

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
Investigative Hearing

Alaska Airlines Flight 1282

Boeing 737-9, N704AL

Left Mid Exit Door Plug Separation in Portland, OR

January 5, 2024

Docket No.	SA-543
EXHIBIT	
2C	

**Operational Factors Group
Chairman's Factual Report -
Attachment 2 - Alaska Personnel
Interview Transcripts**
(96 Pages)

DCA24MA063

OPERATIONAL FACTORS

Attachment 2

Alaska Personnel Interview Transcripts

June 4, 2024

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:

ALASKA AIRLINES BOEING 737-9
MAX IN-FLIGHT STRUCTURE
FAILURE NEAR PORTLAND, OREGON
ON JANUARY 5, 2024

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* Accident No.: DCA24MA063

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Interview of: JEFF SEVERNS, Managing Director
Alaska Airlines

Renton, Washington

Thursday,
April 11, 2024

APPEARANCES:

STARR BLUM, Aviation Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

JP WILSON, Portland Based Chief Pilot
Alaska Airlines

RYAN IWASAKI, Senior Safety Pilot
Boeing

MARC HENEGAR, Aircraft Investigation Chair
ALPA

GARY PITCHFORD, Cascadia Aircrew Program Manager
Federal Aviation Agency

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INTERVIEW

(12:59 p.m. PDT)

MS. BLUM: Okay. Today is April 11th. It's 12:59 Pacific Daylight Time.

My name is Starr. I am an operational factors investigator with the NTSB, and I'm leading the operations working group for the investigation of Number DCA24MA063 involving Alaska Flight 1282.

We just want to thank you for being here. This is for us to understand from like the training perspective and your perspective, give us an education, and to see, well, what maybe could have gone better. And as part of the process, we invite other parties and they help provide me technical expertise. So today we've got Boeing, of course, Alaska, ALPA and the FAA. I'll go around the room and ask everybody to introduce themselves in a minute.

MR. SEVERNS: Sure.

MS. BLUM: The NTSB is an independent federal agency. We're not part of the DOT or the FAA, and we have no regulatory or enforcement powers. Our mission is to determine the probable cause of incidents and accidents and make recommendations so similar events can be avoided.

Our mission does not include findings of liability or blame. Your participation today helps insure that this fact-finding phase of the investigation is complete and accurate.

We'll be recording this interview so that it can be transcribed, and after we receive the transcript, our group will review it for typos before it's included in the public docket and we'll provide you an opportunity to review that as well.

So let's go ahead and go around the room and introduce ourselves.
Ryan.

1 MR. IWASAKI: Good afternoon. I'm Ryan Iwasaki, one of Boeing's pilots,
2 flight tech and safety.

3 MR. SEVERNS: Nice to see you, Ryan.

4 MR. WILSON: JP Wilson, Portland base chief for Alaska. I'm with air
5 group 20 years. Been in Alaska for 16 years. Previous, Horizon as well, on the Dash 8-
6 200s. Civilian background, also run our critique (ph.) program as well. I've been in the
7 current position for 5 1/2 years.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Five years.

9 MR. WILSON: Yeah.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It only seems like 20.

11 MR. HENEGAR: Marc Henegar, Seattle base for Alaska Airlines, 24 years,
12 somewhere in there. Memory starts to fade. Vice chair of the safety committee and
13 accident investigator and the party coordinator to the investigation, previous
14 experience by BizJets (ph.) as an air traffic controller and a variety of other things, in
15 previous lives.

16 MR. SEVERNS: Good to see you, Marc.

17 MR. PITCHFORD: Gary Pitchford, aircrew program manager on the
18 Boeing 737 for the Alaska Airlines CMT.

19 MR. SEVERNS: All right. And Jeff Severns, managing director of flight
20 operations training at Alaska Airlines, 25 plus years with Alaska, Air Force, KC-10s prior
21 to that. I've been in the role of Director and Managing Director of training for the last 6
22 plus years.

23 MS. BLUM: Okay. So, each member will have an opportunity to ask
24 questions. We do two rounds. If you need a break at any point, absolutely tell us. If
25 you don't have the answer to a question, I don't know is a perfectly acceptable answer.

1 We just ask that to the best of your recollection you answer the questions. And if you
2 feel like you've misstated or you don't understand a question just let us know.

3 MR. SEVERNS: Sure.

4 MS. BLUM: And you are aware that you are allowed to have a
5 representative if you would like one.

6 MR. SEVERNS: Yes, I'm aware.

7 MS. BLUM: Okay.

8 MR. SEVERNS: I'm good solo.

9 MS. BLUM: All right. Does anyone have any questions?

10 (No response.)

11 INTERVIEW OF JEFF SEVERNS

12 BY MS. BLUM:

13 Q. Okay. So you introduced yourself for the transcript. Do you mind spelling
14 your name?

15 A. Yeah, Jeff, J-e-f-f, last name Severns, S-e-v-e-r-n-s.

16 Q. And how old are you, Jeff?

17 A. 53 [REDACTED]

18 Q. [REDACTED].

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. And your job title?

21 A. Managing director of flight operations training.

22 Q. And what's your base?

23 A. Seattle.

24 Q. Seattle. Have you held any other managerial or training roles?

25 A. Yeah, I've been an instructor pilot for the last 12, 13 plus years, instructor

1 evaluator and currently APD.

2 Q. Okay. Can you give me an estimate of your total time?

3 A. At Alaska Airlines, 13,000 hours around, total time is in the -- somewhere
4 between 17 and 20. I haven't kept -- I've lost track.

5 Q. Yeah.

6 MR. HENEGAR: None of us keep logbooks.

7 MR. SEVERNS: Yeah, right.

8 BY MS. BLUM:

9 Q. And how about your PIC type?

10 A. That's a good question. That's another 5 to 6,000 hour range.

11 Q. Okay. And what was your date of hire at Alaska?

12 A. October 21st, 1998.

13 Q. And can you give us a cliff notes version of your aviation and background?

14 A. Yeah. So I started in college flying, working on my ratings at the
15 University of Washington, transferred to Central for the flight tech program over there,
16 graduated from Central. I had an Air Force Reserve pilot training slot leaving college
17 that was cut. It was 1992. So the, you know, post-9/11 -- or sorry, post-Gulf War. Some
18 of the Air Force slots were cut. So I wound up working at Flight Craft, you know, the
19 flight tech degree and some ratings, pumping gas out of Boeing, and getting into a
20 little bit of corporate flying, and then my Air Force Reserve slot came open again in
21 1994. And so in March of '94, I went to officers training school, undergraduate pilot
22 training at Vance Air Force Base, graduated there in 1995, September of '95, went
23 straight to my Air Force Reserve squadron at Travis Air Force Base on a KC-10, and did
24 that full time for 3 plus years. Was hired here, you know, almost exactly 3 years later.
25 Did both jobs in the Reserves flying KC-10 and here at Alaska Airlines on the 737 up

1 through post-9/11. Right after 9/11, I volunteered to, you know, serve overseas and go
2 fly in Enduring Freedom out of Diego Garcia did a couple of stints out there for 60 plus
3 days supporting that -- those missions, flew the first -- we started bombing the Taliban
4 in Afghanistan. And then eventually, you know, as that wound down and after a few
5 deployments out there, my commitment was up with the Reserves and I was, you know,
6 getting -- both jobs were keeping me busy. So I resigned from the Air Force Reserve
7 slot and have just been here full time since that time.

8 Q. Thank you. I got to land at Diego Garcia.

9 A. Yeah, that's an interesting place for sure.

10 Q. Yes. So you said -- how long have you been an instructor?

11 A. 13 years.

12 Q. 13 years. And you said 6 as the manager director?

13 A. Yeah, I was hired as the director of training for the Boeing in 2018, and let
14 me think here. So for 2 plus, 2 1/2 years it was a director position and the we got rid of
15 the Airbus director training position and I became a managing director, and took both
16 fleets. So I was in charge of both Airbus and Boeing training until the Airbus recently
17 retired.

18 Q. What's the difference between a managing director and a director?

19 A. Just a level up in management. So it's higher up on the executive chain.
20 It's more of an executive position. It's a higher level of responsibility, bigger teams.
21 You're managing more from a budgetary standpoint which training has quite a large
22 budget, and then a lot of, you know, vision, very long term planning sort of functions as
23 opposed to more direct day-to-day operations.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. So it's more of create the vision on where training is going and growing

1 that into a world class organization would be for my managing director position, that's
2 what that encompasses, and then making sure that the directors that report to me are
3 executing on the actual, you know, day-to-day mission, who are executing in training.

4 Q. Okay. So could you give me like the basic organizational structure of like
5 training? So you're managing director. And then on down.

6 A. Yeah. So then I have a director of flight training below me that -- for the
7 Boeing. If the Airbus had stuck around, we'd have two positions there. But then the
8 director of flight training. So my direct reports, so that's director of flight training for
9 Boeing. I have the director of simulation that runs all of our sim technicians and
10 engineers in support of all our training devices. I have a manager of training records
11 that reports to me and a manager of training scheduling that reports to me. And then I
12 have an individual contributor that's more of a project lead on specific projects that we
13 run into. The other group that reports directly to me is our human factors group. It's a
14 team of six individuals that they really drive a lot of the gold I would call it and content
15 in the way that we train. So that's a team that reports directly to me that executes on,
16 you know, in CQ development and, you know, captain four stripe training, leadership
17 training, you know, we really probably I would say lead the industry in the human
18 factors world and how we integrate it into training. We don't just teach human factors
19 or CRM. It's spread out, you know, across our entire -- everywhere that we touch, pilots
20 in training, CRM and human factors is the glue that brings that altogether.

21 Q. Yeah, I was going to ask about that later, but since you're talking about it
22 now, I was going to ask, you know, how often do pilots get CRM training but --

23 A. Yeah, you know, I saw that as one of the advanced questions. It's a kind of
24 interesting one. We don't really just come in and say, hey, here's your CRM training.
25 That would have -- I think that's the way that it was probably, you know, handled 20

1 years ago. We've advanced quite a ways along from that, and it's really -- it's spread
2 out across, you know, CRM and we call it event management. We create those
3 opportunities that we have training or touch one of the pilots. So, yeah, we'll identify
4 CRM in some aspects of quarterly training and then in content we put out, but it's really
5 not -- we don't hand you something that says here's your CRM training. It's whether
6 you consciously understand it happening or not, it's going on all the time. We really,
7 you know, find that to be the most important and critical piece to success in training
8 and successful outcomes of flying the line is getting that CRM embedded that you're
9 not even really thinking about when you're doing it. It's just happening. It comes
10 inherent by nature.

11 Q. Okay. So I think that would lead into this. I know you guys are in a lot of
12 unique operating environments like Alaska. What is your -- how would you describe
13 your overall philosophy in training?

14 A. You know, we're -- ultimately we are trying to create and replicate and
15 challenge our pilots with scenarios that are representative of what they're going to see
16 on the line and create challenges for them to experience and learn from so that when
17 they do see those things on the line, it's an issue question, you know, we're a very
18 mature AQP program. So we're data driven. We're taking down out of our operation,
19 out of FOQA, out of safety, out of ASAP reports, out of training data, all these different
20 feeds that come in and that drives the content and how we train, so that it's real and it's
21 relevant to the pilots that come in. So our philosophy would be that we are going to
22 empower our pilots to learn and it's a building block approach that we take. We start
23 with a simple, to the moderate to the complex, and by the time we're in the loss (ph.) or
24 the line, we're in flight training events, it's a gradual level, here we go and it's the
25 triggers that are created in those events that are generate are directly out of operation

1 and the data that we receive.

2 And as -- we're very agile. We're trying to create, you know, scenarios
3 every year that are -- because it changes, you know, the threats change out there in the
4 environment, and we have to adapt to that and we try to be nimble and create those to
5 be as realistic as they can be and challenging quite honestly. We don't -- we're a little
6 unique in that area, too. We're not trying to create something vanilla (ph.) that's just
7 coming and get it done and go back out the door to the line. It's like we want the
8 learning to happen. We want the event management to be a key player in all of our
9 events that we create and really create decision making and opportunities for our pilots
10 to lead and be successful in using all the resources they have available to them.

11 Q. Okay. So, I'll have to think about that. So there's mandatory subjects in
12 the curriculum that happen in the yearly cycles, and then there's ones that you rotate.
13 How do you determine that? Who determines that?

14 A. So, on the rotational subjects, those happen -- those happen in different
15 arenas. So in quarterly training or computer based training that goes out, there's ad
16 hoc topics that we -- ultimately that falls to myself and our director to decide but the
17 inputs that come in from that, it comes in from HF (ph.). It comes in from standards. It
18 comes in from safety. You know, our DAG meetings and our SRBs where we're getting
19 the data and looking at our safety data every month, that's what is driving us into -- it
20 drives the training content. So if we see an issue with stabilized approaches, if we see
21 an issue with landings or whatever the topic might be that we're seeing in our line
22 operation, that's something that we go, okay. Is that something that we feel is
23 necessary to hit in training? Is that a yes or no? Yes, it is. Okay. So let's -- and that's a
24 group. That's not just me. That's our director of operations. That's our chief pilot.
25 That's our VP of flight ops that attends those meetings, and we talk about it after the

1 SRB and say, hey, that's something we should put in quarterly training or address.

2 For example, the differences in the way that the comm system works in
3 the MAX for the oxygen door, we close it and hit the reset button. That's out right now.
4 It's in Q2 quarterly training. If JP opens up because I bet he hasn't done his training yet
5 --

6 MS. WILSON: Nope.

7 MR. SEVERNS: -- but if you open it up and if you download it and go to
8 the communications section, that's in there. So we took that from this 1282 and said,
9 hey, that was an issue that the crew identified as something that they didn't understand
10 necessarily or didn't remember, and struggled with. So we put it out in training.

11 BY MS. BLUM:

12 Q. So that has come after the event?

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Yeah, it's actually in -- was in Q2 of 2022 as well but, you know, pilots, the
16 retention level sometimes isn't always there 100 percent of the time, and that's why we
17 do recurrent training or CQ is to refresh. And so it's out again as a result of that 1282
18 flight. So it's out right now.

19 Q. Okay. I'd like to get a copy of what it was before.

20 A. Yeah, I have that for you.

21 Q. Great. And that was, I was going to ask you what's -- how has training
22 changed since the accident.

23 A. Yeah, I mean our philosophy isn't changing, but we're certainly using our
24 philosophy to address the things that came out of that, the communication piece, just
25 the don of the mask and recognizing how cumbersome that is. That's in the profiles

1 that I showed you for next year for 2025. That's going to be in the loft on day 1 where
2 they will have a smoke and fumes event. It won't be a depressurization but smoke and
3 fumes associated with an engine problem and they're at high altitude when that
4 occurs, and they'll have to don the mask and go through the exercise of establishing
5 communication and getting the descent going and coordinating or reading the QRH
6 and everything that they have to do with the associated abnormal with that.

7 Q. And what about reestablishing -- will they -- at the end of this event, will
8 they take the mask off and put the headset back on?

9 A. Yeah. We'll have the smoke and fumes clear as part of it and let them
10 know that so that they will be forced to reestablish comm, yeah.

11 Q. Okay. You know, getting it to when the MAXs came on the property, I've
12 been learning a little bit where you had the Dash Sim, correct, or not Dash 9, MAX 9.

13 A. We did not initially, no. So let's go back. When we put the order in for
14 the MAX, and we anticipated delivery of the MAX, that was pre-Ethiopian (ph.) and Lion
15 air (ph.). So the MAXs were flying. Before we took delivery of our first one, in fact, we
16 were just about ready to take delivery of our first MAX, they were grounded. And so
17 throughout that process of the return, and I was in the director position at that time,
18 working with A4A and Boeing and the other member carriers that were flying the MAX
19 already, we were a subgroup working to -- with the FAA as well as, on what return to
20 service was going to look like in putting that together. As it became apparent and
21 obvious to all of us that a MAX, there was going to be some sim training, required,
22 that's when we went out and purchased this first MAX sim over here. So, yes. By the
23 time that we actually flew the MAX, we had the sim up and running and on board.
24 That's a 2 plus year process or 2 year process that we went through with that.

25 Q. So the first pilot that did, differences in the MAX, their training was

1 ground school and a sim?

2 A. It was both, yes. They had a 3 --

3 MR. SEVERNS: Do you remember, Marc, or JP. It was a 3 plus hour --

4 MR. HENEGAR: It was a CBT, yeah.

5 MR. SEVERNS: It was pretty extensive. It was just -- isn't wasn't just the
6 return to service requirements because we had to do everything. So it was -- because
7 we hadn't flown the airplane yet. It was all of the MAX differences. It was the return to
8 service requirements, and then they had to the sim event. So we did that with I think
9 the -- one of the bases first, it was either Portland or -- I think we started with Portland
10 first, and then we went to LA and then we did Anchorage and then we did Seattle last,
11 but you had to do all of that before you were able to fly that airplane.

12 BY MS. BLUM:

13 Q. Okay. In that sim, was that oxygen mask been donned for that
14 familiarization initial?

15 A. Not in the sim event, no. No, it was not in there. It was in the, it was in the
16 CBT.

17 Q. Okay.

18 MR. HENEGAR: The sim wasn't a full sim event. It was about a -- you did
19 two crews with a normal sim footprint.

20 MR. SEVERNS: Yeah. Two hours each. We took the opportunity. There
21 was, you know, it was actually really beneficial to our pilots I think because it wasn't just
22 the return to service requirements. It was -- we used it, said, okay, if we're going to get
23 in the sim, let's do all this other stuff as well. So we were demonstrating a lot of the
24 other differences in the MAX that they had seen in the CBT already. We thought it
25 would be beneficial for them to see it in the simulator as well.

1 BY MS. BLUM:

2 Q. Okay. Let me back up a little bit. So the MAX was delivered to you guys
3 in 2021, correct?

4 MR. HENEGAR: January, wasn't it.

5 MR. SEVERNS: Yeah, it was somewhere in there.

6 MR. HENEGAR: We met with American right when it showed up.

7 BY MS. BLUM:

8 Q. By the time of the accident, how many MAX 9s does Alaska have?

9 A. At the time of the --

10 Q. The door plug.

11 A. Oh, around 65.

12 MR. HENEGAR: That sounds about right.

13 BY MS. BLUM:

14 Q. Okay. How many NGs (ph.) do you have?

15 A. With everything else, 170-ish.

16 MR. HENEGAR: Ish. We were getting some fast. That stopped. That was
17 January 2021.

18 BY MS. BLUM:

19 Q. Would you say that pilots the NG or the MAX more?

20 A. I think it varies depending on the base and depending on, you know, your
21 preferences and where you bid. If you're bidding -- if you're a Seattle-based pilot that
22 bids southeast Alaska, you're probably not seeing the MAX a lot. If you're a Seattle-
23 based pilot that flies Hawaii or long haul East Coast, the trans cons, you're probably
24 flying it quite a bit. So I can't -- it's going to vary based on, you know, Anchorage pilots
25 probably not seeing a lot of the MAX except on the ETOPS stuff if you're flying Hawaii.

1 Q. Okay. And the training records, all the sims are listed as maybe it's the
2 800F or it's 737-900. Is that -- so looking at our crew, from that format, have they had a
3 MAX sim --

4 A. Yeah, it's --

5 Q. -- other than the familiarization flight?

6 A. Other than the familiarization flight?

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. I'd have to go look and see what they have for CQ and then look at the
9 actual simulators that they were in. I know that I look to make sure that they had their
10 MAX familiarization sim which we looked at.

11 Q. Yeah, you see here for both the first officer and the captain, you know,
12 you've got the 800 but then, you know, they're all 900.

13 A. Yeah. So this is also like '23, yep.

14 Q. Is that correct? That means they've been in the 900?

15 A. Yep.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Yep.

18 Q. And then so really they've only flown the sim -- the MAX sim once from
19 what I'm reading?

20 A. That's what it looks like there, yeah.

21 Q. Okay. Have you guys -- was there a consideration of doing 1 year NG,
22 one year MAX? What's your thoughts?

23 A. Well, I have a couple of thoughts on that. One is that, you know, from a
24 regulatory standpoint, it's not required. It's technically NG and the MAX are not
25 variants. It's differences, you know, airplane designation. It's not a variant. You know,

1 if it was variant like say when we had the 400 model versus the NG, that requires some
2 specific touch points at different intervals. From a practical standpoint and what's --
3 from a qualify of training standpoint, what's the best mix is probably to rotate to some
4 degree, and that's something that we'll start -- we are doing with our scheduling
5 program now that we have enough MAXs to make that happen.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. You know, when you're looking at some of the history there, it's when we
8 had one MAX sim, and as we've grown quite rapidly in the last year and a half, 2 years,
9 where we now have 8 of them, it's going to be a lot easier. People will most likely hit
10 the MAX more than they hit the NG. And so we'll rotate for sure.

11 MR. HENEGAR: It'll happen naturally going forward.

12 MR. SEVERNS: Yeah.

13 MR. HENEGAR: Whereas before we had no MAX sims virtually. We had
14 one or two, and it's pretty unusual.

15 MR. SEVERNS: It is what it is and it's being used for qual. It's required
16 after the qual parts. So it's getting needed now for the qual training. You know, when
17 you only have one or two, it's like everybody has to hit it and at a certain point in the
18 qual footprint. So that's getting built up there. Now, that we have the number that we
19 have, we'll be more, you know, on a rotational schedule. As Marc said, it's going to
20 happen naturally, and it will be intentional as well, just that we want everybody to see.
21 That's why we train the way we train and have the models of the sims that we have, you
22 know, not a requirement, not a lot of carriers do it. We have one of every model at
23 least and that represents our fleet. So -- and they're all to tail. So the 700 sim that we
24 have over in the other building is to tail number 709 and whatever happens to that
25 airplane happens to the sim. And each one of the simulators in here have a tail number

1 associated with it. So if there's something that changes to that airplane in the fleet, it
2 happens to the simulator.

3 BY MS. BLUM:

4 Q. That's interesting.

5 A. Yeah, it's a little different. It's a lot more complex, and it creates some
6 difficulty or challenges, but it's also the best, most representative training that we can
7 provide our pilot group when we do it that way.

8 Q. Okay. Great. So in our case, in the event, and obviously what we're trying
9 to get to the bottom of, is it -- do you -- would you say, well, how are you keeping your
10 pilots who fly the MAX or maybe they fly it some. How are you keeping them recurrent
11 with things like establishing communications? Is it just the CBT? Like how --

12 A. Yeah. I mean it's CBT and it's -- and one thing, like this surface, it's
13 communication that we provide and, you know, reminders and, you know, kind of
14 putting our heads together and saying, all right, what out of this incident do we want to
15 highlight and communicate? We found that the communications piece with the door
16 panel is important, we put that in quarterly. That's the primary way, and the best
17 vehicle that we have is -- and the quickest one is quarterly training, where if it's, you
18 know, if we feel something is critical, then we'll put out a bulletin that needs to be read,
19 you know, before they go fly again. And then we have CQ development in the
20 scenario (ph.) building that we do, and that's the other one but obviously that takes
21 some time to get to.

22 Q. And that's going to be 2025.

23 A. That's '25, right.

24 Q. Yeah. And so from the instructor interviews, it sounds like they will do that
25 in 2024, and then it goes to the line in 2025.

1 A. Yeah. So our instructors will see everything that they test out and use
2 what will be 2025 CQ for the line pilots. It's instructor CQ in summer of '24. So they
3 start in June going through that. In fact, we just submitted for those approvals with
4 your office there, Gary.

5 MR. PITCHFORD: Got them.

6 BY MS. BLUM:

7 Q. Okay. So you said it's going to be in quarter 2. Is there any other means
8 that you've distributed to the pilot group about establishing communications, the push
9 -- the test resets switch it seems like that might be a little gray area.

10 A. Yeah, I think it's something that wasn't, you know, you get a difference in
11 package to the pilot group. Communications is probably not one of the most
12 interesting areas for them to dive into. I mean admittedly not the one that I would turn
13 to first if I was a pilot. But it is important obviously, and it's something that, you know --
14 so not there isn't -- we don't have another vehicle at this point in the plans on how
15 we're going to do that. I think the highlight that we have in it for this year in quarterly
16 training or for this quarter is relevant. I think that'll get through. I think the CQ piece
17 will be really impactful, having people -- we haven't done the high dive or donning the
18 mask in CQ in quite a number of years. We did it before I came into this job. So
19 probably at least a decade ago. So it's time. It's a great time for us before we go, hey,
20 you know what? We haven't done this in a while, and we just had a crew that had it
21 happen to them on the lines. Let's get in CQ and have them do it, and get the word
22 across.

23 Q. Yeah, I show the trainer with the masks, but you don't get to plug your
24 headset in, you know.

25 A. Right.

1 Q. The CBT, I saw one slide concerning the communications with the mask.

2 A. Okay. Yeah, I've got -- I'll show you the ones. I can forward them over to
3 you that are currently out right now. And then the other thing that's interesting is just
4 now happening. In fact, it's effective May 1st is our base aircraft the last 15 years has
5 been the 800 short field performance airplane. We just now are switching to the MAX
6 9s as our base aircraft. So when our initial qual pilots come in and learn the airplane,
7 they're learning the MAX 9 starting May 1. Communications and all that included,
8 oxygen, the whole bit, is all based on the MAX 9, and then they'll get differences on the
9 other NG models. So it's flipping.

10 Q. Again, what made the decision to flip to the MAX being the base?

11 A. Well, the NG models aren't being produced any more. We have a
12 massive order for MAXes out ahead of us, and we felt like we had enough of them in
13 our fleet and enough simulators to make the switch. And, that's our future. So that's
14 going to be the dominant airplane here eventually, and we just want to get out ahead
15 of it and make that our norm for going through qual.

16 Q. Okay. Great. Let's see. Are you aware of any other reoccurring or any
17 like awareness to things, problems or areas that you might need to pay attention to
18 regarding differences between the MAX and the NG?

19 A. Not any that are coming to mind right off the bat. I think, I think the way
20 that we train and the training that we provide does a really good job of identifying the
21 differences. I think the sim training does an excellent job of providing an opportunity
22 for them to see, you know, both airplanes especially now that we're mixing up the way
23 we are. You know, in a CQ, it's kind of slow to happen in getting people to touch
24 points but in an initial qual, when they come through, they're seeing, you know,
25 everything, all the different variants and all of the MAX especially with it now flipping to

1 the base aircraft. But I can't think of anything off the top of my head that's glaring to
2 me that is not addressed or that is problematic in the differences between the two.

3 Q. Now, you guys, you talked about DAG. Can you define DAG for me?

4 A. DAG is our data analysis group, and really it's followed up where they're
5 looking at all of our data at the director and below level. All the subject matter experts
6 are in there. So our AQP manager from training, our director of training, Gary, you're
7 in the DAG, correct?

8 MR. PITCHFORD: Um-hum.

9 MR. SEVERNS: And all of that information is gathered and then put into
10 another deck that is presented at the safety review board for the more executive level
11 of flight operations. So VP of flight ops, chief pilot, myself, safety, the FOQA, FMT, the
12 CMO, everybody's in there. Our POI attends that meeting, and it's re-presented if you
13 will. So there's two different meetings that happen with regards to data from not just
14 training but everywhere across the flight operations org.

15 Q. So do you have data being generated MAX specific, NG specific?

16 A. You know, we do in certain arenas and from a training perspective not so
17 much. But in other areas there is a differentiation where we'll look at the MAX versus
18 the NG for the -- call it -- if we have some tail touches. Were those MAXs or were they,
19 you know, probably not the 700. Was it a 900 ER? Was it a 8? Was it a MAX 9? What
20 is -- where were they? We look at those kind of, you know, differentiators in those
21 scenarios.

22 Q. Okay. So back to that original question. There's nothing glaring from the
23 DAG with the MAX in general?

24 A. Not that I can think of, uh-uh. We've seen, you know, the issues that have
25 come up, that I can think of, SRV as of late have not been MAX related. We're finding

1 more issues on the 900 ER and some other fleets.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Do you know the crew?

5 A. I actually don't. I don't know them. They did a great job. I know the
6 names, and I'm familiar that way. I don't personally know them.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. But I was pleased with the way that they handled the event. Let me speak
9 to that a little bit. Just from a philosophical standpoint and why, you know, I think that
10 they were successful and why any of our line crews would be successful in that event, is
11 really the way that we teach event management, and how to manage the flight deck
12 and use resources and bring any scenario to a successful conclusion. And it's really
13 that empowerment that we give our captains. It's the leadership training that we give
14 our captains. It's the engagement that we have with our first officers and then in telling
15 them that they're captains in training from day 1. It really is that entire I think training
16 philosophy and process that we've put them through and the tools that we give them,
17 that will make them successful even if it's something they haven't seen since their MT2
18 event and initial qual which is what happened here. And I gather there are a few things
19 that we've learned from and we're going to address in training coming out of this.

20 I think it's a -- all these things are great learning tools. It's like, hey, where
21 can we focus some attention a little better so that this isn't a problem later on for crews
22 in the future, and that's how you get better is, you know, look in the mirror and say that
23 didn't go perfectly. Well, let's try and get it to be perfectly run next time. But I think the
24 overall plus for the event management that we preach is why I think any of these
25 scenarios in the future once it happens will be successful outcomes for our pilots.

1 Q. Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Well, looking into that, I don't know if you've got
2 the records in front of you. So you discussed CRM, how that's really a constant part of
3 your training cycles. So when would be the last time that both of them had differences
4 training? Would that be in the odd or even year, the quarterly?

5 A. They get difference in quarterly every quarter. So if we -- if we're
6 identifying the system and now that we're flipping to the MAX, they'll get differences
7 differently, if you will, you know what I mean.

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. Because they're going to get the MAX version first, and then they'll get
10 the differences of it after. But, the way the quarterly rolls out, it's like, hey, here's this
11 system we're talking about, all right. Let's just go pre-flipping of the switch to the MAX
12 as the base aircraft until I think -- so let's say last quarter. The air systems and whatever
13 it was, whatever the topics were, here's the 800 SFP and then they a differences slide
14 on or slides most likely on here's what the MAX is, if there are differences. Or what if
15 there's additional features in the functionality of the system. On the MAX, they would
16 get that in that quarterly. So they get the two, a differences standpoint every quarter
17 that they get computer based training.

18 Q. Okay. I'm trying to get it. It's a lot to take in.

19 A. It is.

20 Q. So I've seen the slides for the MAX 9, but then I saw the slides for the MAX
21 8 which from what I could tell, like for instance, the two systems, the communications
22 are in that difference CBT because it's not different. It's the same in the MAX, in the
23 MAX 8.

24 A. Um-hum.

25 Q. So does that mean -- I guess I'm trying to understand when you say --

1 when's the last time they would have had training on the O2 masks and establishing
2 communication?

3 A. Well, I mean they got it in Q2 of 2022 on the computer based training,
4 and they're getting in Q2 of 2024. So it's out right now. That's the cycle for
5 communications, and that's when those -- that's when they would have seen -- close
6 the door and hit the reset switch to re-establish communications. Physically when was
7 the last time I saw it? Like actually donning the mask --

8 Q. Right.

9 A. -- and re-establish communication was in the initial qual.

10 Q. That familiarization flight.

11 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, no, not the differences one, but in the actual
12 initial qual. MT2 of that, that's where they would have been in a high dive scenario or
13 put into a rapid D scenario that they would have to perform oxygen mask regulators on
14 crew communications established. That's the myriad which they would have done that
15 -- probably was in a NG sim.

16 Q. NG sim.

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. So we're talking like initial ground school.

19 A. Initial qual, that's what it is.

20 Q. It probably --

21 A. Yeah, it's probably the last time that they actually donned the mask like
22 that and did the actual high dive.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Yep.

25 Q. Let's see. And not any smoke, fumes. Maybe, I'm wondering if you had

1 an event --

2 A. I'd have to go look at our CQ. I don't know. We've had that in CQ at
3 times. They do get smoke and fumes in initial qual somewhere. I'd have to look. They
4 get it, and we do both of them.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. But it's -- from this one that we're talking about, if you want to correlate
7 their rapid depressurization of that, that's in the initial qual --

8 Q. Initial qual.

9 A. -- in maneuver trainer 2, yeah.

10 Q. Okay. So I guess -- I'm sorry, Jeff, if I'm not understanding everything
11 completely. I think I'd like to be able to track down like I understand the rapid D in the
12 initial qual, but do you know if they've had it since then? Like the captain's been here.

13 A. They've seen it in, they've seen it in quarterly training for sure.

14 Q. But I mean in the sim?

15 A. Yeah, in the -- physically in the sim, probably not since then.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Okay. Let's see here. You know, I think that's going to be it for me for
19 now in this first round. So I'm going to pass it off to Ryan.

20 MR. IWASAKI: I have no questions at this time.

21 MR. SEVERNS: Okay.

22 MR. IWASAKI: JP.

23 BY MR. WILSON:

24 Q. Jeff, three questions. On OE, initial hire, OE, do we have a mechanism
25 where they touch the MAX and the NG or it's just the way it plays out?

1 A. Yeah, that's the way it plays out.

2 Q. The way it plays out.

3 A. I would say that there's a strong likelihood that they see both given that
4 we have to qualify them on the ETOPS, and that's, you know, a little unique to our
5 operation. Some carriers don't do that, and they do it by base.

6 Q. Um-hum.

7 A. We're -- all of our pilots are ETOPS qualified and they all
8 -- most all of them see southeast Alaska but -- so there's a strong likelihood
9 they're going to see both variants -- I should say variant -- a difference in NG airplanes
10 and then as well as the MAX when they fly the ETOPS legs.

11 Q. Gotcha. And then when -- well, knowing that, we do -- do the instructors -
12 - because that's the first time they're actually in the airplane. Do they emphasize
13 operation of the O2 mask, audio panel because it actually physically in the airplane
14 now, like this is how this works? Do they do --

15 A. There is -- I don't -- there's a set list of topics that they -- the instructors
16 address at different stages when they're -- we don't have anything, I don't think that
17 directly prescribes them to talk about the oxygen mask and the stowage and the
18 resetting of the communications. I'm sure that's something we can look at if that's
19 something we want to do on OE when they touch MAX. I know the comm panel is a
20 topic that they hit. They have to --

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. -- because it's going to be different airplane to airplane. So whether
23 they're going to 900ER to a MAX, they're going to get instruction on both of them.

24 Q. Okay. Because I think like we have, you know, we do the training over
25 there which we touch a lot on the O2 mask and stuff like that. And maybe you know

1 this, but what's -- in this event, this event came up, right, it was like okay, it's like
2 flashing, like, oh, okay. What can we do better in training? If we want to -- if you
3 wanted to change something real quick like I want my instructors that go -- I want them
4 to start emphasizing this like now since we've just had this event. Do you have a
5 mechanism to do that?

6 A. Um-hum.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Yeah. Through, you know, director of standards, I work tightly with John
9 Scarola. He and I would come -- we have the ability to put guidance out to the
10 instructors in a very short period of time. We've done it within a matter of minutes,
11 before of things we want to address. Say this is a topic we want you to hit when you're
12 conducting line checks, when you're -- another point we have is our random line check
13 program, when you're conducting OE or just when you're conducting events and this is
14 a topic we want you to hit. So there is that. We do have that vehicle.

15 Q. Awesome. How about -- have we had a scenario, where we've had like a
16 rapid D but not like -- almost like this event, like rapid D at 14,000 feet where it's not a
17 dive and drive kind of thing, but it's like, okay, let's get down and then re-establish.
18 Have we ever had any events like that do you remember?

19 A. Not that I can remember, but I will say in CQ last year, if you remember,
20 they -- we created something very similar where they had the pressurization issue
21 going through -- it was climbing through around 10,000 feet. And so if they didn't
22 catch it in time, they wound up getting into the point where they had to put the mask
23 on in the CQ event, and this -- if they caught in time, then it was -- they kept the horn
24 from going off and were able to arrest it quick enough. That was -- it was -- that's as
25 close a scenario that I can think.

1 Q. I had to put on the mask. The last question I had is if you want to speak to
2 some of the enhancements that you've made in training, like there's a lot of
3 technological stuff you've done to enhance learning that I think is applicable the NG
4 and the MAX. And so just for us, to hear like what are the things you've been doing to
5 enhance the learning.

6 A. Well, you know, we've took a look at just the experience, I come in and
7 look at where we've been, and made a lot of modifications in the last 2 years to our
8 program. We've added events. We added an additional loft into the module for a
9 more scenario training. We saw the benefit in that. We added a maneuver trainer, a
10 procedure trainer event to really allow more hand flying and basic airmanship skill
11 building for those pilots coming in the door. We've added -- I think one of the most
12 important things that we done is we mandated our leadership course so we have four
13 stripe 1 and 2, when you show up as a new captain for the curriculum on day 1 and 2,
14 when they come in the door. Four stripe 3 and 4 are also part of the curriculum
15 statement now where it's mandated that you have to come back in the 16 to 18 month
16 range after you've been a captain.

17 This captain, I looked him up actually on 1282, it's not because he's
18 eligible, he hasn't come back yet, and he'll probably come back in the fall when we
19 have our next classes. But that's a 2 day course that we put on here with our human
20 factors team and that's really good leadership training.

21 The other thing that we added into our program, I think it's the only one in
22 the industry is we said, hey, we have a lot of new hire pilots coming on board that don't
23 have captain experience. They don't have that foundational piece to build or
24 springboard off of when they do come into upgrade 4, 5, 6 years down the road. So
25 how are we going to get them up to speed and really the tools in their belts and be

1 successful and they do upgrade? So we created an introduction of four stripe course
2 for anybody that's a new hire that's been here for -- you have to be off of probation. So
3 once you achieve your 12 months mark, you're eligible to come in. It's a 1 day
4 introduction to the four stripe course, and it's all about, you know, here's how to prep
5 yourself and the things, how to invest in yourself and how to build yourself and make
6 yourself successful when you come back to upgrade. Here's what you need to do on
7 the line. Here's how you need to engage your captains and questions to ask and how
8 to start, you know, just building and getting that foundation built so that you're
9 successful. And that's what we saw. Our new hires, when they come in the door, we
10 don't hire first officers here. We hire captains and the captain training really starts on
11 day 1.

12 Q. And you're also using virtual reality, too.

13 A. We added VR. Yeah, we had a few others. We added virtual reality into
14 the curriculum which has been, you know, it's an optional thing they use during the day
15 to reinforce the flight deck and the cockpit setup and the flows and all that. We've also
16 added our new level 5, the 550 XRs with the visuals, and then we have systems on the
17 side panel. So they're getting a blended, you know, procedure trainer and systems
18 trainer at the same time. Those level 5 classes are super capable. They're fully tactile.
19 They have the HUD repeater the captains on the visual. It's embedded in there, and
20 then it also has control loading that is every bit as the -- the fidelity as the full flight
21 simulator which is basically the aircraft. So we have level 5 devices, fixed base devices
22 that are every bit as good as the full flight simulator. They just don't have motion. And
23 that's been a really positive thing in our program. We're going to continue to invest in
24 that space and keep getting better. We receive a great benefit with that. To get those
25 touch points early in training, it really just makes the simulator training that much more

1 effective and then as a byproduct, the LOE and the aircraft training is even better.

2 MR. WILSON: I have no more questions. That was more than three.

3 Sorry.

4 MR. HENEGAR: I gave my questions to JP. I have no questions at the
5 moment.

6 BY MR. PITCHFORD:

7 Q. I just have one. Has there been any specific communication to the
8 instructor group about the door and re-establishing communication after the event?

9 A. Not yet. It's something that we're talking about. We have -- I shouldn't
10 say not yet. We had our first -- we're a little slow right now in training, slower than
11 we've been and we have a bunch of new instructors, you know, that we hired. And so
12 we created some instructor meetings, standardization meetings, that the first rolled out
13 the day before yesterday. It was brought up in there, and it will be in each one of those
14 events. Every instructor hits those courses, the classes. They're going from now in
15 April and May and a couple in June and instructor will be in that course, and it is a topic
16 in there. But have we rolled up formal communication about it? Not yet.

17 Q. But they're going --

18 A. It's in the meetings.

19 Q. -- how to re-establish?

20 A. Yep.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. It's in there.

23 Q. That's it. I'm done. Thank you.

24 BY MS. BLUM:

25 Q. I don't think we're going to have too many questions for round 2, but I

1 have more questions. Are you okay?

2 A. Yeah, I'm good. Yeah, I'm good.

3 Q. Okay. I guess, you know, this obviously has a lot to do with the
4 differences. Do you perceive in your opinion and in your professional experience any
5 other obstacles that might need to be shepherded with the MAX, NG training? I mean
6 this was an event that is very strange. It's not common, but clearly the amount of times
7 that things are trained, I mean do you foresee any more obstacles in this way?

8 A. You know, I don't see them. I'm not saying that they won't surface --

9 Q. Yeah.

10 A. -- because you can't predict the future --

11 Q. Sure.

12 A. -- and how things are going to play out. But I think that the -- I think the
13 training that all the carriers are providing differences-wise, they're applied to different
14 models and the MAX or the NG. I think they covered everything pretty well. I think the
15 differences is the package that Boeing put out that we all templated off of. It's
16 everything in there, and I feel confident about the way that the training is hitting the
17 pilot group and that they're comprehension of it, you know. People are human beings,
18 right, and it's -- you can't I think trap or predict every little thing that people are going
19 to maybe miss or forget about what they saw in training no matter how many times you
20 give it to them or how many opportunities they have to see or experience something.

21 What I do think is the most important thing though is the training and the
22 expertise that they ultimately have in just managing the events and being able to run a
23 flight deck through to a successful conclusion, given any obstacle and that may be
24 something that they, you know, created themselves by not remembering something
25 that they should have and still being able to overcome that and be successful. I think

1 that's what we really want to train is not every, you know, rivet on the airplane but to the
2 whole picture of how to do we just manage this successfully as a crew. And that's
3 where I like to focus. I mean I think all the little things are very important, and we
4 definitely want to create opportunity for people to experience those and be trained to
5 them, and have them available for their own, you know, ability to go back and look at
6 and read and comprehend. But, again I think the biggest thing and the most -- the
7 biggest impact on safety is that event management and the way that we teach and the
8 way that we expect all our crews to just handle any scenario that we give them.

9 MS. BLUM: Do you have any more questions?

10 MR. IWASAKI: Just one.

11 BY MR. IWASAKI:

12 Q. So have you encountered any issues with the mask itself?

13 A. Personally?

14 Q. Personally or heard of, gotten any feedback of --

15 A. The only ones are from the events themselves, where the first officer had
16 some fogging issues and then yesterday, I think one of the pilots had the same issue.
17 Those are the only two I've heard of, but we're also not donning the mask on a regular
18 basis.

19 Q. Right.

20 A. And, you know, with the changes in the rules and regulations, you know,
21 when you're a single pilot in a flight deck now for the bathroom breaks and whatnot,
22 we're not required to put the mask on any more. So we're not -- we're just not doing
23 that at the same, you know, cadence that we used to. So I don't have any reference
24 points for you.

25 Q. That's all.

1 MS. BLUM: JP.

2 MR. WILSON: That was actually one of the questions and he just
3 answered it. So good.

4 MR. HENEGAR: I'm good.

5 MS. BLUM: Gary.

6 MR. PITCHFORD: I'm good.

7 BY MS. BLUM:

8 Q. Is there anything that you would like to talk about that we didn't ask
9 about?

10 A. No, I -- you know, I'll just close out by saying I think this is a healthy
11 process, and I think it's always good to take a good hard look at, you know, any event
12 and outcomes and the challenges that were experienced by the crew. And then take
13 what we learn from it and implement it in our programs where it fits, and get better. I
14 just think this is a really healthy, you know, kind of experience and thing to do, and
15 something we embrace and it's I think why our training program is as good as it is, is
16 that we're willing to do that and look in the mirror and say, hey, you know what, we're
17 not perfect. Nothing's perfect, and where can we get better and we've identified a few
18 of those. I think we've identified a couple more in the last couple days, and we'll take
19 them and we'll put them into play.

20 Q. Well, that's usually the question I end with is any safety suggestions you
21 might have.

22 MS. BLUM: Okay. The recording is ending at 1:56 p.m.

23 (Whereupon, at 1:56 p.m. PDT, the interview was concluded.)
24
25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

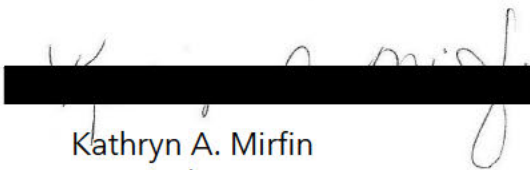
IN THE MATTER OF: ALASKA AIRLINES BOEING 737-9
MAX IN-FLIGHT STRUCTURE
FAILURE NEAR PORTLAND, OREGON
ON JANUARY 5, 2024
Interview of Jeff Severns

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA24MA063

PLACE: Renton, Washington

DATE: April 11, 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.


Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	*	
	*	
ALASKA AIRLINES BOEING 737-9	*	
MAX IN-FLIGHT STRUCTURE	*	Accident No.: DCA24MA063
FAILURE NEAR PORTLAND, OREGON	*	
ON JANUARY 5, 2024	*	
	*	

Interview of: CHRISTOPHER BAKER, Pilot
Alaska Airlines

Seattle, Washington

Thursday,
April 11, 2024

APPEARANCES:

STARR BLUM, Aviation Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

JP WILSON, Portland Based Chief Pilot
Alaska Airlines

RYAN IWASAKI, Senior Safety Pilot
Boeing

MARC HENEGAR, Aircraft Investigation Chair
ALPA

GARY PITCHFORD, Cascadia Aircrew Program Manager
Federal Aviation Agency

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INTERVIEW

(9:11 a.m. PDT)

MS. BLUM: Okay. Today is April 11th, and it's 9:11 Pacific Daylight Time. My name's Starr Blum and I'm the Operation Factors Investigator with the NTSB. I'm leading the working -- operations working group for the investigation over DCA24MA063 involving Alaska Flight 1282. We really appreciate you being here. This interview is to provide us an education and to get your perspective. Hopefully we can be able to see what went well, what could go better, and we just appreciate anything you can give us from an instructor's point of view.

As part of our process, we invite other parties for technical expertise.

MR. BAKER: Um-hum.

MS. BLUM: And for this group, we've got the NTSB, the FAA, ALPA, Alaska and Boeing. In a moment, we'll go around the room and introduce themselves. The NTSB is an independent federal agency. The NTSB is not part of the Department of Transportation or the FAA. We have no regulatory or enforcement powers. Our mission is to determine the probable cause of incidents and accidents and make recommendations so similar events can be avoided.

MR. BAKER: Okay.

MS. BLUM: Our mission does not include findings of liability or blame, so your participation today just helps ensure the fact-finding phase of this investigation is complete and accurate. We will be recording this interview so that it can be transcribed. After we receive the transcript, our group will review for any typos and for acronyms, and you will get a chance to review it as well before it goes into the public docket.

So, if nothing else, we'll go ahead and go around the room and make

1 introductions. Jim.

2 MR. WILSON: JP Wilson. I'm the Portland Based Chief Pilot. I've been in
3 Alaska for, gosh, 17 years now, been in the job for five and a half years.

4 MR. BAKER: Okay.

5 MR. WILSON: Previous civilian background and I was at Horizon for four
6 years, (indiscernible). I also worked with our fatigue program here as well. And thanks
7 for coming out, it's good to see you.

8 MR. BAKER: Of course.

9 MR. IWASAKI: Good morning. Ryan Iwasaki, I'm a Boeing pilot based in
10 Seattle here with the Flight Technical and Safety Division.

11 MR. BAKER: Okay, nice to meet you.

12 MR. HENEGAR: I'm Marc Henegar, I'm the Vice-Chair of the Safety
13 Committee for ALPA here at Alaska. Also the Chief Accident Investigator and party
14 coordinator for the NTSB investigation. Almost 24 years at Alaska with an aviation
15 background. Before that, business jets and as an air traffic controller.

16 MR. PITCHFORD: Chris, good morning, Gary Pitchford. We work
17 together in the APM for Alaska Airlines Certificate Management team and Chris is one
18 of our APDs (ph.). We work closely together and looking forward to hearing your
19 answers.

20 MS. BLUM: Okay. So each of us will have the opportunity to ask two
21 rounds of questions. We've all been instructed not to interrupt each other. And if you
22 need any breaks, please just say so. And also just if you can answer the questions to
23 the best of your recollection. If you don't remember or you don't know, that's a
24 perfectly acceptable answer. And if you think you misstated something, please go
25 ahead and correct yourself. And if you don't understand the question, please ask us to

1 reiterate.

2 And you do have the right to have representation. Do you feel like you
3 need anybody here today?

4 MR. BAKER: No.

5 MS. BLUM: Okay. Do you have any questions?

6 MR. BAKER: Do we -- different question -- do we happen to have a
7 picture of this individual that might --

8 MR. PITCHFORD: Jog your memory?

9 MR. BAKER: Yes.

10 MR. WILSON: Yes, we can find -- we --

11 (Crosstalk)

12 MR. WILSON: Yes, we can find that.

13 MS. BLUM: Let's pause the interview at 9:15.

14 (Off the record at 9:15 a.m.)

15 (On the record at 9:17 a.m.)

16 MS. BLUM: Okay. Recording's starting at 9:17 a.m.

17 INTERVIEW OF CHRIS BAKER

18 BY MS. BLUM:

19 Q. Okay. So we'll just start with the basic, easy questions first. Can you
20 please state your name and spell it out?

21 A. My full name is Christopher T. Baker. It's spelled C-H-R-I-S-T-O-P-H-E-R,
22 the last name is B-A-K-E-R.

23 Q. Thank you. And how old are you?

24 A. 61.

25 Q. I wouldn't guess that. And your employer?

1 A. Alaska Airlines.

2 Q. And what's your job title?

3 A. Pilot. I also work in the training department as an APD.

4 Q. And your base?

5 A. Seattle.

6 Q. Are you in any other roles in Alaska managerial training?

7 A. No.

8 Q. And if you had to guess, what's your total time in airplanes?

9 A. About 15,000 hours.

10 Q. How about in a 7-3?

11 A. That would be about 8,000 to 10,000 of that.

12 Q. And how much is PIC would you guess?

13 A. The majority of that.

14 Q. Okay. What is your hire date at Alaska?

15 A. May of '92.

16 Q. Can you give us just a CliffsNotes version of your aviation background
17 prior to --

18 A. Sure. I was -- I went to pilot training in Phoenix at Willie, and it's now
19 closed. And then I went to Norton to fly C-141s and that's now closed. And then
20 moved up to McChord to finish out the reserves. In about a year or two into --
21 McChord career, I got hired out here at Alaska. And then -- at first I was hired to the
22 panel on the 727 and then displaced to Long Beach on the MD80 and then displaced
23 to Anchorage on the 737-200, and then bid down to Seattle, bid down to Portland, and
24 then back to Seattle. At first I was the first officer, and then I upgraded first opportunity
25 in Seattle on the 7-3.

1 Q. Okay. How many years have you been providing flight training or
2 instruction for Alaska?

3 A. For Alaska? About 20 years.

4 Q. So can you describe what your job duties and responsibility are as an
5 APD?

6 A. As the APD, I have the final say-so whether or not the individual deserves
7 a ticket, the type ride, a rating to go ahead and safely conduct all the operations. I
8 have the final say-so.

9 Q. Okay. And can you explain to me, like, what the different ranks of
10 instructors are at Alaska?

11 A. Sure, there's APD, which is the Aircrew Program Designee. There are
12 your IEs or your instructor evaluators. They evaluate other individuals in the training
13 department because it's a tree or pyramid design. They provide evaluations for other
14 individuals in the training department, as well as the line pilots and then some of our
15 ground-based instructors. And then there's just check airmen is the next level below
16 that. And then we also have some first officer instructors and then there are ground
17 instructors that do not have a line number but provide some of the basic training for
18 the fixed training devices and some of the non -- I wouldn't really say non-involved --
19 but just some of the early on training with a new hire.

20 Q. Okay, thank you. So as APD -- so do -- you train in the sim, but what about
21 the airplane as well? Do you train in the airplane?

22 A. Typically, most of the -- it's called OE, operational experience, goes to
23 some of the younger check airmen and instructor evaluators because as an APD, it was
24 explained to me that now that you're wiser, you get to fly the desk and everybody else
25 gets to go do the flying. So you don't fly as much, not nearly as much, but usually --

1 especially when there's a training push, you are in the simulator doing evaluations.

2 Q. So is that recurrent or initial or both?

3 A. Usually is qual-training (ph.), which is somebody moving from the Virgin
4 side or somebody new to the company or somebody moving from the right seat to the
5 left seat. That's qual-training.

6 Q. Okay. So as an instructor, how do you remain qualified?

7 A. You have your own yearly qualifications. There's multiple meetings a
8 year, as well as you have an instructor evaluation yearly as well that has to be done,
9 somebody that's above you or from the FAA.

10 Q. So you have just like the normal pilot qualification, but also in addition to
11 that, the instructor --

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. -- evaluation? Is that in the sim?

14 A. The instructor evaluation watching you administer a type ride.

15 Q. Okay. How do you keep current between the NG and the MAX?

16 A. There is no currency requirements between the NG and the MAX. So if
17 you haven't seen one for two months, that is just the way it falls. There used to be a
18 difference between the 400 and the NG, but that's long gone. So now with the MAX --
19 number of MAX aircraft that we have, it's really not that much of a factor unless
20 somebody's really got the seniority of the bid the particular type of trip, for example,
21 the freighter through southeast. That's only the NG aircraft --

22 Q. Um-hum.

23 A. -- and they may stay away from a MAX. But unless you're very particular
24 with a very particular type of trip, you see both of them on a regular basis.

25 Q. Yes, I was going to ask in your opinion, do you think that the MAX is flown

1 more or less than the NG for your average pilot here at Alaska?

2 A. It depends on what they're flying. I would say the NG probably a little bit
3 more.

4 Q. Um-hum.

5 A. If you fly some of the Hawaii routes and some of the longer haul stuff, the
6 MAX is kind of -- right now, it's still a little bit on the NG, and if you look at the numbers
7 -- I saw them the other day, I forget -- it's still a little bit favored in the NG. We have
8 240-ish aircraft, I think, and the NG are the majority of those.

9 Q. Okay. As far as the instructor crew, how do you handle, like -- do you
10 guys all teach the same thing? Like, how do you handle techniques versus standards?
11 What's the provisions there?

12 A. Technique versus standards are -- it's a very touchy subject and one that
13 we always drill to try to make sure that they don't

14 -- what I would refer to as the "techchedures", there you go, where some folks
15 are drilling things that this is way it has to be. And you need to make a very definitive
16 difference between okay, this is a technique, this is a way to do it, versus this is the
17 flight handbook, this is the way to do it.

18 And you always got to make that -- there are times that -- there's plenty of ways,
19 for example, where auto pilot, the MCP. And there's -- those of us in the bell curve, the
20 vast majority that kind of stay around the center. And then there's some outliers and
21 you can kind of try to bring them in. It's legal, but it might not be the most efficient way
22 of doing things. And somebody that's not that familiar with the MCP auto pilot or new
23 hire might kind of just take them off their game a little bit just by a little bit of weird
24 manipulation in the MCP.

25 Q. So is that fixed?

1 A. It's brought to their attention. It's --

2 Q. Through the evaluating instructor?

3 A. Through the evaluations, yes. You can do it that way, this is the way most
4 of us do it. It is legal the way you're doing it. However, if you continue to do it that way,
5 these might be the ramifications of that.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. You might be distracting your pilot monitoring enough that he perchance
8 would miss something else because he's kind of scratching his head, wondering why
9 you're using this particular mode or that. So --

10 Q. So do you guys have a handbook? I mean, is that developed for you? Is it
11 the same amongst the instructor group of how you teach something?

12 A. There are instructor standards. That is a published document. It's only
13 about, I don't know, five or six pages long and it's by -- it's kind of like, along the lines of
14 the handbook itself with what portion of the flight it is and stuff, whether it be takeoffs,
15 crosswind takeoffs. Then we had it time for a while that folks were adding a little bit too
16 much aileron and inducing spoilers. We were getting too much into the weeds of
17 things versus just the basic, a little bit of rudder, track center line, be careful of the tail.
18 And then when you lift off, add the appropriate rudder and just do what needs to be
19 done to keep the aircraft tracking down the centerline.

20 So and then we also have yearly meetings. We're having a meeting -- an
21 additional meeting this year just to talk techniques, standards, teaching points, what
22 we're seeing as weak points.

23 Q. Um-hum.

24 A. What we're seeing as strong points, what we're doing well and what we're
25 doing not so well.

1 Q. I was just going to ask, do you have involvement with the training
2 content? Is that --

3 A. Particularly, no. They ask our input and you may have input on things.
4 But it's always gone to the point where it's kind of past me to a little bit younger
5 generation. The new instructor meetings are held -- they're going to be held and run
6 by some folks that are new in the training department, because they're trying to get
7 them up to speed and get them ready to start taking over things. I'm 61. John Scarola,
8 our director of standards is 60-ish, so we're not going to be around here that much
9 longer, so.

10 Q. Gotcha. So I'm trying to understand the training that a line pilot goes
11 through. Can you walk me through, like, what CQ is?

12 A. CQ is a three-day event, okay. Day 1 is called CLO for line- oriented,
13 okay, continuing qualification and line-oriented. And what they consist of is a leg from
14 A to B, timing of such is you're going into an aircraft, cold aircraft and you're taking
15 some sort of a malfunction to a safe conclusion. Okay. And every once in a while,
16 depending on what the length of that is, it might be pushed back from the gate with
17 engines running, just so that timewise, the timeframe works. All these things have
18 been approved by -- you know, they developed this program and then they go through
19 ALPA, they go through the FAA, they look at common -- some of the trends that they're
20 seeing through FOQA data and such with that to try to get some of these problems,
21 get a handle on them, get ahead of them, and that type thing.

22 And then the second half of that is MT, maneuver training, and those are
23 your typical engine failures, single engine approaches, stalls, that -- just maneuver
24 training as opposed to line-oriented training. Day two consists of the maneuver
25 evaluation, ME, and that is nothing but both seats doing V1 cut profiles. So you have

1 one both as pilot flying, pilot monitoring, and that's event management. And that
2 instance is set on a back burner because we need both first officer and the captain
3 accomplish and being able to take care of the problem to the landing no matter what.
4 And in some instances, you know, under event management, normally the captain,
5 once the aircraft is safe and stable, he'd assign the flying to the first officer, give him a
6 plan on what -- how they want it accomplished. Then he would -- defer he or she, first
7 officer, would take the aircraft while the pilot, the captain would take care of the
8 problem and run the QRH, talk to the appropriate people, talk to the flight attendants,
9 talk to the passengers and then work the problem. And then depending on what the
10 situation is, decide who's going to land the aircraft. So that's day 2.

11 And then day 3 is CLE, flying evaluation, and that is two legs with
12 malfunctions, both of them real-time taking off. There's no repositioning of the
13 simulator and those items are taken to its fruition. Let the crew debrief on both legs,
14 and then the three of you will get together and discuss the good points, the bad
15 points, you know, how they did in the briefs, the debriefs and that type thing, threat
16 error and air management.

17 Q. And I saw in the training records too PPD. What is PPD? Pilot
18 development?

19 MR. HENEGAR: Pilot Professional Development.

20 MR. BAKER: Yes.

21 MR. HENEGAR: Professional development, yes.

22 BY MS. BLUM:

23 Q. Yes, what does that consist of?

24 A. We started to have that as stressing the mentorship. And as such, we're
25 getting a younger group of folks with less flying time. It's a newer -- it's a younger age

1 and just doing that mentorship and showing how to bring that up. You don't want to
2 kind of sit there on your throne and bombard the younger folks that might turn them
3 off. Everybody's got a different reception and learning curve and that type of thing.
4 But some of the problems that I've seen whether it's distractions with iPhones or
5 phones or whatever, trying to bring them into the professional realm that this is a pretty
6 well high-paying job and it's very, very important to keep your guard up.

7 Q. Okay. And so if that CQ, what is a pass fail? Is it just the LOE that's
8 graded?

9 A. Theoretically, you cannot fail day 1, okay. But if things are just so
10 atrocious that they're not getting anything accomplished, then there might be some
11 additional training there. I'm not sure of that. You have to talk to Jeff or John -- Jeff
12 Severns or John Scarola about that. But I think that there's been some instances where
13 some folks have gotten additional training from day 1 where they're just so far out
14 there that it would not behoove anybody to keep moving forward. We need to get
15 them retrained at that point.

16 Day 2 if they're not proficient in their maneuvers -- I mean, you have to be
17 able to handle an engine failure and such, then you will get additional training. And
18 then day 3 is definitely pass fail. In the past we really haven't had a whole lot of CQ
19 failures, but as time kind of goes on, you get younger and younger folks or merging
20 with a different airline that wasn't AQP. There have been some -- I mean, if I move to
21 the Airbus and all of a sudden I'm in charge of it and I'm not as accomplished as
22 somebody that's been in the airplane for 10 to whatever X number of years, then I
23 might fall the same way.

24 Q. Okay. I want to get into, you know, like when the MAX came on the
25 property and some of the differences training. So you were instructing when the MAX

1 first came on scene?

2 A. Um-hum.

3 Q. What was required of you for training the pilots? Like was
4 -- what was the original training that you gave the pilots for the MAX?

5 A. Well, as instructors, we have a little bit of a ground school. We had some
6 training on the iPad and then we also had a simulator event on those individuals who
7 were kind of the initial cadre of the MAX. And then you were put into the MAX and
8 shown, okay, this is the profile but you have to go through. And then it got tweaked a
9 little bit and what you would be taking all of the new folks -- or not necessarily new, but
10 folks who have not been qualified on the MAX, the scenario for that, so the sim event
11 before that.

12 Q. Do you recall what the sim event was, what was the curriculum for that?

13 A. It's called the MAX familiarization sim. I think it was Seattle, but I'm not
14 sure. I could pull it up, but -- and then it had quite a few number of slides, just talking
15 about the systems differences and that type thing. And then you would go in with --
16 typically there were about four folks in that, so you would do 2 and 2. And you would
17 take them in just everything pre-flight. Okay, here's what's different on the overhead,
18 here's the screen

19 -- obviously the screens are different, what you're reading here in the MCDU
20 (ph.). And then as you're going all those pre-flight items, your -- you would show them
21 those differences as well as what is different if you don't have your pressure panel
22 configuration correct. So the additional warnings that the MAX would give you. If you
23 do an engine failure, the rudder pressure and the differences in that type of stuff. So all
24 those items. And then take them up to altitude and such and talk about the differences
25 with the flight controls and the spoilers and that type of stuff.

1 Q. How often would you say you're flying the MAX? Would a pilot be in a
2 MAX and for their CQ or their training?

3 A. I don't know that

4 Q. Yes, okay.

5 A. Right now about half of our -- well, not half -- what do we have? About a
6 third of them are MAX sims, but now it's not nearly as infrequent as it might have been
7 originally.

8 Q. Do you recall if the O2 mask was donned in that initial --

9 A. I do not --

10 (Crosstalk)

11 A. I do not recall that. I mean the system itself, the box is identical, so full
12 sweep on.

13 Q. So how do you train a rapid decompression as far as the oxygen mask,
14 donning, and establishing communications?

15 A. Well, we haven't had that in a while in recurrent, and so it is part of our --
16 when you're going over the recall items, we take that time to actually discuss what does
17 that mean. We all know what the immediate recall items are, but how do you apply
18 that. What does that mean? What do you do with your comm switches? What do you
19 do with your headset? What do you do with the overhead speaker? What's going to
20 be interference for all those things?

21 Q. Yes, so in regard to that, do you teach the differences between -- how do
22 you teach the differences between the MAX O2 mask donning and establishing
23 communications compared with the NG?

24 A. In day 2 of recurrent, you go down to the oxygen trainers and you have
25 both types of oxygen masks at that point. And a lot of times -- I don't teach a lot of day

1 2 -- but a lot of times you'll talk about it there and what that means.

2 Q. Okay. Do you require headsets to be worn in the sim?

3 A. On the beginning of day 1 and day 3, yes. There was a period during
4 Covid that because of Covid, we didn't. But then they made it quite aware that you will
5 now do it and then for any of the type rides, you always have to use a headset.

6 Q. And when you do have the curriculum when you're donning the mask, do
7 you -- are the pilots required to actually don them? Because, you know, we've seen in
8 the past, too, where you say, okay, that's done.

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. Are the pilots required to actually physically --

11 A. Yes --

12 (Crosstalk)

13 A. That's done in initial and yes, the pilot is a big part of it.

14 Q. How did Covid affect that?

15 A. Because of the spread of Covid that for until -- you just put a halt on it.
16 You just wouldn't --

17 Q. Right.

18 A. -- wouldn't don the mask, you wouldn't pre-flight them.

19 Q. Has that changed? When did that change where you could don the mask.
20 Are you familiar with when you could start on it?

21 A. No, it was about when Covid started easing up. And it was a directive and
22 it was, hey, that's enough of the past now. It's time to put them back on.

23 Q. Okay. Has there been any differences in the way you're instructing since
24 the door plug event?

25 A. Just like any event. You kind of use what you might have learned, or to --

1 for example, we had an overheating telephone while the aircraft was parked over on --
2 by the tower and I think it's been a few years now. But what that led to, and it ended up
3 just from an overheating telephone that got on the floor and it blew, you know, tried to
4 stomp it out. And they blew close to two bottles of halogen on top of it, and then they
5 ended up evacuating the aircraft, which seems like a lot for a telephone. However, if
6 given the circumstances and the obscurity and the visibility and all that type stuff, I
7 could see where it could happen. So anytime that there's been an event, you try to
8 take that (indiscernible) and learn from it.

9 Q. Do you have an example from the door plug event of what's changed in
10 training?

11 A. I haven't done a lot of training since then. I've been flying around quite a
12 bit. Just with the training, but just with the emphasis on how you're going to establish
13 communications. From what I understand, the crew did a great job, but everybody's
14 kind of surprised how hard it is to get the communication thing going. It sounds easy.
15 Oxygen masks on, 100% crew communications established, but there's some steps
16 there and what exactly that means.

17 Q. Yes, that's the question is how are the crews being trained to establish,
18 like, what are the steps in establishing communications?

19 A. Well, normally we're on hot mic, right. And if you put on the mask with a
20 hot mic on, all you're going to have is -- hearing is each of us over hyperventilating.
21 Okay. So you have to take that off, you have to turn your speaker on, okay, and then
22 you're going to have to push to talk either through your yoke switch or you push to talk
23 to what's there on the comm panel for communications. And you've also got to be
24 aware of where that selector switch is. If you get the down rocker, then that is
25 interphone (ph.). If you're communicating with ATC, then that would be the upper

1 switch on the yoke.

2 Q. So now they put their headset back on.

3 A. Um-hum.

4 Q. In this case they took off the masks because they were below 10 at a lower
5 altitude. How do you reestablish communications once you put the headset back on?
6 How do you train that?

7 A. You would -- I haven't trained that specifically, but then you would have to
8 -- you just go back to what you're used to and take it to a hot mic, or you could just --
9 none of us do it -- but you could also do the down rocker with the switch on the yoke.

10 Q. Okay. Let's see. Are you -- just as an overall, generally, are you aware of
11 any reoccurring issues lately with the training or the different aircraft types? Is there
12 any big issues that is brought to your attention?

13 A. No.

14 Q. So do you remember conducting the first officer's LOE (indiscernible)
15 back in, I think, February?

16 A. They sent me my comments, just she did a really nice job with her
17 communications and such, but I gave her all 4s. I don't usually do that, so.

18 Q. So that's a high score?

19 A. Yes. A 5 requires some additional comments and stuff, and really in a 5
20 you have to be a Chuck Yeager in my book.

21 Q. So there was no performance issues. Do you remember the content of
22 that LOE? Did they have to don the mask?

23 A. No. I know for a fact they did not don the mask.

24 Q. I think that's it for me for the first round.

25 MS. BLUM: JP?

1 BY MR. WILSON:

2 Q. The only question I had was just honestly from your perspective, I mean, I
3 think you know something about 1282 and probably common knowledge. But from a
4 training perspective, you know, the communication between the pilots and in the back
5 was kind of an issue as --

6 A. Um-hum.

7 Q. -- the event was happening. When you look back at that or think about
8 that, in our own training program, what would you recommend that we could do for
9 the pilots to kind of highlight how to navigate that situation in a better way to work the
10 system on the MAX. Because, you know, we got --

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. -- the NG and the MAX and we still have some, I think -- you know, some
13 people may not fly the MAX for a while, do you know what I mean. So from a training
14 perspective, in your opinion, how can we -- what would be a better way that he can --

15 A. Probably we can introduce -- I mean, we don't do rapid Ds (ph.) that often.

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 A. I mean, we see it every great once in a while in recurrent. Then other than
18 that, it's initial. Perhaps have a rapid D event, just kind of like we've got the currency of
19 what used to be a PRM like every two or three years, whatever that was. And then
20 introduce the noise and introduce the communications and all that stuff that is entailed
21 with that. And really the communications with the flight attendants between the two
22 seats, as well as ATC.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. You know, put in every other year; put in every third year. Obviously,
25 that's going to take a 20-minute window of time and it's already compressed and there

1 are priorities, but this could, and perhaps should be, one of those priorities.

2 Q. I'm glad you said that, because I was just thinking that in our traditional
3 rapid D events, we usually do it at a higher altitude, and you know, we do the dive
4 thing. We have plenty of time. And it sounds to me like a scenario with compressed
5 time --

6 A. Um-hum.

7 Q. -- would make a difference in how we sometimes handle these situations
8 and how we train for it. Because in this case, being compressed for time, there were -- I
9 think the crew also did a good job but handled it differently because by the time that
10 they were able to reach that, they were already landing, right. I think in training, it
11 sounds to me like you think that that would be a good scenario, because --

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. -- we just have not done something like that.

14 A. Well, and the LOE has two instances. And they're all being rewritten and
15 there's going to be change to it within the next couple of months. But two of the
16 instances are land at the nearest suitable airport, so that means a little bit of a time
17 crunch, right. And one's a cargo fire that's been suppressed, but there's been
18 instances of aircraft that have been lost with indications of a fire that's no longer there.
19 So you don't -- I mean, you need to be expeditious about it, but you need to get it right
20 the first time.

21 And then the other scenario is a signal generator source where you've only one
22 source generator landing in a suitable airport. Once again, you need to do it right the
23 first time. We had a scenario a couple of years ago where we took off out of Burbank
24 with the APU running, taking off to the west and they had an APU fire. And you had five
25 dings from the flight attendants, we got smoke in the cabin, I can't see in front of me.

1 And we did 180-degree return and we landed. And obviously Burbank's got its
2 challenges, a very short airport, but with smoke in the cabin, it was very compressed
3 but people really liked it because it was very real and, once again, you need to get it
4 right the first time. You go around on a situation like that, there's smoke in the cabin,
5 you probably lost some passengers in the back.

6 Q. Gotcha. The last question I have is you noted that, you know, we have a
7 lot of pilots that are coming through with lesser experience.

8 A. Um-hum.

9 Q. And some of them come from different airlines and have flown different
10 airplanes, like the E175 that have a completely different set-up. Do you think -- in your
11 opinion -- do you think it would be recommended that we highlight our comms, our
12 O2 mask? As a result of this event, do you think it would be beneficial to really
13 highlight that in our initial training and continued training on those emphasized items,
14 the O2 mask and comms? Do you think it would be helpful?

15 A. I think it's already there.

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 A. It might -- it is there in initial --

18 Q. Um-hum.

19 A. -- but perhaps it isn't refreshed as often, put it on a -- perhaps not every
20 year; every two or three year --

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. -- cycles since they see it, and maybe alternate between high altitude dive
23 and a 16,000 foot and what that entails.

24 Q. Gotcha.

25 A. It wouldn't be a bad idea -- it certainly wouldn't be a bad idea.

1 Q. Yes, absolutely.

2 MR. WILSON: Thank you.

3 MS. BLUM: Ryan.

4 MR. IWASAKI: I don't have any questions at this time.

5 MR. BAKER: Okay, thank you.

6 MS. BLUM: Marc.

7 BY MR. HENEGAR:

8 Q. Hi, I've got a couple. Just -- nothing major. You covered some of it. One
9 thing just for -- to clarify an earlier comment. You talked about using the oxygen mask
10 trainer.

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. You know, with one over in flight ops or one that's down here.

13 A. Um-hum.

14 Q. And just to clarify there are two masks -- the two masks setups. There's
15 one from our older generation --

16 A. Um-hum.

17 Q. -- 700, straight wing 900s, and then pretty much everything else, which is
18 a non-full face. It's just the normal --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- smoke goggles. Then there's a full-face mask that is in the majority of
21 our ERs and all of our MAX's. So I was just clarifying when you talked about your
22 training with different masks, there are not two different masks on the MAX. There's
23 just the --

24 A. No, only one on the MAX --

25 Q. Right.

1 A. But --

2 Q. There's a diversification on the other fleets --

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. -- of that.

5 A. But we have seen that the full-face mask isn't new to us with the MAX. It's
6 been --

7 Q. Right.

8 A. -- around, but -- that's what I was referring to.

9 Q. Yes, and that's what I was trying to clarify. We've actually had that for a
10 while, so that was not a MAX difference, per se.

11 A. Correct.

12 Q. Let's see. Was -- and also just to clarify, as an APD, what was the training
13 you received for the MAX over and above what the line pilot would have received?

14 A. We received same as the line pilot. I mean, it was -- you've got the same
15 training out of the iPad.

16 Q. Right --

17 A. And then --

18 Q. -- the CBT.

19 A. -- those individuals that originally got checked out, then they checked us
20 out and it was a pyramid type of thing. And

21 then --

22 Q. Right.

23 A. -- once we were qualified and have gone through that training, you turn
24 around and give the same training to the line crews.

25 Q. Okay. So you weren't necessarily providing any training in sort of how to

1 train the MAX to the individuals?

2 A. I think it was more in-depth, I mean, when you're talking about some of
3 these things and you're going over the slides, I mean, you want to be able to teach it.
4 And as such, you need to have more knowledge than just what the slides says, you dug
5 into it a little bit deeper. But there was no additional training, per se, as an instructor or
6 -- it really made no difference if I was an instructor evaluator or an APD once you got
7 checked out.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. I'm not sure if just the IEs were the ones doing the initial, but I knew after a
10 while, anybody, including some of our ground instructors did the MAX familiarization
11 sims.

12 Q. Okay. Let's see. And then we were talking about the reestablishment of
13 communications. When you give -- I realize you don't OE's as much as maybe as you
14 used to -- but when you do do OE, do you see -- one, do you see any issues with either
15 the captain, the new captain, or the new first officers' demonstration because that's one
16 of their qual items on the OE is they have to demonstrate the use of the oxygen system.

17 A. Um-hum.

18 Q. You know, they pull it out, they test, they put it back. Do you see any
19 issues with the captains or the first officers' knowledge or operation of those systems,
20 and is there anything additional that you brief at that time when you're talking about
21 that?

22 A. No, I bring up the door, making sure that the right door on the full-face
23 mask, make sure that's closed all the way and such, because that might -- not
24 necessarily -- that's for most communication in the oxygen shut-off valve and just point
25 that out. But beyond that, probably not, no.

1 Q. Okay. And I think the last question is, rapid depressurization. I know
2 we've kind of talked about that a little bit, and in your -- and I know I'm going into your
3 memory bank -- but how often -- because we were trying to think of it on our own --
4 how often is that taught in the sense of a CQ? I'm guessing -- because I know we had it
5 in initial, I know I had it in my Captain upgrade, but I can't -- I'm not sure I've had it
6 other than that.

7 A. Um-hum.

8 Q. But I can't identify -- is that an every five-year thing, every ten-year thing,
9 or can you recall --

10 A. I don't --

11 Q. -- when --

12 (Crosstalk)

13 A. We have done it, I'm almost certain, but I have no idea what the last time
14 we've done it.

15 Q. Okay, thank you.

16 MS. BLUM: Gary.

17 BY MR. PITCHFORD:

18 Q. Hi, Chris. Gary. You -- I kind of laughed when you said you gave her all 4s
19 -- you gave the first officer all 4s, and you don't normally do that.

20 A. I mean, there's usually something to debrief.

21 Q. Right. There's always something and everybody has. But can you explain
22 the rating system just a little bit, the 1, 2, 3, 4.

23 A. Sure, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, okay. One is significant deviations from standards
24 where you can either have major damage, loss of life, and completely undetermined by
25 the crew. Two is deviations that -- major deviations that do not get recognized by the

1 crew in a timely manner. Three are minor deviations that they can figure out
2 themselves and they take care of. Four is standard, and five is well above.

3 So -- I mean, if the folks just absolutely have it nailed with all their
4 communications and all that stuff, I will sometimes give them a 5 with just event
5 management and that type thing. If you walk away from it thinking I kind of learned
6 something myself there, I might have to -- I might try to add that to my portfolio, so to
7 speak.

8 Q. So with that, you attend (indiscernible) how often the instructor pilot
9 ground school?

10 A. Um-hum, once a year.

11 Q. Once a year? In that, do they stress standards?

12 A. Oh, absolutely.

13 Q. Okay. And with that being said, with the standards being stressed -- I
14 guess where is it going on this -- it's -- it follows the FOTM, correct? The flight
15 operations training

16 manuals --

17 A. Um-hum.

18 Q. -- is where you have your standards?

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. And that follows the ACS, correct, the air carrier --

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. -- standards? Okay. And you as an APD follow the ACS, which is basically
23 the FOTM. Correct?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Okay. I just want to make sure that's correct. Okay, that's it. Thank you.

1 MS. BLUM: Okay.

2 BY MS. BLUM:

3 Q. Round two. Usually round two's really short. Do you need a break before

4 --

5 A. No, I'm good.

6 Q. Okay.

7 MS. BLUM: Everybody else good? Okay.

8 BY MS. BLUM:

9 Q. Are you aware that the press reset button on this oxygen storage mask
10 door is required to establish communications again?

11 A. Um-hum.

12 Q. You are aware of that? Is that something the instructor group is training
13 the pilots?

14 A. I'd bring it up if it isn't. If the flag is displayed and talk about that, but no, I
15 don't know what other instructors do.

16 Q. Yes, I think that's it for me.

17 MS. BLUM: Do you have --

18 MR. WILSON: I just have one, yes.

19 BY MR. WILSON:

20 Q. Chris, in your whole training in the MAX simulator, we do mask, right, that
21 we have. Have you ever experienced any fogging of the mask, whether it's a pilots
22 doing it or -- have you ever experienced having issues with the fogging of the mask?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Have you?

1 Q. Well, actually the reason why -- no, I haven't. But the reason why -- well,
2 the reason why I ask is because in the event, they would know if their mask was kind of
3 fogging up. And then --

4 A. Okay.

5 Q. -- actually as we were -- we're here -- we were in this actually, it kind of
6 happened to us as well. We're just trying to figure out why that is and actually in your
7 opinion -- I'm curious -- what do you think --

8 (Crosstalk)

9 A. A good seal and everything, so no glasses or anything.

10 Q. Yes, I mean -- yes, and it fogged up. So we were just trying to say as it
11 happened, is this something that's even talked about amongst the instructors. That's
12 something we were wondering about, so.

13 A. Okay.

14 Q. Yes. But you haven't seen it?

15 A. No, I haven't.

16 Q. Okay.

17 MR. IWASAKI: None for me, thank you.

18 BY MR. HENEGAR:

19 Q. So just going back to the -- talking about the rapid depressurization or
20 smoke fire, they had the mask on and then they returned the mask to the canister.
21 And, you know -- or they don't as the case may be.

22 A. Um-hum.

23 Q. They just sort of throw it aside because they're busy and they -- you're
24 telling us the requirement is you shut the door and then you have to press the test reset
25 switch to reset it --

1 A. Um-hum.

2 Q. -- to regain communications using a normal headset.

3 A. Yes, and if you're in a hurry or getting ready to land, I could see where
4 you're not taking the time to form the burrito and putting it away and securing
5 everything.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. But that right-hand door is important on that.

8 Q. So the door with the test reset switch -- so my question is, we've looked, that is
9 not anywhere in the systems handbook. How do you know that?

10 A. The right door?

11 Q. Not the door, the press test to reset. In other words, there's a two-step
12 process on this one. You have to shut the door, then you have to hit the light, you
13 know, basically it's a reset. That is not in our systems manual. We know, unfortunately,
14 because we've looked.

15 A. Okay.

16 Q. And so we're wondering, a) how many of the -- in your opinion, how many
17 of the instructors in general know that, b) how many -- how much of the pilot group do
18 you think knows that, because it's not in our materials as far as we can tell.

19 A. I don't know. I don't even know how it came -- knowledge to me. I just
20 know that that's what you got to do.

21 Q. Okay. That was my question, thank you.

22 MS. BLUM: Gary, do you have any?

23 MR. PITCHFORD: I don't have any questions, thanks.

24 MS. BLUM: Well, is there anything that you'd like to share with us that we
25 didn't ask about?

1 MR. BAKER: No. The crew did a good job, did they not?

2 MR. HENEGAR: They did.

3 MS. BLUM: Is there any safety-related suggestions you have for us concerning
4 this event?

5 MR. BAKER: No, well, like we have been going at, I think, that it would be
6 worthwhile going forward practicing it every few years. Because people -- every once
7 in a while, with extra time, I'll do something, like do a rapid D, do an engine failure on
8 final, which they haven't seen for years. And it's kind of a no jeopardy in that and we
9 have the training time. So actually a lot of times the folks will say I haven't done that in
10 years. So --

11 MR. HENEGAR: And one thing I would say is they -- we do have -- most
12 instructors are very good about if there is 45 minutes left in the instruction, 30 minutes,
13 is there anything you'd like to see?

14 MS. BLUM: Um-hum.

15 MR. HENEGAR: Or anything you'd like to do again for your own -- just no
16 jeopardy, it's just, hey, for your own interest. So --

17 MR. BAKER: Um-hum.

18 MR. HENEGAR: Yes, they're really good about that.

19 MS. BLUM: But how about in relationship to any suggestions with the
20 differences between the MAX and the NG, do you have any suggestions as far as the
21 training goes?

22 MR. BAKER: No, I think it's mainstream enough now that it's, you know, the mask
23 is, like you said, is present in quite a few of our NGs already. So that isn't that much of a
24 factor. No, I can't really think of anything.

25 MS. BLUM: Okay. Well, we appreciate your time and we're ending at 10:01 a.m.

1

(Whereupon, at 10:01 a.m. PDT, the interview was concluded.)

2

CERTIFICATE

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

IN THE MATTER OF: ALASKA AIRLINES BOEING 737-9 MAX
IN-FLIGHT STRUCTURE FAILURE
NEAR PORTLAND, OREGON
ON JANUARY 5, 2024
Interview of Christopher Baker

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA24MA063

PLACE: Seattle, Washington

DATE: April 11, 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.



Marisu Abellar
Transcriber

APPEARANCES:

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National Transportation Safety Board

JP WILSON, Portland Based Chief Pilot
Alaska Airlines

RYAN IWASAKI, Senior Safety Pilot
Boeing

MARC HENEGAR, Aircraft Investigation Chair
ALPA

GARY PITCHFORD, Cascadia Aircrew Program Manager
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INTERVIEW

(10:24 a.m. PDT)

MS. BLUM: Okay, recording. Today is April 11th, 2024 and it's 10:24 a.m. Pacific Daylight Time. My name is Starr Blum. I'm the Operational Factors Investigator with the NTSB. I'm leading this working group for investigation number DCA24MA063 involving Alaska Flight 1282. We really appreciate you being here. This just provides us an education, further understanding and to get your perspective of the event. It allows us to see what went well, what could have gone better. As part of this process, we invite other parties to participate to provide us technical expertise, so we have Alaska, Boeing, ALPA and the FAA. And in a moment, I'll have them go around the room and introduce themselves.

The NTSB is an independent federal agency. We are not part of DOT or the FAA. We have no regulatory, no enforcement powers. Our mission is to determine the probable cause of accidents and incidents and make recommendations, if there are, so similar events can be avoided. Our mission does not include findings of liability or blame. Your participation today just helps ensure that this fact-finding phase of the investigation process is complete and accurate. We will be recording this interview so that it can be transcribed. After we receive the transcript, our group will review it for typos and you'll also be provided the opportunity to do the same before it goes into the public docket.

So now let's introduce everyone. JP.

MR. WILSON: JP Wilson. Portland based, too? I have been in the air group -- well, for 20 years, but in Alaska about almost -- let's see -- 16 and half, 17 years. I was with Horizon previous to that point on a Dash 8. I've actually been in this job for just about five and a half years. Civilian background, mostly -- also worked our

1 fatigue program, too. I run that program with the fatigue review panel. So thanks for
2 coming out, Darin.

3 MR. NEWTON: Good to see you.

4 MR. WILSON: You, too.

5 MR. IWASAKI: Good morning, Ryan Iwasaki with Boeing. I'm with the
6 Flight Technical and Safety Division.

7 MR. WILSON: Okay.

8 MR. HENEGAR: Marc Henegar, I'm ALPA. I'm the vice chair of the Safety
9 Committee and the Chief Accident Investigator and the party coordinator to the
10 investigation for ALPA. Seattle captain 20 whatever years, and an air traffic controller
11 before that.

12 MR. PITCHFORD: Gary Pitchford from the FAA. Air crew program
13 manager on the 737 for Alaska Airlines.

14 MR. NEWTON: All right.

15 MS. BLUM: Okay. So each of us will have the opportunity to ask
16 questions twice. We'll go around two times. We've all been instructed not to interrupt
17 each other. And please just answer the questions to the best of your recollection. If
18 you don't know or don't recall, that's a perfectly acceptable answer.

19 MR. NEWTON: Sure.

20 MS. BLUM: And if you realize that you've misstated something and you
21 want to correct it, please do so or if we ask something that isn't clear, you can ask for
22 clarification. You are entitled to have a representative if you want one. And also if you
23 need a break, please just say so.

24 MR. NEWTON: Okay.

25 MS. BLUM: Okay. Any questions?

1 MR. NEWTON: No.

2 MS. BLUM: Okay.

3 INTERVIEW OF DARIN NEWTON

4 BY MS BLUM:

5 Q. Well, let's start with the -- he actually -- yes. Let's start with the easy stuff.
6 Can you state and spell your name, please?

7 A. Darin Andrew Newton, D-A-R-I-N, A-N-D-R-E-W, last name Newton, N-E-
8 W-T-O-N.

9 Q. How old are you, Darin?

10 A. I'm 53.

11 Q. Okay. And your employer?

12 A. Alaska Airlines.

13 Q. And what is your job title?

14 A. Check airman, line pilot.

15 Q. And where are you based?

16 A. Anchorage.

17 Q. Are you in any other managerial training at Alaska?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Okay. If you had to guess, what's your total time in your estimate?

20 A. 20,000.

21 Q. And how about in 737?

22 A. 16,000.

23 Q. Okay. And how much of that would you say is PIC?

24 A. 10,000.

25 Q. That's a lot of time. And what was your date of hire with Alaska?

1 A. 2/22/1999.

2 Q. Could you give us just a CliffsNotes version of your background before
3 Alaska?

4 A. Grew up here in Seattle, University of North Dakota for college.
5 Instructed a couple of years. Had an opportunity to go to Alaska to fly, and so I got a
6 job. Flew in the bush in Alaska, mostly western Alaska for three to four years. And then
7 got hired at Alaska Airlines.

8 Q. Okay. I'm a Sioux grad too. How many years have you been a check
9 airman and providing training and instruction?

10 A. I believe around six. Yes, I don't know the exact -- what they consider my
11 date of hire as an instructor, so I think it's right around six.

12 Q. Okay. So other than line piloting and check airman, how would you
13 describe your job duties and responsibilities?

14 A. As a line pilot?

15 Q. No, as a check airman?

16 A. Oh, as a check airman. So show up prepared and evaluate and instruct as
17 needed, you know. It's pretty self-explanatory, the position, I believe. So that's it in a
18 nutshell.

19 Q. Okay. So as a check airman, you're doing line checks online. What do
20 your roles in the sim -- what other training do you provide as a check airman? Is that
21 part of the flight?

22 (Crosstalk)

23 A. You're always a role model and providing guidance where needed,
24 and/or mentoring when needed, so.

25 Q. Do you train -- initial training when pilots first come on?

1 A. Occasionally, yes, when they need us or if you pick up an event that that's
2 what you pick up, so you're qualified for all.

3 Q. So recurrent, initial?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Okay. How do you as a check airman remain qualified?

6 A. We do an evaluation annually, ground school, and we go through our
7 own CQ on an annual basis just like line pilots do. However, we're -- when we go
8 through CQ, say, in 2024, we'll be doing 2025's CQ footprint and that's part of the
9 validation process.

10 Q. For pilots next year?

11 A. Correct.

12 Q. How, as a check airman, do you keep current between the NG and the
13 MAX?

14 A. Well, we used to have a differences training. Okay. I believe that's going
15 away. And now the MAX is becoming the base airplane, so now it's -- I believe it's all
16 captured under the CBT portions that we do on a quarterly basis.

17 Q. Okay. With the philosophy within the instructor group, does everybody
18 teach the same thing like technique versus standard?

19 A. They're supposed to teach the flight handbook and not technique. So
20 what's written down in the manuals is what's supposed to be taught, so -- or taught.
21 So I would say we are supposed to be teaching all the same. Correct.

22 Q. Okay. And what's given to you as a check airman? Is there a handbook or
23 curriculum of the content that you were given from the company?

24 A. There's various documents. I mean, I can show you an IP file. It's full of
25 things that we are given.

1 Q. Yes.

2 A. It's extensive.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. It's not just, like, okay, you've got a brand-new pilot. Here's the training
6 curriculum that you need to cover or in recurrent.

7 A. I mean, it is divided into -- okay, there's a document for operating
8 experience. There's a document for CQ. There's a document for failures if you run into
9 that. There's a document -- so there's various documents.

10 Q. Is there a document for the MAX, any particular differences, when
11 somebody is being given that first familiarization?

12 A. Yes, I'm sure I can go under the training tab and pull up a MAX, you know,
13 MAX differences. I think there's -- yes.

14 Q. So I've been learning about the continuing qualification and what's
15 required in these evaluation periods. Do you see those ever -- the CQ happening in
16 the MAX sim?

17 A. Oh, yes, absolutely. We're already doing it.

18 Q. Yes. Do you -- I mean, is it one year it's in the NG, the next year it's in the
19 MAX --

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. -- like --

22 A. That's -- I believe that's called structured if I'm not mistaken.

23 Q. Okay. Are you aware of how the curriculum is chosen? Are you a part of
24 that process?

25 A. I'm not part of the process, no.

1 Q. Okay. So you would have been instructing when the MAX was first
2 delivered?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Probably.

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Did you conduct the initial training to pilots?

7 A. Initial training, no. No, I just know the one name of one of the pilots.
8 (Crosstalk)

9 Q. Is there any pilot --

10 A. Okay.

11 Q. -- yes, since the MAX came on the property for you --

12 A. How I conducted any initial training for --

13 Q. Yes.

14 A. -- any pilots?

15 Q. Yes.

16 A. Yes, I believe I have.

17 Q. Do you recall ever donning the oxygen mask and establishing
18 communications in this training?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. How do you train the pilots in the event of a rapid decompression?

21 A. Oh, usually if it's in the event, we'll usually brief it in the briefing and go
22 through the profile and talk about different things that may come up that aren't in the
23 profile. Like foreseeing issues that may happen with communications, for instance,
24 some things like that. And so we'll brief it in the briefing and then we'll conduct it in the
25 simulator.

1 Q. Are pilots required to wear the headset in the sim?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And when you're doing these O2 mask donning, how do you train the
4 pilots to establish communications in the MAX?

5 A. Well, it's supposed to be a real-world event, so we train them the way
6 they're going to see it in the real world. So I think that's pretty self-explanatory, so
7 they're supposed to do the procedure that gets prescribed in the flight handbook.

8 Q. And do you recall what the procedure for establishing communications
9 is?

10 A. Well, it's -- do I recall it? Yes, I could do it. So do you want me to explain
11 it to you?

12 Q. Please, yes.

13 A. So oxygen mask on regulators are on 100%, crew communications
14 established, and so you would establish your communications by setting up the ACP
15 (ph.) panel in the proper manner so that you're turning the speakers up so that you
16 could talk to each other.

17 Q. So once you take the mask off, what would the next steps be?

18 A. That's pilot's choice. You could use a hand mic and continue to use the
19 overhead speaker. You could -- if you could find your headset, you could probably put
20 your headset right back on -- not probably, you could -- put the headset back on and
21 be communicating normally at that point again.

22 Q. Are there any steps after they put the headset back on with the O2 system
23 and communications?

24 A. With the O2 system?

25 Q. Well, yes.

1 A. I'm not sure.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Yes, I'm not sure what --

4 Q. My question is?

5 A. Yes, really, I mean --

6 Q. I'm wondering after you take the mask off and you put the headset back
7 on, how do you reestablish communications with the headset?

8 A. It just becomes a normal through the ACP panel. So you would -- yes.
9 That's kind of self-explanatory, I guess, in my opinion. But you put your headset back
10 on and in the MAX I guess you would have to go ahead and stow the mask, yes.

11 Q. Okay. During Covid, how did that affect your instruction as far as oxygen
12 masks go?

13 A. How did it affect it?

14 Q. Were you donning them during Covid?

15 A. I think we got a waiver --

16 Q. Yes --

17 A. -- to not do that.

18 Q. Yes. And then do you recall when you started donning the masks again?

19 A. I don't recall exactly, no.

20 Q. Yes, okay. Are you aware of any training that has evolved since the door
21 plug incident? Has there been any changes into how pilots are being trained or
22 taught?

23 A. I mean, there's been multiple communications on the new training
24 because of this. It's more of an informational. I don't know that we've -- it's gone down
25 the road far enough to where it's training yet. Yes, I think it's just more informational.

1 Q. So, it was a long time ago, do you remember conducting the captains'
2 LOE, I believe, April of 2023?

3 A. So no, I don't remember actually conducting it, no.

4 Q. Okay. Did you have -- were you able to look at the records, and --

5 A. I did review my record, yes.

6 Q. And how -- do you have any notes -- how did the --

7 A. I reviewed the record. I'm sure you guys have as well what I did. And I
8 rarely -- so one rarely in an event is like all fours and out the door. That's what we say,
9 but -- and then you can see by my comments in general for the entire event, the person
10 did very well.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. And so it was -- that's what I saw and that's how I graded it.

13 Q. Perfect. Yes, actually I haven't seen that, so --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. -- yes. So no issues there? No problems?

16 A. No, there were no issues. In fact, my comments, I was going to -- maybe
17 that's related, but I have a question for you --

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. -- in the end.

20 Q. Okay. What -- do you remember when they were required to don the O2
21 mask during this last CQ or --

22 A. I didn't really even look at the dates. This was within the last two years, so
23 was it 20 -- I don't remember whether it was an oxygen donning event or not.

24 Q. Okay. Are you aware of any reoccurring issues with training or online with
25 the different aircraft types?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Okay, perfect. I think that's going to be it for my first round.

3 MS. BLUM: JP, you've got a question?

4 MR. WILSON: Yes.

5 BY MR. WILSON:

6 Q. And you do a lot of OE, right?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. You do that? Okay, good. So in OE, how do we teach in the MAX? Do
9 you do OE only in the MAX or just --

10 A. Not a lot.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. No.

13 Q. Well, the ones that you do, if you do it, and --

14 A. See, I do OE out of Anchorage as well.

15 Q. That's true, yes.

16 A. Out of Anchorage, we're not flying the MAX a whole lot.

17 Q. Yes.

18 A. So they kind of give us a little -- the little jets.

19 Q. I was in Anchorage for a little bit, so we were all good. But, well -- and
20 once the instructors -- and maybe if you've taught in the MAX and on OE, do we
21 emphasize the O2 mask on panel configuration set-up?

22 A. So, no, I don't think it's an emphasis item.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. And I could see where you guys are kind of drilling in on this issue, and
25 rightfully so, probably.

1 Q. As a follow-up to that, actually, since you do a lot of Anchorage in the NG,
2 do we talk about that, like a difference? I know we do it, like, in initial training and stuff,
3 the difference between the NG and the MAX, but on the OE on the NG, we don't talk
4 about anything like that. Like the inquiry is, you know, hey, if you're flying the MAX --

5 (Crosstalk)

6 Q. Yes, I don't know. Did we do anything like that?

7 A. I think it's at the instructor's discretion and I would say
8 -- this is just my opinion -- I would say the majority of the instructors probably
9 don't.

10 Q. Gotcha. This is probably not a task card or anything like that?

11 A. No, I don't --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. -- think so.

14 Q. Being on OE, you probably -- you fly a lot of new hires, right? Do you
15 notice any trends with the new hires with their systems knowledge of the O2 and audio
16 system, comm system?

17 A. Well, it's always different from where they came from so it's always a
18 challenge for them when they get in there to, you know, they'd have to look at it -- look
19 at the ACP panel and kind of process it to -- okay, well, what does that button do? And
20 so it's -- again, I have noticed some difficulty with it.

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. On OE, especially -- just basically a communication and knowing what
23 radio you're talking on, which frequency you're talking on, which channel you're talking
24 on, flight attendants, intercom, you know, comm 1, comm 2, SAT. There's a lot going
25 on on that ACP panel, so.

1 Q. Um-hum.

2 A. Yes, I mean, for a new hire, it is one -- it's probably one item that probably
3 needs to be looked at a little bit harder, you know.

4 Q. Okay. And I'm not sure if you can answer this one but let me see if you
5 can. So on OE, when they schedule out or when you have your OE scheduled for a
6 candidate or for a student, do they try to interject NG and MAX? Is there a standard
7 that that has to happen or sometimes it could just be all NG or --

8 A. That's an AQP (ph.) question --

9 Q. Yes.

10 A. -- for Chelsea (ph.) and them. I --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. -- I don't -- I'm not sure.

13 Q. Okay, good. Yes, I figured -- I didn't know -- and your OE's if you -- if it's
14 just, like, yes, we do the NG and then we get a MAX somewhere in there. Sometimes
15 it's just the way it works out, you know.

16 A. I don't want to speak to that because I don't --

17 Q. Yes.

18 A. -- I don't know.

19 Q. Cool. I'll ask -- Jeff (ph.) would probably know.

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Yes.

22 MR. WILSON: That's all for round 1 for me.

23 MS. BLUM: Okay. Ryan.

24 BY MR. IWASAKI:

25 Q. Good morning. I just have one question. Do you recall the last time you

1 had personally donned the mask?

2 A. It's probably -- yes, it was in training actually, yes, during my CQ and my --
3 I'm drawing a blank on the term they use -- but when we do the --

4 MR. HENEGAR: The oxygen mask trainer?

5 MR. NEWTON: Yes, but there's a catch-all for all that stuff. I can't come
6 up with the term. But, yes, the last time I trained.

7 BY MR. IWASAKI:

8 Q. You're not remembering issues with the mask that you personally had?

9 A. No, everything worked as it should with the mock-up that we have in the
10 training bays, yes.

11 Q. That's all I have, thanks.

12 BY MR. HENEGAR:

13 Q. Hi, Darin. I just got one because JP stole all my questions. The -- just
14 understanding that during LOE event on day 3 of CQ, every other year the oxygen
15 mask trainer is used as part of the training curriculum.

16 A. Right.

17 Q. How do you -- when you go and train that there is the old-style mask on
18 the 700, Straight wing 900s and a couple of the ERs, and then there's a full-face mask
19 that pretty much covers the rest of the fleet.

20 A. Right.

21 Q. How do you train -- can you kind of walk us through the --

22 A. Yes --

23 Q. -- training that you provide --

24 A. -- yes.

25 Q. -- on the --

1 A. So I review both mock-ups and the oxygen -- you know, we pressurize it
2 and everything and -- so they work like they should in the actual aircraft. And I will go
3 through the pre-flight and then we will take the mask out --

4 Q. Um-hum.

5 A. -- and don the mask. And -- so the -- do you want me to, like, talk about
6 the pre-flight?

7 Q. Um-hum. Say I'm the guy --

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. -- and you're giving me the training.

10 A. So --

11 Q. Can we just walk it through?

12 A. -- so to get that involved, well, okay, how would you pre-flight this? And
13 so I would watch them go through their pre-flight on each mask and then come up with
14 anything that they did wrong or what they weren't catching, how to address that. So,
15 you know, on the NG, in the old-style masks, you know, you're pulling the red lever
16 down and watching for five seconds so that the oxygen level doesn't decrease. In the
17 event that it did decrease, I ask the question, okay, what would that mean? You know,
18 okay, they left the valve open when they changed the oxygen tank out. So what --
19 closed -- they left the valve closed when they changed the oxygen tank out. So,
20 therefore, you know, that's got to get addressed, of course, because the drop -- it
21 should not have dropped to zero. And if it didn't drop to zero then the valve's good
22 and we've got good pressure up there per the flight handbook, then we're good to go.
23 And then I would talk about the communications and the ACP panel and how you
24 would set that up.

25 Q. Um-hum.

1 A. And that's more of a new hire thing.

2 Q. Um-hum.

3 A. So with the new hire, you would definitely go through that ACP panel to
4 therefore set that up with the NG, you know.

5 Q. Um-hum.

6 A. With the MAX, it's basically automatic and you're going to be talking right
7 into the masks, so.

8 Q. Okay. Do you -- and you talked about how you basically restow the mask
9 --

10 A. Yes, yes --

11 Q. -- to reestablish --

12 (Crosstalk)

13 A. Yes, so --

14 Q. -- communication. Can you walk me through that?

15 A. Yes. So we've all seen the videos and --

16 (Crosstalk)

17 A. Yes, there's some videos --

18 Q. Well, maybe it's CQ--

19 A. There's some videos on --

20 Q. Yes.

21 A. -- basically how to stow the masks.

22 Q. Um-hum.

23 A. And then, you know, pushing the liner down in the box and then --

24 Q. Right.

25 A. -- and then making the hose -- I'm talking about the NG, okay. So pushing

1 the liner down the box and then making the hose, you know, follow that in there --

2 Q. Um-hum.

3 A. -- and then the straps, basically --

4 Q. Um-hum.

5 A. -- kind of making a little package.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. And then putting it on the orientation and making the -- making sure the
8 peg -- it's, you know, there is a lot going on there for -- especially for someone that
9 never -- has done it. And there -- so there's -- you know, I could see how there's room
10 for some error on those, so.

11 Q. Yes, on the MAX.

12 (Crosstalk)

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. And on the MAX where you show them as far as putting the -- you show
15 them putting the mask back in and then what do you show them as far as
16 reestablishing communications?

17 A. Well, making sure that the ACP is correct.

18 Q. Um-hum.

19 A. And, you know, like making sure that you're going to be able to talk
20 before the break -- the correct channel gets selected.

21 Q. Yes. Okay.

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. That's all for me.

24 MR. HENEGAR: How about you, Gary?

25 MR. PITCHFORD: Good.

1 BY MR. PITCHFORD:

2 Q. How you doing, Darin? Gary. And has there been any -- we'll call it
3 information out from flight operations or flight standards to the check airmen about
4 pre-flighting the oxygen mask recently, especially in reestablishing communications?

5 A. I don't recall, like, specifically, no --

6 Q. Yes.

7 A. -- with reestablishing communications. I don't recall.

8 Q. Or how about -- has one coming out from fleet about bringing -- the first
9 flight of the day for that aircraft you'll take the mask out, inspect the lens. Do you
10 remember anything like that coming out?

11 A. Yes, yes. There's been various things on oxygen masks.

12 (Crosstalk)

13 A. Pre-flighting throughout the years.

14 Q. Yes, I mean, recently --

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. -- within the last three months, six months? Since December, say? Has
17 there been anything about that?

18 A. I --

19 Q. Do you know?

20 A. I don't recall, yes.

21 Q. I wouldn't either (indiscernible).

22 (Crosstalk)

23 Q. No, that's okay. I understand. That's my last question. Okay, that's it.

24 Thanks.

25 BY MS. BLUM:

1 Q. Yes, we're not trying to put you on the spot. We're just trying to
2 understand, like, you know, what's being trained and also has anything changed since
3 this event?

4 A. Right.

5 Q. For the instructor to disseminate to the pilots. Are you aware of anything
6 since the door plug?

7 A. If I ever read it, I'm not remembering it right now, yes.

8 Q. That's okay, yes.

9 MS. BLUM: JP, do you have any more questions?

10 MR. WILSON: Do you seem -- for round 2 or just --

11 MS. BLUM: Yes, I mean, we could take it -- we're going to start round 2 if you
12 need a break. We could take one.

13 MR. WILSON: No, that's fine.

14 (Crosstalk)

15 BY MR. WILSON:

16 Q. I just have to -- round two. And this more like your opinion, Darin, like
17 how -- what is the most effective way to teach -- or to -- between the instructor group,
18 how do you -- what do you think is the best way to communicate the standards? Right?
19 Because, you know, within -- I'm sure within the instructor group, you talked about, like,
20 you know, the flight handbook, SOP, that's -- right. But, you know, there's technique
21 out there, too. And how do -- as an instructor group, how do you stop that -- and then
22 communication-wise from, like, Jeff on down, how do you -- Scarola, are we doing a
23 good job there, in your opinion, as far as the training department?

24 A. As far as standards, it's always -- we've always talked about this. Every
25 meeting that we do and it's emphasized -- it's been emphasized throughout my check

1 airman career is, you know, technique and the SOP, FOM, flight handbook are the
2 bibles. That's what we teach and that's what we go by. If you're straying into technique
3 and things, and I think this has been addressed by some critiques with new hires in the
4 past couple of years, too, when they started -- after they started doing these critiques,
5 it's kind of up -- because that, you know, these instructors are teaching technique. And
6 I try and say it when I'm going to give a hint to somebody and say this is how I do it.
7 This is technique only and this is not flight handbook. You know, it might not even be
8 addressed in the flight handbook what I'm going to be talking about. So I'll say, yes,
9 technique only. This is how, you know, I've seen it done in the past or this is how I do
10 this particular item. So I think I lost your other part of the question. How do we
11 communicate?

12 Q. Yes, just, like --

13 A. Yes --

14 Q. -- you know, is there any recommendations as far how we can effectively
15 communicate better when there's changes, what emphasis items.

16 A. Right. You know, we do -- we get the information out and I believe on a
17 timely basis and also -- but things -- there are so many things, it just -- a lot of stuff gets
18 lost, you know. There's just so much going on that you throw out this bulletin, it gets
19 incorporated into the FOM or flight handbook and then it's -- there's guys that have
20 been here 20, 25 years and they just revert to the old way and kind of forget about
21 what they just read three months ago, let's say.

22 Q. Yes.

23 A. So I think it's -- it might be an emphasis item, in my opinion, and I think
24 we're already doing this, is up in -- trying to up everybody's game in -- to be, I think, just
25 be more vigilant about their profession and back in the books a little bit more to

1 become a better aviator and a better, you know, a better employee.

2 Q. I had another question, but -- I have one, too -- but as the events of 1282,
3 after that event, with 1282, with just --

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Was there any change within the instructor group of how we
6 communicate or how, you know, teaching-wise, just with what you knew of the event?
7 Like is there -- was there anything within the training program --

8 A. Well --

9 (Crosstalk)

10 A. Maybe the higher-ups were --

11 Q. Um-hum.

12 A. -- were given the information right away on how the crew handled the
13 event, but I have no idea how the crew handled the event. I mean -- so --

14 Q. So it really wasn't --

15 A. And it's not really relevant until we know how it all happened and what
16 can be done better.

17 Q. Gotcha.

18 A. You know.

19 Q. Okay. Last question I have is -- how long have you been instructing? You
20 said --

21 A. Six.

22 Q. Six years, okay. In your six years with the MAX and with the new mask --
23 with the mask, the full-face --

24 A. Um-hum.

25 Q. -- mask, have you ever seen fogging in that mask when people use it in

1 the sim or out in the line? Have you ever --

2 A. I have not, no.

3 Q. Okay.

4 MR. WILSON: I'm good.

5 MS. BLUM: Okay. Ryan.

6 MR. IWASAKI: I have no questions.

7 MR HENEGAR: I'm good.

8 MR PITCHFORD: No questions for me.

9 MS. BLUM: None? Okay.

10 BY MS. BLUM:

11 Q. Is there anything that we haven't asked you that you would like to talk
12 about or share with us?

13 A. I just have that one question for you is -- and I don't know if you can share
14 it or not -- but -- and you said you haven't seen my comments on the event that I
15 conducted --

16 Q. Just -- we will, yes.

17 (Crosstalk)

18 A. Oh, you haven't seen it yet, okay. So --

19 Q. We just have the basic training records.

20 A. Do you mind if I just share what I -- based in general what I said and then -
21 - because you're going to see them anyway.

22 Q. Yes.

23 A. And then I'll follow-up with a question. So, basically, I think -- I believe I
24 said -- well, I could pull it up, actually.

25 MR. WILSON: Can we pause for a second?

1 MS. BLUM: Yes, sure. We're going to stop the recording at 11:01.

2 (Off the record at 11:01 a.m.)

3 (On the record at 11:02 a.m.)

4 MS. BLUM: Okay. Recording back on at 11:02 a.m.

5 BY MS. BLUM:

6 Q. Okay. So my comments were great LOE, all to standards per the flight
7 handbook and FOM. Great communication skills, leadership, event management and
8 pacing. And so did -- are those comments in reflection of how this crew handled the
9 event?

10 A. The crew did a good job.

11 Q. Okay, good.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Is there any other safety-related suggestions or thoughts you have before
14 we conclude?

15 A. No.

16 MS. BLUM: Okay. Well, we really appreciate your time. Ending at 11:03
17 a.m.

18 (Whereupon, at 11:03 a.m. PDT, 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: ALASKA AIRLINES BOEING 737-9 MAX
IN-FLIGHT STRUCTURE FAILURE
NEAR PORTLAND, OREGON
ON JANUARY 5, 2024
Interview of Darin Andrew Newton

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA24MA063

PLACE: Seattle, Washington

DATE: April 11, 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.



Marisu Abellar
Transcriber