistleblower
8 more of an internal HR kind of issue. Describe the kind of a
9 complaint that you're thinking of, and I'll --

10 Q. Oh golly, there's so many complaints out there, you can, you
11 know, oh, that airplane came way too close to my house, I'm
12 calling 1-800-TELL-FAA or whatever the number is.

13 MR. WARD: Tell is a safety hotline, a complaint hotline.

14 MR. LAMBRECHT: Okay.

15 MR. ETCHER: General public, passenger in the back --

16 MR. WARD: Anonymous.

17 MR. LAMBRECHT: Okay, so we're talking safety hotlines, okay.

18 MR. ETCHER: Sorry, I'll have to remember that word because
19 I've never called it before.

20 MR. LAMBRECHT: No, that's fine. So what's the question then
21 now that we know we're looking at the safety hotline?

22 BY MR. ETCHER:

23 Q. Have you ever had any of those on any of your operators?

24 A. I don't think so, but I'm not 100 percent certain. I would
25 have to go back and look and that's --

1 Q. Would you expect to be told if there was a safety hotline
2 complaint about one of your operators from whoever would tell
3 internally?

4 A. From the operator, or from the management telling me?

5 Q. I assume it'd be coming from management, but I don't know.
6 How would the system work, if you would know?

7 A. Yes, I would assume that I would get notified of that.

8 Q. All righty. This is the last little group of questions and
9 it may be only be one.

10 If I was working at DuPage, I was a pilot, been there for a
11 period of time, but they decided out of complete craziness that
12 they want to designate me as one of their check airmen and start
13 me through that process. What is that process?

14 If they came to you and said, we want to have Shawn be a
15 candidate to become a check airman, walk me through the process
16 from that point on to, hopefully, get me as a check airman or
17 maybe there's criteria I have to meet first.

18 A. Yeah, there are criteria. There's regulation and criteria.
19 The criteria can be found in FAA Order 8900.1. I don't know that
20 I can spell out all of that criteria because I don't want to
21 memorize that. It's in the order so I reference that. Much like
22 all the previous manuals references, I don't know those because I
23 don't memorize manuals, I reference them.

24 So, they would have a candidate, they would cross reference
25 8900, they'd put together an application package that would come

1 to me. Are we talking a company check airman, or we talking a
2 contract check airman at a training facility, Part 142 training
3 facility?

4 Q. A company. I work for DuPage, I'm one of the pilots.

5 A. Oh, that's right. You're right, yeah, okay. So I'd put
6 together the application package. I would then take 8900.1 and
7 compare the two to make sure that we have the qualifications that
8 are needed. Perform the necessary background checks on pilots to
9 see what we have, and then depending on the type of authorizations
10 they're looking for, there is a checking event that goes with it,
11 depending on how, which airman they want to go.

12 And then I would administer the check or another
13 representative of the FAA would administer that check.

14 Q. If they came to you and said, here's Shawn's resume, here's
15 our packet for him, would they do that knowing what the 8900
16 required, or would you tell them hey, go look at 8900, go through
17 that list, make sure Shawn has these qualifications before you
18 submit it to me, or is that something incumbent upon just you to
19 go through it and make sure I have all those qualifications
20 needed?

21 A. Are you talking about this operator specifically?

22 Q. DuPage specifically, yes.

23 A. They would put in the leg work to make sure that they have
24 everything cross referenced before they brought it to me.

25 Q. All righty. And please forgive me if I've misheard or mis-

1 memorized in my brain. I believe you recently approved a check
2 airman for them, or has it been more than just recent?

3 A. It was approximately October of 2023.

4 Q. So just prior to the accident?

5 A. It was the day of.

6 Q. The day of?

7 A. That's why I was there. I was in the process. It wasn't a
8 full check, it was part of the check which is normal. Yes.

9 Q. So, when they brought you that paperwork for that check
10 airman, everything was met, so you were out there doing a
11 checkride and, I guess he's now a check airman, so I assume it was
12 quite acceptable to do --

13 A. Yes, he is now a check airman, yes.

14 Q. How long does that process take, just ballpark? I know, it's
15 all different, everything is different in aviation.

16 A. I mean, what's the starting point and then the ending point
17 him being certified? So from to sign --

18 Q. From the time DuPage reaches to you and says hey, we want
19 Shawn to be a check airman, here's his packet, until you come out
20 and give me the omni-omni blessing of you are now a line check
21 airman, here's your letter.

22 A. It could be a couple of days, it could be a couple of weeks.

23 Q. So it's not like a six-month process?

24 A. No.

25 Q. It doesn't have to be -- I shouldn't say it could be,

1 obviously it could be, I suppose, but it's not something --

2 A. Yeah, it would go into that priority of safety, as we were
3 talking earlier, and workload and where does that all fit into
4 everything.

5 Q. So would that make it a higher priority then to you to
6 approve a check airman, or is that just -- help me understand how
7 you work it?

8 A. It's circumstantial.

9 MR. ETCHER: I believe you answered all of my questions so I
10 appreciate it. But I'm going to go around just to make sure
11 everybody else, because they might have some other crazy questions
12 as well. Kat?

13 MS. WILSON: I don't have anything, thank you.

14 MR. GENTRY: I don't have anything.

15 MR. ETCHER: Round 3 since you seemed to really enjoy this,
16 no.

17 I know we've asked you a lot of questions, you've given us a
18 lot of answers. My brain's trying to absorb it all so I
19 appreciate that.

20 MR. LAMBRECHT: Sure.

21 MR. ETCHER: I'm always afraid, we can ask a ton of
22 questions, but maybe there's something we should have asked but we
23 didn't know because if we just don't know, it's hard to ask.

24 Is there something that you can think of when you found out,
25 oh great, the NTSB's coming here to interview me, sit down and

1 chat with me, they're going to ask about X. And I always hate it
2 if we're going to ask about X and we don't because we didn't know.
3 Not that I want you to say, oh, let me add more time to my
4 interview here.

5 But is there anything that we didn't ask that we should have,
6 or we should be looking at?

7 MR. LAMBRECHT: I don't think so. I mean, one, I'm not going
8 to ask you to ask me more questions.

9 MR. ETCHER: I kind of assumed that. It's kind of like a
10 loaded question, right?

11 MR. LAMBRECHT: Yeah. And two, I think we've hit most of the
12 relevant points.

13 MR. ETCHER: Most but not all?

14 MR. LAMBRECHT: Yeah.

15 MR. ETCHER: Is there something we should have hit? Now
16 you're going to have me asking.

17 MR. LAMBRECHT: No. I think there's nothing more that I
18 would add.

19 MR. ETCHER: Well, with that, we can call this concluded at
20 14:04 local. Thank you.

21 (Whereupon, at 2:04 p.m., the interview was concluded.)
22
23
24
25

CERTIFICATE

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

IN THE MATTER OF: RUNWAY COLLISION AT THE WILLIAM
 P. HOBBY AIRPORT IN HOUSTON, TEXAS
 ON OCTOBER 24, 2023
 Interview of Scott Lambrecht

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA24FA017

PLACE: Chicago, Illinois

DATE: July 17, 2024

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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RUNWAY COLLISION AT THE WILLIAM

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P. HOBBY AIRPORT IN HOUSTON,

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Accident No.: DCA24FA017

TEXAS ON OCTOBER 24, 2023

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Interview of: JAMES LOBASH, Supervisory Aviation Safety Inspector
Federal Aviation Administration

Chicago, Illinois

Tuesday,
July 17, 2024

APPEARANCES:

SHAWN ETCHER, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

KATHERINE WILSON
National Transportation Safety Board

TODD GENTRY
Federal Aviation Administration

BENJAMIN WADE, ESQ.
Federal Aviation Administration

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I N T E R V I E W

(2:38 p.m.)

MR. ETCHER: Good afternoon. It is 14:38 on July 17th. My name is Shawn Etcher, I'm an Operational Factors Investigator with the NTSB. All that means is I look forward, at everything forward of the cockpit door and how it interacts with the crew.

And being FAA, obviously, you guys interact with the crew or maybe not with this crew, but with the operator. So we're just trying to understand your guys role with this operation and anything along that line.

Typically, we ask questions so it helps us with the investigation in case we see something we need to change or request a change. I should say, we can't make change, we can only make recommendations.

But I don't have to know it all, thank goodness. I've got some great help here as well. I'll have them introduce themselves in a moment. Luckily, there's only a few of us here so it won't take us long. But I will start with Ms. Katherine.

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

MR. ETCHER: And Todd.

MR. GENTRY: I'm Todd Gentry with AVP-100, the Office of Accident Investigation and Prevention. I'm sorry I'll say it for the tape recording.

I work closely with the NTSB on many accidents. And my role

1 here is a safety role only to try to see if there's anything the
2 FAA could do better.

3 MR. ETCHER: Thank you. Those are all the people that will
4 be asking you questions. Don't think of it as an interview, we're
5 just having a discussion. I want to learn, and I can't learn by
6 reading manuals so I like to ask questions so I make sure I
7 understand everything.

8 Are you okay you with all us here, or is there any of us that
9 you don't want to be in here.

10 MR. LOBASH: I'm okay with that.

11 MR. ETCHER: All righty. As part of our process, we record
12 all our interviews. Those recordings we send off to be
13 transcribed by a transcriptionist. I usually get them back in
14 about two weeks.

15 When I get them back, I go through just to make sure there's
16 no acronyms misspelled or names misspelled. That's all we will
17 change, is correcting misspelled words. They'll recertify it.

18 When I get that back, I send it to your representative, if
19 you have one. And they will let you look at it to make sure it's
20 all correct because that transcript will actually become part of
21 our public docket when this case opens up to the public so we want
22 to make sure everything's correct.

23 Sometimes when you reread it, you're like well, I didn't mean
24 it quite that way. Maybe you want to add a little clarification,
25 you can. I'll just have you write it on a form, a piece of paper,

1 whatever you guys need to, and we'll attach that right to the
2 transcript so whoever's reading these, they can have a great
3 understanding of exactly what you wanted to, to make sure we
4 understood.

5 Are you okay with us recording and transcribing?

6 MR. LOBASH: Yes.

7 MR. ETCHER: All righty. And just for your knowledge, I said
8 the transcript is public, your audio recording will not be. So
9 you don't have to worry about hearing yourself necessarily on the
10 10:00 news at night.

11 Additionally, as part of our investigation, you are entitled
12 to one representative of your choosing, if you wish. Do you wish
13 to have one?

14 MR. LOBASH: I do.

15 MR. ETCHER: Okay. And may I assume it's Mr. Ben?

16 MR. LOBASH: It is.

17 MR. ETCHER: And Ben, for the recording, would you please
18 state your name and your role?

19 MR. WADE: Yes. Benjamin Wade, FAA, Office of the Chief
20 Counsel.

21 MR. ETCHER: Thank you very much. Now, before we get
22 started, because we're government, there's always rules so I have
23 rules.

24 At any point if you need a break, please so say. If you need
25 to confer with counsel, need to get a drink, use the restroom,

1 whatever, just so say. It's easy to hit pause, take a break, we
2 come back and we continue. I'll try and ask you throughout just
3 to make sure because typically by the time you need one, I'll need
4 one too.

5 If you don't completely understand a question I ask or any of
6 us ask, just ask for clarification. It may sound great in my
7 brain, but it didn't come out that way so I will take no offense.
8 I don't think anybody here will. If you want clarification, just
9 ask. You give me an answer I don't know, I don't understand, I'm
10 going to ask for clarification as well.

11 The last little rule, if you will, if you don't know
12 something, I don't know works just fine. If you have an opinion,
13 just say, in my opinion or something, so we know what you're
14 telling us is an opinion. It's not a regulation, it's not a
15 procedure, it's your opinion. Sometimes I'll even ask for your
16 opinion. So that way we just want to make sure when I'm reading
17 this two, three or four weeks later, I can remember, oh, yeah,
18 that was his opinion. All righty?

19 MR. LOBASH: Okay.

20 MR. ETCHER: Well, with that, we'll get started. I always
21 start with the harder questions first and then they get easier.

22 INTERVIEW OF JAMES LOBASH

23 BY MR. ETCHER:

24 Q. Can you please state your full name and spell your last?

25 A. Sure. James Lobash, L-o-b-a-s-h.

- 1 Q. Excellent, thank you. What is your job title?
- 2 A. My job title is Supervisory ASI, Aviation Safety Inspector.
- 3 Q. With?
- 4 A. With the Greater Chicago FSDO.
- 5 Q. And that's part of the FAA, I assume?
- 6 A. Yes.
- 7 Q. Okay. I just want to make sure we knew that. How long have
- 8 you been in that role?
- 9 A. About two and a half years.
- 10 Q. Okay. How long have you been with the FAA?
- 11 A. Just short of nine.
- 12 Q. Congratulations.
- 13 A. Thanks.
- 14 Q. Soon you'll be up on 10.
- 15 A. Yeah.
- 16 Q. Excellent. Kind of help me understand what a supervisor in
- 17 your position, what you do.
- 18 A. Okay. As the frontline supervisor, my job is to monitor what
- 19 tasks are coming into the office, get those assigned to the
- 20 particular principals and inspectors. And then watch that, you
- 21 know, assist them if they need clarification on something, if they
- 22 need assistance from higher headquarters, if they need assistance
- 23 from other offices to help them, give them the resources to do the
- 24 job they need to get the task done.
- 25 Q. Okay, excellent. And in your role, can you kind of give us

1 -- let me rephrase this. Give me kind of a nutshell of your
2 aviation history, aviation career.

3 A. Okay. I started in the military about 22 and a half years
4 with the, in the Air Force flying primarily B-52s.

5 Once I retired, went to go fly with Doss Aviation. They were
6 contract flight, preliminary flight instruction for the Air Force,
7 teaching, you know, giving folks preliminary flight instruction
8 basically from off the street to solo, and then they would go of
9 to their Air Force training.

10 And then from, that was about three years, and then over here
11 to the FAA as an ASI, POI and now as the frontline.

12 Q. You said you were a POI. Were you DuPage Aerospace, since
13 we're here about that event, were you their POI at any time?

14 A. I was for probably six or nine months, probably six years
15 ago.

16 Q. We can kind of get into that in just a little bit. I just
17 wanted to make sure I understood.

18 So you flew B-52s and you've instructed. What airmen
19 certificate ratings do you happen to hold?

20 A. Airline transport, multi engine, commercial, instrument,
21 single engine, and flight instructors.

22 Q. Any type ratings?

23 A. No.

24 Q. And this is usually the very toughest question, ballpark,
25 about how many hours do you have?

1 A. About 5,000; 5,500.

2 Q. See, those are all the toughest questions. Now they just get
3 easier so it's, yeah, you got the tough stuff out of the way.

4 Let's kind of start digging in here a little bit, to the FAA
5 a little bit. Who's in your chain of command? Let's start with,
6 who's above you? Who would you report to?

7 A. Okay, so, first line, first manager would be the office
8 manager, Luanne Wills-Merrell. From her, it's to her division
9 manager, Bill McGowan, and then the executive director for general
10 aviation safety is Hardie DeGuzman.

11 Q. And below you, who reports to you and walk me through that?

12 A. Below me is the five operations inspectors we have in the
13 office. Three of them are principals, one's an assistant and, I
14 guess, we have two now because we got a new one on Monday, so we
15 have two just brand new, two inspectors. One's been here a year,
16 still in training; the other one's been here two days.

17 Q. Well at least you're still hiring people in here, that's
18 good, right?

19 A. Still hiring, yeah.

20 Q. And is that all you have under you, is those five principals?

21 A. I guess it's six.

22 Q. Sorry, six?

23 A. Six, yeah.

24 Q. And they're ops inspectors?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. You don't have maintenance, or you don't have avionics or
2 anything?

3 A. No.

4 Q. All right. And of those six inspectors, how many of them
5 currently manage certificates?

6 A. Three.

7 Q. Three?

8 A. Uh-huh.

9 Q. How many certificates then do you, I want to say you manage,
10 but that you have oversight over with your principals?

11 A. Part 135, it's about 25. There's probably about 10 Part 141
12 flight schools, and then the remainder are 137 Ag and 133 lift,
13 external lift.

14 Q. Maybe you can give me a fact, maybe it's your opinion, I'll
15 let you decide how you want to answer this question. I know
16 you've got two in training and an assistant, but having three
17 principals managing all those certificates, is that manageable?
18 Do you find that works your folks pretty hard? Help me understand
19 because I don't know what would be a balance.

20 A. Right. It's kind of an ebb and flow, that's my opinion.
21 There are times of the year where it's, you know, not a lot of
22 work is coming in.

23 It's kind of when the charter companies, especially the 135s,
24 have kind of like a dead period, you know, lower periods of
25 activity, we find we have lower periods of activity.

1 Somewhere around September, October, they don't have a lot
2 going on. And then come November, December, lots of people want
3 to take trips for Christmas. The first of the year, it kind of
4 spikes up, we see an increase in requests. After Christmas, it
5 goes back down again. And then, January, February, March, it's
6 kind of slow and then April, May, start ramping back up again.
7 That's when the 141 flight schools really start taking off and
8 adding to that.

9 And then all the general aviation in the summer time and so
10 from like May through September is kind of a really busy period.

11 Q. You mentioned general aviation, do you guys oversee general
12 aviation aircraft as well or just your certificate holders?

13 A. In addition to the certificate holders, we also oversee, we
14 don't directly oversee general aviation, we do random checks. But
15 if there's any investigations for pilot deviations or accidents or
16 incidents, they fall on us if they're in our jurisdiction.

17 Q. So, considering all that you guys do -- I know, ebbs and
18 flows, they're always fun in this business.

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. But considering all of that, do the three of you have, does
21 that give you enough staffing to do that job well? Is it enough
22 to just, I don't want to say just get by, but to do what you got
23 to do, but --

24 A. We have, we can do what we need to do. It would be nice to
25 have more experience because then you can kind of spread the

1 wealth out a little bit more.

2 A lot of the issues that are, you know, you kind of get to
3 the surface and if they ask, they have a request, you finish the
4 request and move on.

5 If there's something that, if you, if there's a, you know,
6 they find a problem with it and slows it down, they'll get that
7 problem but then something else is taking longer. And then you
8 start getting, you know, hearing from other people like, hey, how
9 come this is taking so long.

10 Eventually everything gets done, it just may not happen in
11 the timeline that everybody would like it to happen in.

12 Q. And that's a great way to answer it so I appreciate that. In
13 your position, do you have an assistant --

14 A. I do.

15 Q -- to help oversee all that?

16 A. Not directly. We have some admin assistants; we have two
17 aviation safety assistants. They primarily deal with the
18 administrative side, doing the paperwork, making sure it gets
19 mailed out, emailed, whatever happens to do.

20 We have a management program assistant who also assists with
21 the ancillary stuff like, you know, on-the-job training and the
22 office safety, communications and things like that. So it helps
23 take some of the, you know, the ancillary duties that are out
24 there, we don't have to worry too much about other than taking
25 care of what we have to do for ourselves.

1 So that's really the assist that we get. We don't have to
2 worry too much about trying to deal with everything ourselves from
3 a management perspective.

4 Q. All right, excellent. I know you'd said when you were kind
5 of describing your day in the life, if you will, that you get
6 notices of things coming in or you assign stuff out. How do you
7 get notified of whatever it is you got to assign out?

8 A. Typically, it's through email. So, I'd say about 95 percent
9 of what we get now is, thanks to Covid, through email. It was
10 less than that before Covid, but Covid kind of forced everyone
11 that way.

12 So they'll send us all the requests via email and depending
13 on what they're asking for, they'll send the supporting
14 documentation. And then I'll just assign the email in our
15 tracking system and assign it to whichever inspector it happens to
16 be, with a due date.

17 Then from there, let them work directly with the requestor to
18 get whatever information they need and do the approvals.

19 Q. You said they request. Are you talking they being your
20 management? Are you talking they being an operator?

21 A. They being the operators; operators, any applicants. So
22 they'll send the request in and then, the applicants will send the
23 request in and then I'll forward that out to the inspectors.

24 Q. Okay, all righty. So, for a moment, since we're here talking
25 about DuPage Aerospace, if they have a request, do they send that

1 to you, or do they send that to their POI, or PMI, or PAI?

2 A. We have tried, over the past couple of years, to get all the
3 operators to send it to a common email that we have for the
4 office, our common email inbox. That way, in case I'm out, I'm
5 out for vacation or one of the POIs happens to be out, it doesn't
6 sit for two weeks.

7 If it needs to be, if it's something that's kind of routine
8 and, you know, let's say it was for DuPage Aerospace and Scott's
9 not here, I'll just, I'll assign it to Scott and we'll just let it
10 sit.

11 If it's urgent, I have the ability then if it's in the other
12 box to assign it to somebody else.

13 Q. How long have you had that one inbox concept going?

14 A. We started it probably about five years ago and it was kind
15 of slow catching on but then Covid kicked everybody, you know,
16 because nobody was in the office, we were doing everything by
17 email so everybody got used to sending things there.

18 Especially after people came down with Covid and they were
19 out for a week at a time, people started sending things, you know,
20 we started telling people hey, send it to the nine box so that
21 they could, you know, so that's one central place. So that's how
22 we do it now.

23 And I'd say about 95 percent of the assignments come that way
24 now. There's an occasional that comes direct to somebody who they
25 worked with last year or two years ago.

1 Q. So, I just want to make sure I understand how this whole
2 process works, if DuPage Aerospace wants to change a manual, one
3 section or the whole manual or whatever, they would send their
4 request to that box or directly to their POI?

5 A. Directly to the box. Some operators will carbon copy the POI
6 or PMI, whoever it happens to be. And if they forget to send it
7 to us, the inspectors will forward it to the box.

8 Q. All right. I just wanted to make sure I had that in my head
9 correctly so excellent.

10 Now, since I'm talking about DuPage for a little bit, I think
11 you said when you were giving us your history that you had been
12 their principal for six months, nine months, six years ago or
13 something like that.

14 A. Seems like, yeah.

15 Q. I know, you have to think way back, so forgive me for that.
16 When you were their principal, how was your interaction with them?

17 A. I never had any trouble with them from what I remember. I
18 want to say that there's no personality issues. They would, if I
19 had a suggestion or if I found something that was a small
20 discrepancy, they were usually fairly good to fix it. Nothing
21 stands out as being, oh my gosh, they were terrible to work with.

22 Poor personality, you know, personality conflicts or anything
23 like that, I never had anything like that.

24 Q. Usually that's the things people remember is the bad side so
25 if you didn't have trouble, that always says something to me.

1 For a moment, let's say you were crazy enough to have me come
2 on as a POI for an operator, any of them, you choose, I don't care
3 and I had an issue with them, whether it's a personality conflict
4 or this operator's scaring me to death, I'm not talking DuPage or
5 anything, just in general --

6 A. Right.

7 Q. -- what is, how would you explain to me the process of what I
8 need to do? Do I deal with them directly? Do we try and get me
9 off their certificate onto another one? How do you guys handle
10 those kind of conflicts? And maybe that's so vast.

11 A. Yeah, that's kind of vague, but I'll try to start from the
12 beginning what I would do.

13 If somebody came to me and said, hey, I've got a problem with
14 this operator. Come in, let's sit down and talk and just tell me,
15 first off, what's the problem right now. Is it a personality
16 conflict, did this person, did somebody out there say something
17 wrong, bad to you, what are we dealing with. Are we dealing with,
18 you know, or is it, hey, they're just unsafe, I don't like the way
19 they're doing this and there might be a problem. We can separate
20 it out and figure out what it is.

21 If it's a personality issue, we'll talk, see what's going on.
22 Maybe somebody, maybe you just took something the wrong way. I
23 may just say, hey, somebody -- depending on what it was, we may
24 just continue, hey, let's go out and see what happens the next
25 time and if it's kind of the same thing then maybe we'll think

1 about moving on from there.

2 If it's more of a technical safety issue, let's talk through
3 what's wrong, what are they doing about it right now, what did you
4 tell them to do about it, where do we stand in that process, and
5 is it so bad that we need to do something immediately, can we give
6 them time to fix it, what do we need to do, let's kind of shape
7 the problem, determine, you know, find out what the boundaries are
8 and then go through there and what's a good fix.

9 Q. Have you ever had to do that, that you can recall?

10 A. I haven't had a personality conflict, not with the current
11 group I have now. We've had some small, minor issues that, we
12 haven't had to shut any, you know, go out there and do major, hey,
13 we need to shut the person down. But there may be, hey, I found
14 this when I was doing a search and there may be a bigger issue.

15 Because usually the ones we typically find is time and duty
16 records, they seem to always cause issues everywhere. So, it's
17 okay, I found, I went out and did a handful of, you know, I did a
18 survey. I found 10 percent, I checked 10 percent, half of them
19 had time and duty issues.

20 Okay, so, maybe you need to go back, hey, I'm planning on
21 going up there in 30 days from now, I told them what I found,
22 let's go back out there, see what it looks like in 30 days.

23 And now if it's still an issue -- and also try to get to the
24 cause of it, why is it a problem rather than just, hey, they just
25 didn't log it the right way, why are they logging it the wrong way

1 because then we can find the root cause, hopefully fix it so it
2 doesn't keep occurring.

3 Nine times out of 10, the operators are already looking for
4 that root cause after we point it out to them. They're willing to
5 come and say, hey, what's wrong, what did you find, let me see how
6 I can fix it.

7 So usually, trying to, you know, going back out there is
8 really more of is there a fix taking, has their fix taken effect,
9 has it gone through the system and it's good. And then just 30
10 days or 60 days has gone by, okay, let's go back out six months
11 from now and check it again, really see if that has taken hold.

12 Q. All right. Now I know that you use we and lots. Do you go
13 out with the principals to do this kind of stuff?

14 A. Day to day, I usually don't. If there's a problem or if
15 there's a series, you know, if there seems to be an issue, I'll
16 try to go out there separately from the inspectors and just say,
17 hey, how's it going.

18 Try to get the management for the operator together, hey,
19 how's it going, do you have any, you know, what are your current
20 issues, are they trying to expand, see if I can get them to tell
21 me if they're having financial issues, look around the place, see
22 if it's falling apart, things like that.

23 And then just ask point blank, are you having any issues with
24 the FAA folks. And usually I get some things back, usually I
25 don't. Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't. But I give them the

1 opportunity to talk to somebody other than their principal.

2 Q. Okay. Ballpark, how many days a month are you out of the
3 office doing that kind of stuff or maybe you're hardly ever?

4 A. I'd like to do more, but it's probably once a quarter. So
5 it's not, I'd like to get out to try to see everybody every year,
6 but it just doesn't happen.

7 Q. How big of a geographical footprint does your office cover?

8 A. The footprint goes from Moline on the, basically, Mississippi
9 River to the first four counties in Indiana. That's out to about,
10 somewhere between Valparaiso and LaPorte is kind of the break.
11 And then from the Wisconsin border down to about Kankakee.

12 Q. It seems like a pretty decent footprint?

13 A. It is. Fortunately, most of the 135 operators are located in
14 the Chicago-Gary area.

15 Q. What, you see my next question I was going to ask you? All
16 right. So, I guess being closer makes it a little easier to get
17 out to them but still a challenge?

18 A. It's still a challenge just because there's so much other
19 stuff going on trying to get to meetings, keep the office manager
20 involved in what's going on. We try to manage what we can but
21 whatever needs to go to her level, I try to raise it up. And if
22 it needs to go farther than that, I'll let her know, hey, we need
23 to push this up even farther.

24 Q. Let's step back just a little bit. Let's say I'm one of your
25 principals, I'm one of the three, just grins and giggles, and you

1 get a new certificate that just moved into the area. How do you
2 determine who gets that certificate? How do you assign out
3 certificates?

4 A. I look at it a couple of different ways. One, where are they
5 located. With only three principals and we're kind of working a
6 hybrid office from home, I'll try to look at geographically where
7 they're at too so I try to minimize the amount they have to
8 travel.

9 I'll look at what they already have as far as a workload, you
10 know, kind of a base workload and then how busy I think this new
11 operator's going to be. If it's one pilot, one airplane, it
12 probably doesn't really matter. Throwing it on top of everything
13 else they're managing right now, it's probably not going to be
14 that much.

15 If they've got, if it's a small operator but they're talking
16 about expanding, okay, well, I'll give it to the person who's
17 geographically closer but I may move something else to somebody,
18 to another one of the principals.

19 Q. Let's say you take away one of my operators I'm watching
20 because I've got one of those that's trying to start up. How does
21 that transition go? Do you just say, okay, I'm going to take
22 Operator A from you because you're getting Operator B that's going
23 to be more work and then is there like a briefing that I have to
24 do?

25 A. I usually try to bring everybody together who's involved in

1 that. If we start, if for some reason we have to shuffle, you
2 know, if we add a principal or we lose a principal, I'll try to
3 bring everyone together and say here's my, you know, I'll look at
4 the list of operators and I'll use, I'll apply that criteria I
5 just talked about. I would say, here's what I'm looking at and
6 I'll get their input, get the inputs from the principals and say,
7 what do you think. This guy's a lot of work but if I keep him,
8 he's not so bad. This guy's a lot of work, it may cause problems
9 with the other problem children you may have, for lack of a better
10 term.

11 If I've got one person who's got a lot of people who
12 consistently show problems or just need a lot of, you know, they
13 have a lot requests, there's a constant churn in paperwork, that
14 may change, we may shuffle some things around.

15 Q. Is there a, I don't want to say magic number but it's the
16 best way I can do, all your certificates, three guys, or three
17 inspectors, do you try and keep them all equal or is it based on
18 some point criteria?

19 A. There is a point criteria. The old complexity numbers that
20 they, that use to be used, it gives a good approximation of how
21 much work to be expected based on the number of aircraft, the size
22 of the aircraft, where they're located, things like that.

23 It's not really used for anything other than kind of an
24 informational thing right now. It's a good way to compare
25 operators, but it's, you know, over the time I've been in the FAA,

1 there's less and less emphasis put on it. When I first got here,
2 it was hard and fast rule, you had to have this many points in
3 order to get a new, get a higher grade. It's not so hard and fast
4 anymore.

5 Q. And by higher grade, I assume grade in pay?

6 A. Grade in pay, yes.

7 Q. Okay. I just wanted to make sure it wasn't like oh, you get a
8 B now instead of a C.

9 A. No, higher grade in pay, sorry.

10 Q. If you're not used to my, it would be, oh, good, I go from an
11 F to a D, excellent. I just wanted to make sure I understood
12 that.

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. So, I have an operator, let's say I have DuPage, just since
15 we're going to talk about them in a little bit. I'm sure your
16 POI's doing a great job of it, it's not that I'm replacing him,
17 just trying to put myself in that mind set. How often do you
18 require or request me to go out and visit my operators?

19 A. First, for a routine surveillance, typically if they're what
20 we consider a nine or less operator, so all the aircraft that they
21 operate have nine seats or fewer. That's the criteria that's kind
22 of set up by our overall surveillance plan. If they're below it,
23 if all aircraft fall in that category, then once a year is the
24 minimum. If they find something and they need to go out more, by
25 all means, just let me know what you're doing and go do it.

1 If they're above that in what we call a 10 or more category
2 then it's every six months.

3 Q. So if, let's say, I had a 10 or more category, so every six
4 months I should be going out there?

5 A. Right.

6 Q. But let's say I decided oh, you know, I want to go out there
7 monthly, just you know, I have no proof why I need to, I just have
8 that feeling, I need to go, just kind of keep an eye on them,
9 whatever reason, a little hair on the back of my neck stands up,
10 whatever it be. Can I do that? As a principal under you, is that
11 something I should do, can do?

12 A. You can do it, I won't stop you from doing it. If I see
13 those requests coming in, as you put them in the computer to say,
14 hey, I'm going to go do this, I'll start asking, hey, why are you
15 going out there every month, what's going on to trigger that. And
16 if it's, hey, I got a hunch about this or that. Okay, great,
17 explain to me why you're doing that and then go do it.

18 I'm not going to stop because probably what's going to happen
19 is if you're out there every month, they may pick up the phone and
20 say, why is he here every month. So I need to be able to, at
21 least, know why you're doing it so I can support you in your
22 decision why you're doing it.

23 Q. Okay. And since this is about DuPage, of course, have you
24 had to question your POI on how much they go out, or if they've
25 been out to much? Has that been anything on your radar?

1 A. No. Once we've got back from, you know, all during Covid, it
2 was kind of tough to get out to a lot of the operators. So, we
3 all were feeling a little uneasy, initially. But once we started
4 getting back out there and looking at everything again, everybody
5 started getting back into a comfort zone and everyone was like,
6 okay, the people who you expect to be doing it right, are doing it
7 right. The people who typically would have problems, show some
8 problems, we got them back up to speed and moved onward.

9 Q. Now, as a principal to whichever operator, I know I said
10 DuPage, just trying to keep us all there, but whoever, and they
11 fly aircraft X, Y, Z, whatever type aircraft they have, as a
12 principal, should I have a type rating, should I go through
13 training for the aircraft that my operator's fly, or is that just,
14 it's a nicety but it's really not needed type of thing? In your
15 opinion even.

16 A. Yeah, this is my opinion only. It would be nice, but I don't
17 think it's required for every single type rating. Because there's
18 so many diverse things that are out there right now to try to get
19 someone up to, an inspector up to proficiency on all of those
20 would be difficult.

21 If they had one type rating to kind of, or at least maybe
22 some sort of training in a type rating so they can understand the
23 training principle that happens when these pilots go to CAE or
24 FlightSafety, okay, they would be able to understand how that
25 looks and what's all entailed in that.

1 But as far as being able to know the difference between a
2 Lear jet and like a CE-500, or whatever, we don't do many
3 checkrides where you're actually sitting there at the ready, at
4 the controls anymore because it's all done in the simulators.

5 To have some general technical expertise about how that type,
6 that size aircraft works would be nice, but I don't think it has
7 to be every single airplane.

8 Q. Can I, as a principal, request training and type rating in
9 aircraft or is that not --

10 A. No, we can't. We have to hit a certain number of, we'd have
11 to -- the way I understand it because it's never been, I haven't
12 tried it, no one's asked, and I haven't pushed too hard in the
13 system, we have to give a certain number of, have to be required
14 to give a certain number of checks per year. And I'm not even
15 sure what that number is because I haven't tried.

16 But we would have to, let's say it was a Lear jet and okay,
17 you have to go out and do 10 proficiency checks in a Lear jet
18 every year before you could even attempt to apply for that.

19 And it just doesn't happen anymore because 99 percent of
20 those checks happen in simulators now so there's all the -- all we
21 do is the 299-line checks where they fly, you know, we're checking
22 out, basically, their operational procedures where they're flying
23 from Point A to Point B.

24 Q. So, I have an operator, I want to go do their 299, Point A to
25 Point B, but 135 Op is not quite like 121 Operations where they're

1 flying from O'Hare to, pick a city, and back.

2 A. Right.

3 Q. You know, 135 could be flying from DuPage to who knows where
4 and somewhere else and who knows where before they ever see DuPage
5 again. How do you guys get those line checks arranged, or is that
6 something you're even involved in?

7 A. Usually we get, the request usually comes in, again, just
8 like any request we talked about before where they'll send it in,
9 they'll usually send it the nine, the organizational box, and I'll
10 just forward it to the principal and say, go schedule this.

11 And all they really need, based on the guidance in 8900 on
12 how to conduct the check, this only says you have to fly from a
13 point to another point and you can come back to the same airport,
14 you could land at another airport. There's no specific routing
15 they actually have to take to do that check.

16 Q. So, you don't, your office doesn't necessarily do, I used to
17 always call them surprise visits, where you guys would just show
18 up, knock on the cockpit door and say, hey, I'm going to give you
19 guys an enroute today?

20 A. No.

21 Q. You guys don't do that at all?

22 A. No.

23 Q. All righty. Just a few more questions about DuPage and then
24 I'll pass it on to these other two smart people, they'll have good
25 ones as well.

1 How do you guys, how do you work with your principals,
2 whether it's maintenance, avionics or operations, to make sure
3 that DuPage is doing what they're supposed to do, you know,
4 following their standards, following their manuals? How are you
5 guys able to check on that?

6 A. Two ways. One, when the principals do their surveillance and
7 they input it into the system, we have to do the data quality
8 review on what they put in.

9 So, there's a, you know, we have the system, SAS, Safety, you
10 put me on the spot now, Safety Assurance System is what it stands
11 for, and it generates a series of questions based on the
12 operator's profile to, on what the principal should look at. And
13 it's very, they're very broad based.

14 Principals go out there, they do their inspection, and they
15 come back and say, did the operator meet the standard, were they
16 lacking in some things, were they lacking in a lot of things. And
17 based on that, what they're follow up, for example, if they go to
18 do, if they show up at an operator and they look at it, let's say
19 as an example, going back to the training, going to a training
20 record, let's say there's, one of the pilots didn't have his
21 training done for the year or his checkride had expired.

22 You open up the records, his checkride had expired. Show it
23 to the operator, the operator says oh, he just got back from
24 training yesterday, I have the sheet right here in my hand. Okay.
25 We'll still document that hey, it was found that it was missing

1 but we said he corrected it on the spot. That would kind of be
2 the low end of that thing.

3 The other one would be no, he should have been pulled off of
4 training and I just didn't document it in the records. Okay,
5 documented that. And if it's only one person then okay, we
6 mention it to the operator. If it's three or four people, they've
7 got some sort of systematic problem probably. And then okay, now
8 let's dig a little deeper, why is, what's wrong with the system
9 and how wide is this problem. We'll kind of watch that.

10 And then the other, occasionally it's just that, okay, how
11 are your operators going, any problems with any of them. The
12 principals are more than welcome to, more than eager to say yeah,
13 I got a problem with this guy.

14 Q. I know we talked to the POI for DuPage, and he does a lot of
15 manual reviews, training manuals, all those things to do. Are you
16 involved with reviewing any manuals, or do you just put that all
17 on that principal to do and if they have questions, they come or
18 seek other advice?

19 A. That's pretty much how it works. They'll do the primary
20 review. When it comes to me, I'll do a review to make sure that
21 everything's set the way, you know, everything's marked the way
22 it's supposed to be, either approved or accepted. The letters
23 are, the letters meet the criteria that we're going to send back
24 to them.

25 If it's a large check, if it's a large change, I will thumb

1 through the manual to say okay, this was Revision 3, it matches
2 Revision 3 on the letter. I'm not really digging into specifics
3 of hey, I changed my weather procedure today or whatever. I
4 usually don't dig in that deep.

5 If there's questions about that, they usually ask ahead of
6 time hey, I got a, this is what the operator's trying to do, this
7 is my take on it, and what do you think. That usually happens
8 before we even get to the final review.

9 Q. Perfect. My last question. I know DuPage has a POI, a PMI,
10 and a PAI. I assume you call those a team. Do you, as their
11 supervisor, require them to get together as a team to discuss
12 their certificates that they oversee together?

13 A. Yeah. Once a year they should get together and just kind of
14 look at what their surveillance looks like for the next year.

15 We're coming up on that time year again, July, August, remind
16 us, remind all the principals that hey, we should get together,
17 take a look at how you're planning out your surveillance for the
18 next year.

19 If you can overlap together, that's great sometimes.
20 Sometimes if you can, you know, if you want to stagger because you
21 want somebody out there every quarter but you don't want to look
22 like you're doing it, you can do that too.

23 Having been a principal, I would say it's a very short
24 meeting with the other principals just because there's so much
25 other stuff to get done, but it does happen to some extent.

1 Q. Do you have to participate in those meetings, or do you just
2 say you guys schedule it, do it, let me know?

3 A. Usually let them schedule it. And then when they schedule
4 it, they have to submit their plan to both myself and the other
5 frontline manager. And then we get to look at it and go, oh okay,
6 this is what they're trying to do and then hit the button to say
7 approve.

8 A. Perfect.

9 MR. ETCHER: I know you've been talking to me for about 40,
10 45 minutes or so. So, you got to be tired of looking at me, I
11 don't blame you for that.

12 I'm going to patch you off to Kat here in just a minute, but
13 before I do, do you have, do you need to take break, need
14 anything?

15 MR. LOBASH: I'm good for right now.

16 MR. ETCHER: Okay. Everybody else good? All right. With
17 that then, Kat.

18 MS. WILSON: I just have a few questions.

19 BY MS. WILSON:

20 Q. Following up on that last question that Shawn just asked you
21 about the POI, the PMI, and the PAI, you said that they meet once
22 a year to discuss the following year. But what if something comes
23 up in the current year that they need to discuss? Is that just
24 done on an as needed --

25 A. As needed.

1 Q. You had mentioned that if a POI wanted to do some kind of
2 extra inspection or surveillance, they would put in the request to
3 you and you would have that discussion.

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Putting aside that the operator might call and say, why is
6 the POI here again. What is the negative side of doing these
7 extra inspections? Why can't they just do them when they want to
8 do them?

9 A. I would say the negative side is if they're focusing on one
10 operator, something else is falling off the other side. There's
11 just not enough hours in a day, month, year, to get everything
12 done. So if you're prioritizing this, what's the reason.

13 And probably the next question is, what's not going to happen
14 if it's, you know, if it happens to be in October, we got some
15 time for the fiscal year to catch up. If you're doing that in
16 August and September, something probably isn't getting done.

17 Q. Have you put in a request to ask for more staffing?

18 A. Yes. We put in bids, you know, requests for bids for
19 inspectors and a lot of times they just don't want to come to
20 Chicago. I don't know why. But a lot of people what to -- from
21 what I've talked to my other compatriots at classes and meetings
22 and what not, if you go to Florida, Texas, San Diego, they're full
23 up and they got people there beating away at the door.

24 Q. Interesting.

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Since the accident, have you talked with the POI for DuPage
2 about the surveillance activities, if there's anything in addition
3 that needs to be happening?

4 A. Yes, we did talk. We looked at it, we kind of, you know, as
5 we started hearing some things about what was, some of the events
6 that happened in the accident, started going back and saying, did
7 we miss something, was there something there that we could have
8 looked at. And kind of gone back and forth with that.

9 Based on what we knew at the time, we kind of came to the
10 conclusion that I don't think we can really, you know, from what
11 we found up to that point, we didn't really find anything. Was it
12 there? It'd be tough to tell.

13 Q. Are POIs required to observe an operator's training?

14 A. They are not. We kind of look at it. Typically, we end up
15 doing the line check and that's kind of the culmination of, that
16 checkride being the culmination of all the training up to that
17 point, you know, get to see them how they operate the airplane,
18 how their own, the company's procedures work and go from there.

19 Q. As the supervisor, how do you ensure that the principals and
20 the inspectors are doing what they're supposed to be doing?

21 A. I watch what they're, watch their surveillance and watch
22 their, in SAS, we have, by tracking it in there, we can see which,
23 you know, what their, all the different tasks are, and just kind
24 of keep a mental note of who has what at what time because it's so
25 fluid you can't say, you know, he's got 15 today and whatever.

1 You can't be that specific, but you can keep a mental note of
2 yeah, I've been giving this person a lot of pilot deviations,
3 maybe I need to back off and get them something a little easier
4 for a little bit 'til they can get caught up.

5 Q. At the beginning of the conversation, you were talking about
6 work sort of ebbing and flowing depending upon the type, the time
7 of the year. And I apologize, I don't recall if this was a
8 specific question so I'm going to ask it again. But how would
9 you characterize your workload as a supervisor overseeing six --

10 A. It seems to stay the same all the time. It doesn't seem
11 to --

12 Q. And is that high, medium, low?

13 A. It's high.

14 Q. High.

15 A. I would say it's high, and it's constantly high. I might get
16 a day break. Yeah. If I go on a, if I go to a course or
17 something, I've got my computer with me because if I, if the class
18 finishes 30-minutes early, I'm logging in to get, you know, to
19 clear out the 30, do email for 30 minutes. And sometimes hey, I
20 need another 30 minutes.

21 MS. WILSON: I might have asked all of my questions. Give me
22 one, just a quick minute.

23 I think that's all that I have for now. Thank you so much.

24 MR. LOBASH: Okay.

25 MR. ETCHER: Thanks, Kat. Todd?

1 MR. GENTRY: First of all, thanks for meeting with us, I do
2 appreciate it. I don't think I have any questions.

3 MR. ETCHER: Okay.

4 MR. GENTRY: I know that's rare.

5 MR. ETCHER: That's why the pause. It took me a minute. Did
6 I talk to Todd? No.

7 MR. LOBASH: Is he alive?

8 MR. ETCHER: Well, you made it through Round 1 of 10. No,
9 I'm just kidding, but you made it through Round 1. We always have
10 two rounds.

11 But before we start the second round which is usually a lot
12 quicker, do you need to take a break, you doing okay?

13 MR. LOBASH: Sure, let's a break. I need some water.

14 MR. ETCHER: Let's go off the record at 15:27 local.

15 (Off the record at 3:27)

16 (On the record at 3:32)

17 MR. ETCHER: All right, back on the record at 15:32. Again,
18 you made it through Round 1, the second round's always a lot
19 quicker. It's usually just follow-up questions so they may seem a
20 little scattered. It's just as people were asking something, I
21 would think about it and write it up so forgive me for that.

22 BY MR. ETCHER:

23 Q. Let's start with, how did you find out about the accident in
24 Houston with DuPage?

25 A. I received a phone call from, who was it, I can't remember if

1 it was the ROC or if it was Scott, the POI. One of the two,
2 either -- it was a phone call. They said there was an accident in
3 Houston and it was, you know, DuPage was involved. It may have
4 been, it was probably Scott because he was called by DuPage
5 Aerospace to let them know. And that's all we knew at the time.

6 Q. When you hear an operator's involved in an accident of a
7 certificate you guys manage, is there a process, is there anything
8 you need to do as the frontline manager to, if it's one of your
9 guy's certificates, is there anything you guys have, you have to
10 do?

11 A. Usually if it's in our district, we're the ones who go out,
12 if the POI and PMI or if the principals are available, they'll be
13 the ones to go out and actually do the investigation. I'll send
14 them out there to do that unless there's, you know, fortunately,
15 we haven't had any fatals so I wouldn't, that may change my
16 calculus a little bit, but typically that's what I would try to
17 do.

18 Yeah, that would, so if that was the case, then I would make,
19 I would be the one, management would be the ones making
20 notification up the chain. I would try to get whatever resources
21 I had to help gather what information we can at the time. What
22 was the weather, what was the airport, what's the situation at the
23 airport, what do we need to do, that type of thing.

24 Since this happened in Houston, initially, we didn't do a
25 whole lot. We just kind of stopped, asked if the operator needed

1 anything right now, called down to Houston and said if they needed
2 any help. It was kind of weird trying to do, watching someone
3 else do an accident on our operator. But that's what we did.

4 Q. All righty. We were talking a little bit ago about training,
5 things like that, with DuPage going through their training manuals
6 and everything. If your POI goes out there to do a 299-checkride
7 and on that checkride, the pilots fail, it happens, maybe fail's
8 the harsh word, how about it was not satisfactory, how's that?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Is there anything you have to do when that happens, or is
11 that strictly onto that POI?

12 A. The POI will handle probably a majority of the work that
13 needs to be done, you know, notifying the operator, notifying
14 probably the chief pilot and the DO that hey, this guy failed,
15 don't fly him.

16 In 135 operations, they'll call me or text me to say hey,
17 this guy was unsatisfactory on this check that way in case I get
18 a, you know the phone tree, you know how that works. If somebody
19 contests what he, what the result was, telephone calls go a lot
20 faster. So I can hopefully get it up our chain in case it happens
21 to come back down the other way so that nobody is blindsided hey,
22 what's going on, what did your POI do out there to this operator,
23 that type of thing.

24 But then that's, after that, then we'll kind of come back and
25 say okay, what happened, do a set of hey, what happened out there,

1 what was the problems, what's the operator's plan to fix it and
2 then move forward from there.

3 Q. So, with DuPage's event that happened in Houston, do you keep
4 tabs on that with your POI, or is it just, you just tell your POI
5 if you need anything --

6 A. No, I keep tabs on him. I'll let him, okay, here's what I'm
7 planning on doing and I'll just let him implement, we'll talk
8 about the plan, make sure it sounds good.

9 Let him go do it and then a couple of weeks later I'll say
10 hey, how's everything going at DuPage and just kind of follow up
11 that way. But nothing, we don't have any formal procedure to do a
12 formal follow up. It's more of, it was just kind of how I oversee
13 everybody a little bit, keep tabs on what they're doing without
14 trying to feel like I'm all the time in their business.

15 Q. Does your POI, does he go out and do checkrides on every
16 pilot?

17 A. No, because DuPage has, they have the ability to do
18 checkrides on some of their pilots. So, we end up probably doing,
19 depending on the operator, it depends on the operator. The small
20 operators, we'll end up doing more because they don't have, they
21 have less ability to do that. They may not even have their own
22 check pilot. The larger companies will have several check pilots,
23 and they'll do their own where they can and when they can't then
24 we'll, that's when we'll fill in.

25 Q. Do you know if your POI for DuPage is, if they have done

1 other pilot checkrides for DuPage, or do they only do the line
2 checks, the check airline pilots?

3 A. Without checking the record, I think they've only done line
4 checks because with all the proficiency, you know, the competency
5 checks are all done in the simulator.

6 Q. If DuPage has a flight going wherever and the pilots do
7 something and they get a deviation or anything like that, do you
8 get notified of that?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. How?

11 A. Usually it comes through air traffic, the air traffic system,
12 the Mandatory Occurrence Report, MOR. They send the email out.
13 Depending on the tail number, we may or may not be the first ones
14 to hear about it. Let's say they were out in Denver because
15 they're flying, because they're using N-numbers, air traffic
16 doesn't know it belongs to DuPage Aerospace, per se.

17 So they'll probably, they just see the N-number, they'll send
18 it to Denver and then Denver will review it and they'll say oh,
19 that aircraft is on a Part 135 Certificate and it belongs to
20 DuPage Aerospace, and they'll forward it over. So there's a
21 little bit of a delay sometimes with operators like that.

22 Typically, the operators will also call. If one of their
23 pilots reports a deviation, we'll get a call from the chief pilot
24 as well and say hey, our guy just happened to have a, you know,
25 thinks he got a deviation out in Denver so you may want to look

1 out for it.

2 Q. Okay. Have you had any deviations with DuPage in the recent
3 past that you can recall?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Kind of help me understand internally to the FAA. You have
6 POIs that, you know, they have a ton of stuff that they have to
7 do. To me it almost sounds like too much, but that's me because
8 I'm only understanding from your view point.

9 But let's say I applied for a transfer to your office to
10 become a POI. Walk me through the steps to train me to do all
11 that they do so I can do it properly and not let things fall
12 through the cracks.

13 A. Okay. So, if you were, depending on what your experience
14 level was before you come to the office, we would take a look at
15 that. So, let's say you're in the FAA, you were an inspector
16 someplace else and now you want to transfer over as a POI here.

17 We'll look at, we'll look at what your training has already
18 been and compare that against what we need to have you trained,
19 the different tasks that we have assigned to our, that our
20 principals need to accomplish in order to work in this office. And
21 we'll basically do a, compare the differences essentially, and see
22 what you need to do. And those differences will be assigned as
23 training. You'll be assigned an on-the-job trainer to help get
24 through those.

25 And then sit down and start, you know, let the trainer and

1 the trainee work together to build a plan to, how they're going to
2 accomplish that training.

3 If there's certain, some items, some of those tasks are on
4 items or events that don't happen all that much, very
5 infrequently, so I'll say hey, if I come up on one, if I see one
6 of these come through, I'm going to assign it to you because we
7 don't get them often. You'll probably, you know, you'll be the
8 first one on the list to get that.

9 If there's something that you're working towards that you
10 just can't find, we can talk about, is this something we can
11 actually just do sitting at, table top it, can we just sit, you
12 know, can we just talk through it, talk through the procedures, or
13 does this one, is this something you actually need to see in
14 person.

15 So we'll have that, you know, I'll have that discussion with
16 the trainer and say yeah, that one's good, go ahead, you can go
17 ahead and table top that and simulate it if you've got, or if it's
18 trying to do an application of some kind that we don't normally
19 get. Hey, go back in the old files and find one and just pull it
20 out, scrub the names off and have him go through, walk through the
21 process of how would they process the paperwork type thing.

22 So that's how I would approach a new, somebody who's, was
23 qualified at least at some point to an inspector level to get him
24 up to a POI.

25 Q. And, I know, maybe my abilities is a lot lower than others so

1 it might take me longer, but approximately how long would that
2 take me?

3 A. I would say --

4 Q. Let me rephrase that to be specific.

5 A. Okay.

6 Q. From the time I walked through the door, until you're like
7 hey, you know what, here's your certificates, you're going to
8 manage these.

9 A. Yeah. So, for the brand-new person because that's really the
10 only thing I have experience with, I've never, we haven't had any
11 people transferring in from a different office into our office as
12 a principal.

13 Q. Sure. I'm brand-spanking new.

14 A. Yeah. If you're brand new off the street, 18 months would
15 probably be the early side. It would probably, 18 months to two
16 years before you're fully, before you have all the tasks done.

17 And since I've got the new guy in the door, I just went
18 through our office list to look at the, you know, what's currently
19 on our office list and it was 179 items and that doesn't include
20 all the local the administrative courses that he needs to take as
21 well. That's just technical tasks.

22 There's some overlap in those because it talks of, you know,
23 there's some overlap. It talks about doing a ramp check on a
24 Part-91 aircraft, doing a ramp check on a Part-135 aircraft.
25 There's not a whole lot of difference between the two so if you

1 can do that 135, you can probably do the 91. If the OJT trainer
2 says hey, he can do a ramp check on a Part-135 aircraft, you can
3 sign him, I'll sign him off for the 135 and 91.

4 There's a little bit of overlap like that. So, it's not they
5 have to do 179 separate tasks. There is some combining of items.

6 Q. Now, the On Job Trainer you assign to me, is that somebody
7 designated in this office as a training inspector --

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. -- or is just another POI that just --

10 A. It's another POI, but they have gone through the FAA'S OJT
11 course. There's a specific course they have to take to pass that
12 runs through the, that talks through how the FAA's training
13 program works.

14 They then have to be assigned by the office manager so
15 there's a letter in their personnel folder that says you are now
16 an OJT Trainer.

17 Q. I always hate asking this question, but I got to, it's more
18 curiosity, I think. Do they get paid more to do the OJT, or is it
19 just duties as assigned?

20 A. They can, they have the opportunity, let's put it that way.

21 There's three separate levels of training. Level 1, Level 2,
22 Level 3, kind of familiarity. Level 2 is kind of watch the person
23 do it. And Level 3 is hey, you're going to do it, I'm going to,
24 the trainer's going to watch him and see if you do it correctly,
25 kind of proficiently.

1 For that Level 3, they have the opportunity to get incentive
2 pay for it, but they have to add it, they have to put it into
3 their time card. I don't track that specifically. I keep
4 reminding them and say hey, if you do a Level, you know, just to
5 remind you if you do a Level 3, put in for it. Some do, some
6 don't. Some are more consistent than others.

7 Q. And hearing your POI describe a day in the life of an
8 inspector, it sounds busy?

9 A. It is.

10 Q. How do they work all this in? I'm just curious, and you may
11 not know, and it's okay, but how do they care of all their
12 certificates and, yet, train me? Is that too much?

13 A. It can be. Depending on what's trying to be trained, it could
14 be. It definitely makes things go slower. Having been an OJT
15 Trainer, it definitely slows you down. Yeah, it just kind of, you
16 know, it spreads out the timeline.

17 Like I said earlier, everything has got to get done, it's
18 just not going to happen on the timeline everybody wants it to
19 happen sometimes.

20 Q. All right. I believe my last question, I think. How do you
21 as a frontline manager get everything done in a day that you do?
22 I mean, it sounds like, and maybe I'm jumbling it up in my brain,
23 but it seems like you have 12-hours' worth of work to combine in
24 about an eight-hour day is, you know, that's how I visual it?

25 A. Yeah. That's a good estimate and it doesn't always happen.

1 Honestly, I keep a list of hey, this is what I have to get done
2 today, this is what I'd like to get done today, this is what I
3 can, you know, I need to schedule this, and I'll actually have to
4 put time out of my schedule to do this.

5 Sometimes I'll sit down, I'll start working down my to-do
6 list and the office manager will call and say hey, the division
7 manager's looking for this information or wants us in this
8 meeting. And I'll go to the meeting and at that point, it's just
9 triage what's left, you know, what has to be done at this point to
10 keep things going.

11 Sometimes I, some days it's really good, I get through the
12 whole list and I feel really good. And some days it's, I'll look
13 at it and go, I got what I had to, you know, what I absolutely had
14 to get done, done.

15 Q. So, considering that, I'll ask for your opinion. Do you have
16 the tools you need to sufficiently do your job? And I can define
17 sufficiently if you want.

18 A. Yeah, I was going to say sufficiently, that's --

19 Q. To a point, to a minimum, that's required of you. Do you
20 have the tools you need? I mean, maybe not above and beyond --

21 A. Right.

22 Q. -- but to a minimum that you're required to, or maybe there
23 is no minimum requirement.

24 A. I don't think, I don't know if there's a minimum of what's
25 required because there's nothing really, you know, the position

1 description, there's a lot of oversee, manage. There's not a lot
2 of specifics in it. So, it's what is the minimum requirement is
3 kind of, in my opinion, a nebulous.

4 And I've defined it as I need to be able to support what the
5 principals are doing because they're right there doing all the
6 work. They're the ones out there on the frontlines watching what
7 people are doing out there, flying airplanes, pushing the
8 paperwork. And I try to help them as much as I can so that it's
9 efficient for them.

10 And if my, if the administrative stuff has to take a hit on
11 my end, I'll let it take a hit for as long as I can, you know,
12 that's my time management problem to see how long I can push that
13 until I have to absolutely have to get that done and now that
14 becomes front burner, get it done, okay, now let's move on.

15 Q. So, it brings up my last question --

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Sorry. Do you feel like you have enough tools in your tool
18 chest to sufficiently support your principals to get their job
19 done? Your opinion. You don't have to --

20 A. I think I have the tools. Maybe some, you know, as far as
21 tracking what they're doing and watching what they're doing, I
22 think I have the tools to do that.

23 Would I like to have some more time, would I like to have
24 some of that taken off my plate so that I can spend more time
25 watching what they're doing and using what I've, my experience to

1 help them, hey, did you think about this, did you have a second
2 set of eyes on what their doing to help them along if they need
3 it. I would like to have more time to do that.

4 But that's not, you know, time is one thing that you can't
5 build more of.

6 MR. ETCHER: Okay. Well, I told you that was going to be my
7 last question. I know Kat's just dying to ask you questions.

8 MS. WILSON: No. I had a clarification because before he
9 answered, I was, because now I'm going to ask him to answer the
10 question again based on what your clarification is that I'm going
11 to ask you.

12 MR. ETCHER: So with that, I will pass it over to Kat since
13 that was my last question, it really was, but I will pass it to
14 Kat.

15 BY MS. WILSON:

16 Q. Well I was hoping that you could clarify when you asked the
17 question, what tools do you have. And then based on your first
18 answer about, do you have the tools to do your job, I felt like
19 your answer was more time based, like do I have enough time to do
20 it all.

21 And so I was thinking well, what tools are we talking about
22 and were you thinking tools or time. I was hoping that we could
23 just get some clarification on what, when we say, do you have the
24 tools that you need.

25 In your second answer, you said, I do have the tools, but

1 maybe I need more time. But in the first answer, it sounded more
2 like time.

3 That being said, I guess, I would ask if you could clarify
4 what the tools are that you think you have that allow you to do
5 your job and then also to manage your people

6 A. Sure, yeah. The tool that we use is SAS. And in my opinion,
7 it's a good tool, there's a lot of information in there. And
8 that's where, you know, as long as people are feeding it the
9 information, the data that we need to make decisions about, you
10 know, hey, where's the risk at, is probably in there. We just
11 don't have the time to sit down on our own and learn how to do it
12 ourselves to pull out that information.

13 So that's, you know, so now it becomes hey, how do I find
14 that information. If I'm looking for something specific, I'll go
15 look for it. If I have to teach myself, I'll pull out the
16 reference card and go, okay, I think I know what I'm looking for
17 now, I'll go find it and then I've updated myself.

18 But trying to find that, trying to use the information that's
19 there is probably more, requires more time than I'm allowed, than
20 I can give myself because something else has gone, you know, I'm
21 not helping somebody work through a decision that they were
22 looking for another opinion on, or work is piling up in the
23 organizational box that needs to be set, assigned to somebody, or
24 if admin stuff isn't happening.

25 Q. Thanks for the clarification.

1 A. Okay.

2 Q. I was just thinking that going back and reading that I would
3 say, well, what tools are we talking about when you're answering
4 the question so thank you for allowing me to get the
5 clarification.

6 MS. WILSON: I don't have any other questions, thanks.

7 MR. ETCHER: Todd?

8 BY MR. GENTRY:

9 Q. How many openings do you have right now currently?

10 A. We have four. We are authorized 10 ops inspectors, we have
11 six.

12 MR. GENTRY: That's the only question I have.

13 MR. ETCHER: Thank you very much.

14 So, you made it through, you can breathe a sigh of relief.

15 But I always have to ask at the end, you know, we've asked you a
16 lot of questions, you gave us a lot of information, some of it I
17 never knew so I appreciate you doing that. I can't thank you
18 enough. But I'm always afraid I'm going to miss something that I
19 may not even knew was a problem would help something like that.

20 Is there anything you thought coming in here today, like, oh
21 man, the NTSB's coming to talk to me. After you got through that,
22 oh, they're probably going to ask me about this.

23 Is there anything like that you thought we would ask and we
24 didn't, or that you think would shed light on everything we're
25 doing with this investigation?

1 MR. LOBASH: No, I can't think of anything right now that I
2 would add.

3 MR. ETCHER: Okay. Well, you got our contact information. I
4 know you got Todd's so if you think of anything, reach out,
5 whether it's to Todd, to me, to counsel, totally up to you. Just
6 anything we can get to help fill in always helps us a lot.

7 MR. LOBASH: Okay.

8 MR. ETCHER: I appreciate it. But with that, we can call
9 this concluded at 15:56 local.

10 (Whereupon, at 3:56 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: RUNWAY COLLISION AT THE WILLIAM
 P. HOBBY AIRPORT IN HOUSTON, TEXAS
 ON OCTOBER 24, 2023
 Interview of James Lobash

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA24FA017

PLACE: Chicago, Illinois

DATE: July 17, 2024

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