

ERA23FA001

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

Group Chair's Factual Report - Attachment 4

ATC Personnel Interview Summaries

October 7, 2024

Interviewee: Alexander Zayas - Certified Professional Controller
Representative: Sam Christgau - NATCA Representative

Date/Time: October 6, 2022 / 0912 CDT
Location: Duluth Airport Traffic Control Tower (DLH ATCT)
Present: Donald Clark - FAA; Dan Carrico - NATCA
Investigator: Brian Soper - NTSB

During the interview, Mr. Zayas was asked a series of questions by the group, and below is a summary (not a transcription) of the questions asked (Q) and answers provided (A):

Q: What was your age on the day of the accident?

A: 37.

Q: What are your operating initials?

A: ZS.

Q: What is your title?

A: Certified Professional Controller.

Q: Do you have any military or pre-FAA ATC work experience?

A: No.

Q: Do you hold any collateral duties, or have you been on any recent details?

A: No.

Q: Could you please describe briefly, your ATC/aviation background?

A: Always had a passion for aviation that started in the 8th grade when he took a field trip to Washington DC and flew on an old B-727. He recalled flying over the Potomac, getting to see the view from the flight deck, then flying into Chicago where he was from. He then told his mother that he wanted to be a pilot - and said he "was hooked." He attended the University of North Dakota and received a bachelor's degree in aerospace science with a focus on ATC, and minor in professional flight. His second passion was computers, and after earning his degree, first went to work at Best Buy and during the layoffs in 2009 decided to apply for ATC and was selected. Though originally destined for Chicago (ORD) ATCT, after attending the FAA academy changed to DLH ATCT.

Q: In the terms of Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor; how would you describe your overall health?

A: Good.

Q: Did you have a current medical clearance certificate on the day of the accident?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you have any waivers, restrictions, or limitations to your medical clearance?

A: He had a requirement to wear corrective lenses and stated that he was wearing them at the time of the accident.

Q: Were you taking any prescription or non-prescription medications on the day of the accident?

A: Prevacid OTC (over the counter) for acid reflux.

Q: Was drug/alcohol screening performed following the accident?

A: Yes, drug only - not alcohol. Conducted October 5, 2022.

Q: Any major changes in your health over the last year?

A: No.

Q: Any major changes in your personal life over the last year?

A: Had a new house built in 2021 and everything was going well.

Q: Any major changes in your financial situation over the last year?

A: No.

Q: In the 72 hours immediately preceding the time of the accident, how was your rest, eating, and daily activities?

A: Outside of managing the swing shift and quick turn, everything was normal daily routine, including sleep, meals, and activity.

Q: Did you file an ATSAP¹ as a result of this event?

A: Yes.

Q: Have you been interviewed about this event prior to this interview?

A: Yes - with facility management only.

Q: Have you had an opportunity to review a replay of the event?

A: Yes - audio and video.

Q: Was a relief briefing conducted when you assumed the LC position?

A: No, he was the first to assume the position after an ATC Zero² shutdown.

Q: On a scale of 1-5, 5 being the heaviest, how would you classify the traffic volume at the time of the accident?

A: 1 - which he considered normal for that time of day.

¹ ATSAP - The FAA's voluntary safety reporting program for ATC personnel based on the Aviation Safety Action Program (ASAP) model. A defined partnership model where safety issues are resolved through corrective action rather than through punishment or discipline. The program includes collection, analysis, and retention of safety data reviewed and acted upon by the FAA and NATCA.

² ATC-Zero - Operations Contingency Level (OCL) declared when it is determined that the facility is unable to safely provide published air traffic services, or traffic flow management in the case of the ATCSCC.

Q: On a scale of 1-5, 5 being the most complex, how would you classify the traffic complexity at the time of the accident?

A: 1 - which he considered normal for that time of day.

Q: Were there any distractions at or leading up to the time of the accident?

A: Yes, they were opening up after a previous ATC Zero shutdown which was not normal. He was in a rush to get upstairs and open, and missed getting the pre-duty weather briefing done and logged.

Q: Do you recall the general weather conditions at or leading up to the time of the accident?

A: He said it was typical Duluth weather with an east wind generating fog or what almost seemed like a mist layer moving through which was reducing visibility. The ASOS was calling 300 feet ceiling overcast or broken, he could not recall for certain, and visibility of 10 miles. That was off from what he was observing and noted tower visibility at the time was about 1/2 mile.

Q: Did you receive the pre-duty weather briefing on the day of the accident?

A: No - he had been in a rush to get upstairs and open the facility and missed getting it done. He added that he did not feel that the pre-duty weather briefing provided value from a trending standpoint but wished it had more localized content pertinent to Duluth or tower operations.

Q: Did you have a cellular phone or personal electronic device on you at the time of the accident?

A: No.

Q: Had you requested a relief or assistance leading up to the time of the event?

A: No.

Q: Did you notify your supervisor about the event?

A: No - someone else did.

Q: Could you please take a few minutes to explain with the greatest detail possible, your recollection of the sequence of events related to this accident?

A: He recalled N262TA had called for IFR clearance, and he told him to standby and grabbed the flight strip on him to look at the routing before issuing it. He then issued the clearance, and the pilot read it back. He did not recall anything out of the ordinary in the readback and did not note any errors. He said that he had the frequency on speaker and not on headset, so it may have been a little harder to catch the incorrect frequency readback. After advising the pilot his readback was correct, the pilot called for taxi. He issued the pilot a PIREP that had been received earlier by a departing King Air that had reported bases of 250 feet above ground level (agl), with undetermined tops information, but advised that he would likely be in IMC for a while. He then provided the wind and RVR

and issued takeoff clearance. He had noticed when watching a replay of the event that he missed passing the altimeter but was focused on providing the visibility and ceiling information. After takeoff, he instructed the pilot to contact departure.

He then watched as the aircraft entered the clouds while still flying straight ahead and noted on radar the aircraft make a right turn out as instructed. At that point he turned to his coworker and let him know he had to use the bathroom, and that N262TA was the only traffic. He did not do a formal position relief briefing or record it, as he was only running out for a minute and the only traffic was the airplane he just instructed to contact departure. He estimated he was gone maybe 3-4 minutes at the most. When he returned, he heard his coworker advising a pilot that they appeared to be descending out of 1,900 feet and suggested a climb. At around the same time, there was a momentary loss of power, or "power bump." It was only a matter of seconds, the radar screen blanked twice, the fire alarm panel chirped, and other equipment was resetting. At that point we were trying to figure out if the aircraft tag on radar going to "XXX" was due to the power bump, or if the airplane had gone down. His coworker felt that the aircraft had crashed, and they soon determined that to be fact. He then contacted ARFF while his coworker contacted 9-1-1.

Q: Were you surprised that you missed the incorrect readback on the departure frequency?

A: Yes - though harder to discern because the frequency was being monitored over the speaker, it sounded correct to him.

Q: Is there a policy at this facility for headset/speaker usage?

A: No, it is at the discretion of controller and was not restricted to his recollection.

Q: Did you observe anything that appeared out of the ordinary when the airplane he was getting airborne?

A: Maybe a little in the pilot's voice, like maybe nervousness, but nothing extreme or overly concerning, then said "I missed a big chunk of it."

Q: Where did you note the airplane's turnout?

A: The airplane went into clouds before he observed him turn. He only observed the turn on radar, and it looked like a standard turn.

Q: What is the normal expectation for turnouts when departing runway 9?

A: It was a total mix, and he did not feel this was out of the ordinary and said it did not catch him off guard at all.

Q: Are there any standard departure procedures here for runway 9?

A: No. And there was no reason to restrict them to anything specific.

Q: When did you notice the tower visibility drop to 1/2 mile?
A: When N262TA called for taxi, he looked at the ASOS and noticed it did not match what he was observing.

Q: How did you ascertain that?
A: By looking out the window, using the approximate 1/2-mile distance of the midfield ramp adjacent to taxiway A3 as a reference. Since he could not see the midfield ramp at 1/2 mile and could see the Monaco ramp which was 1/4 mile.

Q: Why had you not augmented the ASOS or ATIS with that information?
A: He was more focused on providing the pertinent information to the pilot for awareness and intended to go back and do that after.

Q: Had you guys cut an ATIS since you opened that shift?
A: Yes - the first one at 0255 UTC he believed.

Q: Why did the PIREP from the King Air not make it into the system?
A: He thought it was too limited and was not sufficient to publish at the time. Since then, he had discussed the subject with the ATM and was aware that he should always enter PIREP information regardless.

Q: Did the aircraft depart from runway at full length?
A: Yes.

Q: Regarding your break to use the rest room - how urgent was that?
A: Urgent.

Q: Was it enough to be distracting at the time?
A: Well, he just thought that once the aircraft was switched to departure it would be good.

Q: Were you up there when the low altitude (LA) alert alarmed?
A: Never heard the LA alarm on the radar but did hear the other controller advising the pilot of the low altitude.

Q: Do you work a lot of overtime here?
A: Yes.

Q: Is it consistent?
A: Yes, almost mandatory 5 and 6-day workweeks.

Q: How long has it been that way?
A: [Representative responded] Started in June.

Q: Do you have a radio (transistor/music) in the tower cab?
A: No.

- Q: Regarding weather training here, what kind of proficiency/recurrent training do you recall receiving?
- A: In the past he recalled there having been ELMs courses. For a while there was a focus on observations and if he recalled correctly, someone else used to have to observe them taking observations and sign-off on it, but that changed and they no longer needed someone to watch them, and it was only done in ELMs.
- Q: Do you recall the last time you have had to augment the ASOS under LAWRS?
- A: He said it was routine, and that he had done it tons of times.
- Q: Is there an audible/visual alert on your ASOS to advise of a change in the weather?
- A: Yes, when a weather change was noted by the ASOS, but not when a change is made in the system. It also alarmed when the hourly change occurred.
- Q: Does your LAWRS procedures require you to record your observations on a form of some kind?
- A: We used to, but now it was just input directly into the computer.
- Q: Do you sign in specifically, can it be ascertained who conducted the observation?
- A: No - there was a "base name" login that everyone used.
- Q: Do you recall last time you did an ELMS for LAWRS?
- A: No.
- Q: Did you consider the weather on the evening of the accident normal/routine for here this time of year?
- A: Yes - Duluth is kind of in a bowl, the weather can often be completely different here than it is just 5 miles away.
- Q: In the mid configuration, was that always two people; one tower and one radar?
- A: Yes - always two. The tower was all positions combined and a separate radar controller for the entire airspace. From 2200-2400 the two positions were standalone, then from 2400-0600 may be all combined down to one person in the tower while taking alternating breaks at the discretion of the controllers working.
- Q: Do you go back to two people before 0600?
- A: No - we just open up at 0545 with two people.

- Q: In retrospect, was there anything notable about this event or things you would do differently?
- A: Since reviewing with facility management, the main things would be properly updating the ATIS, entering PIREPs, and providing better weather dissemination.
- Q: You said you had a pilot's license, correct?
- A: Yes, CFI.
- Q: In watching the replay, the airplane entered the soup at about 200 feet over runway and made an immediate right turn. From your perspective as a pilot in those conditions, do you think that was prudent or odd that he made such a hard right turn?
- A: He had no opinion on it and stated he would reserve judgment.
- Q: Are you current as a pilot?
- A: No, he was not current. The last time he flew was in July 2019.
- Q: What is the on-course heading for SGS generally?
- A: A 210 or 215-degree heading, he could not really say if what he did was out of the ordinary, they turnout from many different areas.
- Q: How do you track that you have received the pre-duty weather briefing?
- A: It was accessed through the FAA repository on a central server. The web page had a video link, then there was a link with the drop-down list of operating initials you choose from to indicate you completed it.
- Q: Do you recall any other weather advisories in effect, i.e., AIRMETs, SIGMETs, CWAs?
- A: No.
- Q: When there are valid weather advisories, how would you get them?
- A: Typically, on a flight strip that would tell what, where, and when. Then we could go to CIC computer and verify based on that to determine if it was applicable based on the airspace, then issue as necessary.
- Q: Looking back, what was the reason for not providing the weather information to the pilot in this case?
- A: It was more of a special circumstance, he said that he felt what he provided was more pertinent than the observation itself, which was clearly way off. It was so different that he felt it was better to give that information to the pilot and then augment the METAR afterward. But with everything occurring, he never went back and documented it.

Interview concluded at 1030 CDT

Interviewee: Duane Klemetsen - Certified Professional Controller
Representative: Sam Christgau - NATCA Representative

Date/Time: October 6, 2022 / 1219 CDT
Location: DLH ATCT
Present: Donald Clark - FAA; Dan Carrico - NATCA
Investigator: Brian Soper - NTSB

During the interview, Mr. Klemetsen was asked a series of questions by the group, and below is a summary (not a transcription) of the questions asked (Q) and answers provided (A):

Q: What was your age on the day of the accident?

A: 40.

Q: What are your operating initials?

A: DK.

Q: What is your title?

A: Certified Professional Controller.

Q: Do you have any military or pre-FAA ATC work experience?

A: No.

Q: Do you hold any collateral duties, or have you been on any recent details?

A: No.

Q: Could you please describe briefly, your ATC/aviation background?

A: He initially began pursuing a degree in commercial aviation at the University of North Dakota and obtained his private pilot's license and made it halfway through his instrument rating before switching his major to ATC. He graduated in May 2005 with a bachelor's degree in ATC. He was then hired by the FAA in 2007 and after graduating the FAA academy worked at Fargo (FAR) ATCT until 2010 when he transferred to DLH ATCT.

Q: In the terms of Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor; how would you describe your overall health?

A: Good to excellent.

Q: Did you have a current medical clearance certificate on the day of the accident?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you have any waivers, restrictions, or limitations to your medical clearance?

A: No.

Q: Were you taking any prescription or non-prescription medications on the day of the accident?

A: Omeprazole for acid reflux and Flonase for seasonal allergies. Both are over the counter medications that are prescribed by his doctor.

Q: Was drug/alcohol screening performed following the accident?

A: Yes, drug only - not alcohol. Conducted October 5, 2022.

Q: Any major changes in your health over the last year?

A: No.

Q: Any major changes in your personal life over the last year?

A: No.

Q: Any major changes in your financial situation over the last year?

A: No.

Q: In the 72 hours immediately preceding the time of the accident, how was your rest, eating, and daily activities?

A: Nothing remarkable with normal daily routine, including sleep, meals, and activity.

Q: Did you file an ATSAP as a result of this event?

A: Yes.

Q: Have you been interviewed about this event prior to this interview?

A: No.

Q: Have you had an opportunity to review a replay of the event?

A: No and did not wish to at the time of the interview.

Q: Was a relief briefing conducted when you assumed the LC position?

A: No, he was the first to assume the position after an ATC Zero shutdown.

Q: On a scale of 1-5, 5 being the heaviest, how would you classify the traffic volume at the time of the accident?

A: 1 - which he considered normal for that time of day.

Q: On a scale of 1-5, 5 being the most complex, how would you classify the traffic complexity at the time of the accident?

A: 1 - which he considered normal for that time of day.

Q: Were there any distractions at or leading up to the time of the accident?

A: No.

Q: Do you recall the general weather conditions at or leading up to the time of the accident?

A: He said it was definitely IFR with deteriorating conditions. There were low ceilings and visibility started out at 10 miles, then dropped closer to 5 miles, then getting as low as 1/2 mile. There had been a previous PIREP reporting bases at 250 feet agl and tops somewhere around 10,000 feet.

Q: Did you receive the pre-duty weather briefing on the day of the accident?

A: Yes, and felt they provided little value in their current state. He felt that if they were going to require it, then they should be tailored to the facility explaining that when they are not localized, it diminishes the value.

Q: Did you have a cellular phone or personal electronic device on you at the time of the accident?

A: No.

Q: Had you requested a relief or assistance leading up to the time of the event?

A: No.

Q: Did you notify your supervisor about the event?

A: Yes - immediately.

Q: Could you please take a few minutes to explain with the greatest detail possible, your recollection of the sequence of events related to this accident?

A: Alex [the tower controller] did a majority of the transmissions, while I only had two or three at the end. The airplane taxied out to runway 9 on an IFR clearance to SGS. Alex provided a lot of weather information, but he said he was not paying close enough attention to know whether Alex had confirmed the pilot was in receipt of the current ATIS, just the basic information painting the picture to the pilot providing the bases, RVR, and advisory that he would be in IMC for a while.

Alex then cleared N262TA for takeoff with a right turn on course and was subsequently instructed to contact departure which the pilot read back. Alex then went to the bathroom, verbally advised him that the only traffic was N262TA. A formal position relief briefing was not conducted. While Alex was out of the tower, he waited, knowing that it sometimes took pilots a little longer to check in, but then felt like it had been a while so tried to contact the pilot on the departure frequency with no response. He then keyed up the local control frequency to see if the pilot had just not switched yet, and the pilot responded and said he was contacting departure. He stated, "this was a bit of a red flag for me." He noticed the aircraft descending on radar so advised the pilot and asked him to confirm he was climbing, but he did not respond. Alex then returned around that time, and he asked him if he still had him on his frequency - they both attempted to contact the pilot with no success, there were no further received transmissions from N262TA.

Just before that, there had been a power bump (interruption) and there was some confusion because of the flicker/buzz/alarms, and they did not know if they were having equipment problems or if something had happened with the airplane - or both. They soon deduced that the airplane had likely crashed and they began making phone calls. He called

9-1-1 while Alex called ARFF. Shortly after, he notified the ATM and continued with other required notifications.

Q: What was it that prompted you to key up the LC frequency to attempt and contact the accident airplane?

A: After there was no response on departure frequency, he just tried the last frequency he was on.

Q: Did you see the airplane make the right turnout visually?

A: No - it was on radar.

Q: In your experience, do you feel the early right turnout conducted in this case was normal?

A: It seemed a little odd that they turned that soon - especially in the weather but was difficult to say.

Q: Do you normally work overtime?

A: Yes - I'm on the "no overtime" list but have still been receiving it.

Q: What was your schedule leading up to the day of the accident starting with Wednesday?

A: Wednesday from 0700-1500, Thursday 0700-1500, Friday 0545-1345 quick turn to Fri 2200-0600, and Sat 2200-0600.

Q: Did you hear the pilot readback his clearance?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you notice anything odd about the readback?

A: No but wasn't listening with great detail.

Q: How long was Alex out of cab for his bathroom break?

A: Tough to say but he estimated 2 - 2.5 minutes.

Q: Did you hear the low altitude (LA) alert?

A: No.

Q: Were you aware the ATIS had not been updated?

A: No - not aware.

Q: Do you recall when you last did refresher on LAWRS?

A: No - but said it was required annually.

Q: Who would normally silence the ASOS alarm when it activates?

A: It could be either one of us but did not recall who did it that evening - it may have just beeped.

Q: Is it routine to have to augment the METAR here?

A: Yes - routine.

Q: And that is all done on the computer directly, correct?

A: Yes.

- Q: When did you notice the disparity between the ASOS reported visibility and visibility observed from the tower?
- A: When Alex was advising the pilot of the tower visibility. He did not believe it was fog, but it could have been mist for the conditions outside.
- Q: Was there anything that stood out as odd through any of this accident sequence?
- A: He felt it was odd for a general aviation pilot to fly IFR at 6,000 feet knowing they would be in the soup the whole time. It seemed to take him a little longer than expected to check on, which was why he reached out to try and contact him instead of waiting.
- Q: Anything you would do differently in retrospect?
- A: No - he felt there were things that could have been done better, but did not feel like there was anything that ATC could have done that would have prevented the accident. There was no formalized procedure for them to follow when they had to use the bathroom in these situations so that made it tough for them.

Interview concluded at 1306 CDT

Interviewee: Chad Hill - Operations Supervisor
Representative: Matthew Smith - FAA Attorney

Date/Time: October 6, 2022 / 1456 CDT
Location: DLH ATCT
Present: Donald Clark - FAA; Dan Carrico - NATCA
Investigator: Brian Soper - NTSB

During the interview, Mr. Hill was asked a series of questions by the group, and below is a summary (not a transcription) of the questions asked (Q) and answers provided (A):

Q: What was your age on the day of the accident?

A: 40.

Q: What are your operating initials?

A: HL.

Q: What is your title?

A: Operations Supervisor.

Q: Do you have any military or pre-FAA ATC work experience?

A: No.

Q: Do you hold any collateral duties, or have you been on any recent details?

A: No.

Q: Could you please describe briefly, your ATC/aviation background?

A: He initially went to college to become a professional pilot and obtained his private pilot's license. Then after the events of September 11, 2001, he switched his major to ATC. After graduating the FAA academy, he worked at Green Bay (GRB) ATCT until accepting a position at Minneapolis Terminal Radar Approach Control (M98 TRACON). He worked at M98 TRACON for more than 10 years before accepting a transfer to DLH ATCT.

Q: Have you had an opportunity to review a replay of the event?

A: Yes - audio and video.

Q: Understanding you were not present or involved in the accident in question, could you please take a few minutes to explain with the greatest detail possible, your observations as a supervisor upon reviewing the replay of the event?

A: Receipt of the ATIS was not confirmed, and there was an error in the clearance readback that was not corrected. The tower controller, did however, provide the pilot with a good synopsis of what the weather was going to be like along their planned route of flight. Regarding the pilot, he seemed kind of short on frequency, and his departure with the quick

turnout was kind of odd for sure. The turnout like that was definitely out of the ordinary.

Q: How does LAWRS get trained here?

A: It is part of Flight Data (FD) training and certification for controllers that were not previously LAWRS certified.

Q: Currency on LAWRS - is there requirement here?

A: Yes - 1 hour of FD per month.

Q: Is there a contingency in the event someone does not have to augment the ASOS during their hour of proficiency?

A: No. But FD is normally combined with other positions.

Q: Is a controller required to be monitored recording an observation and augmentation of ASOS to comply?

A: No - none of that.

Q: DLH ATCT had a 5-hour ATC Zero event prior to taking the shift that night - is there a standard checklist after closure that must be done when reopening?

A: Yes - for both opening and closing and is part of the contingency plan.

Q: We understand there is a handheld radio to communicate with ARFF because the crash phone is not working, correct?

A: Correct. The crash phone has worked maybe a month since he had been there - and the handheld was the primary means of reaching ARFF.

Q: How are you guaranteeing the one per month LAWRS requirement if controllers are only required one hour on FD per month? How do you ensure the minimum currency requirement for LAWRS?

A: FD was normally combined with other positions, and FD currency was really never an issue - staffing here ensured plenty of FD hours in a month, and with the weather like it was here in DLH, the likelihood of not having to augment the ASOS at all during that time would be extremely low.

Q: Are controllers required to sign into the computer individually when augmenting the ASOS here?

A: No - there is a general login used by the entire facility.

Q: Were Performance Records of Conference (PROCs) done regarding this event with the controllers involved?

A: No.

Q: Is there an annual requirement for review of OCPs? (contingency plans)

A: Yes - A review was just conducted this year and some sort of briefing was conducted, and checklists were updated.

Q: Do you know the status of the TDW installation slated for the tower?

A: No - just that about a week ago Tech Ops received the articulating arm to mount it but found that it extended to low for the current tower configuration so were now waiting further information from Tech Ops.

Q: How long has the facility been operating almost entirely in the TRACAB configuration?

A: COVID was probably the time it changed to almost all TRACAB.

Q: From an operational standpoint, do you feel it is better to separate or remain in the TRACAB configuration?

A: We do what we must, but it would be best would be to separate it.

Q: Is the main reason for it remaining combined due to staffing and training?

A: Yes.

Q: In your opinion, what number (staffing) would you need to reach to be able to split the TWR/TRACON most appropriately?

A: We would need to be fully staffed at 20 CPCs and 3 OSs.

Q: How long have you been operating as the only OS?

A: 3.5 months.

Q: We heard you also recently lost your Staff Support Specialist - how much of that work are you catching?

A: He caught what he could, but the ATM did most of it.

Q: Does your facility take advantage of shared services from the district?

A: He did not know.

Q: One of the controllers did not receive the pre-duty weather briefing on the day of the accident - when you are here do you track controllers' compliance with this?

A: Yes - If he noticed others not logging it he would find out why.

Q: How would you classify the value of the pre-duty weather briefing in its current state for DLH ATCT:

A: Some value - provided an idea of what might be happening in the broader Duluth area.

Q: Anything you feel that would make it more value added to DLH ATCT if you were provided the opportunity to make change?

A: He didn't feel anything could really make it better at DLH ATCT.

Q: Is there a headset policy here for when you are required to use a headset or when you can have it on speaker?

A: No - it was at the individual controller's discretion.

Q: What is your ratio of work hours providing oversight vs hours doing administrative duties?

A: 4-6 hours of the workday was spent in the operation.

Q: Did you ever ascertain the reason for the power bump?

A: No - but power bumps were common at DLH ATCT.

Interview concluded at 1539 CDT

Interviewee: Amy Sedin – Air Traffic Manager
Representative: Matthew Smith – FAA Attorney

Date/Time: October 7, 2022 / 0805 CDT
Location: DLH ATCT
Present: Donald Clark – FAA; Dan Carrico – NATCA
Investigator: Brian Soper – NTSB

During the interview, Ms. Sedin was asked a series of questions by the group, and below is a summary (not a transcription) of the questions asked (Q) and answers provided (A):

- Q: How were you first made aware of the accident:
A: Duane [the involved radar controller] called about two minutes after the accident had occurred.
- Q: How did that conversation go?
A: He stated that they had lost radar on N262TA and unable to contact him and felt that there had likely been an accident. She was out of town and had numerous phone calls with Duane, calling back at one point to advise there had been confirmed fatalities. She was already in communication with the General Manager (GM) at that point.
- Q: How do you as the ATM fit into the decision to conduct toxicology testing as a result of an accident here?
A: She was not a part of that process. After the SRT another call was made to determine toxicology testing where the decision was made by a higher authority, then she would be directed to comply.
- Q: What was your perception and initial observation of this event after you were able to watch the replay and discuss?
A: She was impressed that from the very beginning the workforce was very open and honest and up front about what they did and did not do right. During mid shifts they would sometimes slack at what we should be doing because they only had a couple airplanes over an entire shift. She also felt the controller painted the picture well to the pilot with the PIREP information. She did not think that the weather dissemination requirements were technically met, however the weather and PIREP information provided was pertinent and valuable.
- Q: Is the Local Safety Council (LSC) active here? Are they meeting regularly? How often?
A: She was never a part of the LSC. She said they did do the SAFE discussions but was not sure how often they were meeting. Chad [the OS] normally handled the LSC stuff, but she would say they were “not super active.” They

were a small facility, and she thought things were discussed more face to face than in the LSC setting.

Q: What is the status of the TDW articulating arm that did not work? Is there an estimation of when it will be fixed/installed?

A: Just last week she had emailed Fred [Tech Ops] who was working to engineer a new one and had also been exploring other viable alternatives.

Q: What is the hold up?

A: Just the arm now.

Q: Do you need traction in this area?

A: She felt everything was currently covered; they had the arm, the connectivity, and the mounting location - now they just needed to find a way to mount it without it being an obstruction.

Q: Is the facility doing a System Service Review (SSR) on this event?

A: Yes. One was scheduled for the following week.

Q: What is the general expectation for standalone CIC/OS oversight on a daily basis?

A: If there was no supervisor, they had no ability to have a standalone CIC - it was very rare that they could staff a standalone CIC.

Q: For OS - how many hours are spent in the operation compared to performing administrative duties?

A: She said Chad was more operational than administrative, and said she would estimate he was in the operation at least 4-5 hours per day, maybe even closer to 6 hours on some days - he was very operational.

Q: What is the status of the PRB Corrective Action Plan (CAP) from your most recent External Compliance Verification (ECV)?

A: They had just finished a briefing yesterday and had started OSA's about two weeks ago - and those were still in progress. They were conducting five per month and had completed five in September.

Q: With the loss of the Staff Support Specialist, how does the district share in the responsibilities of the administrative work here?

A: With this accident, Quality Control (QC) had been very helpful, but this was the first time they had offered administrative support. However, she had not reached out asking for it either, so that could be it as well.

Q: Since this accident, have you implemented or planned any mitigation efforts?

A: They were planning to initiate a CAP on weather dissemination and the importance of PIREPs being entered into AISR and the disseminated to into the national airspace system (NAS).

- Q: Do you attend any regular meetings with the local operators here (Helo outfit, military, Cirrus, etc?)
- A: They used to meet with Lake Superior Helicopters every Monday but that stopped when they moved across the airport and COVID kind of cut-off everything at the same time. Jason [identified incoming OS] wanted to be the lead on that which was great. She met with the airport authority bi-monthly. This was where all airport tenants met to discuss current operations, construction, etc. They are sort of a small world / family at DLH and they did get invited to one of the tenant operations every once in a while, and student pilots had been on tours of the tower with their instructors as well.
- Q: Do you have a set expectation of when you plan to come out of the constant TRACAB operation?
- A: In the SOP, if they had four on a shift, the TRACON shall be open (training dependent). So, they had not set a future number, but adherence to the SOP would result in separating the tower and TRACON more often contingent on the addition of more CPCs.
- Q: When you get new controllers - are they more academy grads that must be "home grown" or are they transferring CPCs?
- A: Most of the time they received academy grads, and it was a problem. For example, last time they received about 10 all on the same day. This makes training in general and meeting the training initiative impossible. They put a hold on academy graduates, so they did not have a training back log. At one point they had about seven training on local which was not realistic. They plan to lift the hold when it expired in November but worry, they will do the same thing with dumping another group all at once.
- Q: Do you upward report to the GM that you are in a TRACAB configuration on a daily basis?
- A: Yes - It is on the daily log - and meets the requirement.
- Q: Have you looked at controllers using handsets in the operation and if it could be a distraction?
- A: There was no expectation of dictating when they used the handset/headset, there was no current policy, and no future plan to consider it.
- Q: Has anybody complained about it?
- A: More to each other than to her.
- Q: What district are you part of here in the realignments?
- A: Minneapolis district / Central Service Area.

Interview concluded at 0857 CDT