



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Eastern Region

Date: March 26, 2020
Person Contacted:
NTSB Accident Number: ERA20CA138

Narrative:

Ms. Tracey Paoletta was contacted by phone on March 26, 2020, at 1440 EDT. She was called at [REDACTED]. Her e-mail address is [REDACTED].

She indicated that in summary with respect to the balloon landing, she sustained multiple broken bones.

She indicated that immediately after the accident she went to the emergency room of Celebration hospital where she had regular radiographic imaging, (*not a CT or MRI imaging*) on my left ankle only, due to my inability to bear any weight on my left leg at that time. She was diagnosed with a left ankle sprain. The fractures did not show up on radiograph imaging. They did not elect to complete any imaging on my right ankle, based on the fact I was able to bear some weight on my right leg, despite having significant bruising and pain at that time.

She subsequently went to her physician, and a MRI of her left ankle was performed on January 26, 2020, which confirmed complete Talar Neck fracture of her left side.¹ Following the diagnosis of her left ankle, given the fact that she was still experiencing significant pain to her right ankle and leg, her physician was concerned for additional fractures given the mechanism of injury and ordered an MRI of her right ankle. She had an MRI done of her right ankle on January 27, 2020, which confirmed Partial Talar Neck fracture right side, with tibial head fracture.²

On March 26, 2020, at 2335 EDT, she send an e-mail to NTSB which indicated that she neglected to mention that she was, "...diagnosed with moderate to severe cervical spinal cord

¹ She added that the fracture was "...only visible on MRI imaging and never on radiographic imaging to date."

² Her physician indicated that those, "...types of fractures were consistent with a high altitude impact."

narrowing per MRI as well as bilateral wrist injury that was noted on the bone scan. These injuries are believed to be from the force of impact when we hit the tree tops that our pilot aimed for in an attempt to slow down our speed in preparation for the unplanned landing destination. It was the force of this impact that resulted in the large tree branch that was approximately 6 feet in length and ranged from 6-10 inches in diameter being broken off and attached to the bottom of our basket beneath where I was positioned. This is the branch that one of the crew members had to forcefully pull to detach it from the basket, as I mentioned to you earlier. I have undergone radiography of my wrists which showed no fractures, however if I continue to have pain I was advised we will need to proceed with MRI imaging according to my doctor.”

She was asked if she had yet made a written statement providing first hand observations, and she replied she had not.

The digest was e-mailed to her for review on March 26, 2020. She replied the same day at 2129 EDT with comments that were incorporated into the narrative. The corrected digest was e-mailed to her on April 7, 2020.