

Factual Report – Attachment 2

Statements provided to the NTSB following the accident by individuals familiar with the ELY ASOS reporting.

METEOROLOGY

WPR19FA084

*Submitted by: Mike Richards
NTSB, AS-30*

[REDACTED]

Thomas M. Little
Senior Aviation Accident Investigator
NTSB
Federal Way, Washington

Original scanned and emailed to [REDACTED]

RE: WPR19FA084

Dear Mr. Little:

At your request, I am documenting the points of possible interest I observed on 2/15/2019 and surrounding times regarding the accident above.

At about 1719 local PST I was at my home located at [REDACTED] and about 2.6 miles from, the departure end of Rwy 30 at Ely Airport. As background for these observations, I am a private/instrument pilot since 1977, with a plane based at Ely since 2010, and have worked at the airport in the past. I have a handheld radio tuned to 122.8 in my kitchen that was on at the time. I am familiar with the airport and the local weather, and can make informed (not official) estimates of ceiling and visibility.

At that time, I heard one, and then about 10 seconds later, a second series of 5 or 6 clicks on 122.8, the Ely Airport Unicom frequency, indicating to me that someone was attempting to turn on the PCL lighting at the airport. At the time, the snow at my house was heavy. I would estimate about ¼ mile visibility in snow.* At about 1720, I heard a radio transmission which I quote very closely as "Are the runway lights on? I can see the runway." About a minute or so later, I heard something (my memory is a bit vague on the word used here) "I'd like (or "I am trying") to land but I cannot see the airport." I looked at the clock time at that instant, and saw 1721 or 1722, from which the other times above are referenced.

Neither transmission contained an N-number or other identifying information, such as the aircraft type. I did not hear any further transmissions. Likewise, I did not hear any airplane engine sounds near my house, even when I went outside to see if I could see the Rwy 12 VASI, (to confirm if the runway lighting system had been activated by the clicks) which is quite bright from my deck when the visibility is good. There was substantially reduced visibility and I would not have seen those lights from that position if they were on. Of course, I did not see any lights. As far as I know, the runway lighting and PCL activation has worked fine in recent months, with no failures to activate.

The above details are intended to help you verify meteorological conditions at the time this airplane was near the airport and to identify the times involved. AS I informed you, I called the FBO after the second transmission and received no answer. Sometime later, 5 or 7 minutes I would estimate, Tim Parish the FBO Manager called me back (presumably having seen my number on caller ID since I had not left a message), and confirmed that he had heard those same 2 transmissions. I understood Tim to say that he had answered the first one call from the pilot to advise that the runway lights were on, but had not heard anything further from the pilot. Our telephone call was short, only to say that we hadn't heard anything more on the radio, and didn't know if he had landed, turned away (perhaps going back to a Center frequency, thus explaining no further radio calls), or something else.

I also informed you that in the weeks prior to the 2/15/2019, the KELY ASOS was erratically reporting the visibility component. Sometimes it was missing, sometimes apparently accurate, and other times reporting 9 miles visibility

when it was substantially less in my observation. I noted that the online text weather occasionally contained the "\$ maintenance needed" indication at the end of the report. Later, at the airport advisory board meeting on March 5, 2019, other pilots commented with similar observations about the ASOS reports in the previous weeks (or months?), and the airport manager Lance Gale reported that NWS (I believe the Elko, NV office) was aware of the problem, had diagnosed it, and was awaiting parts to repair it on Friday of that week, March 8. Subsequently, when I was at the airport on March 10, one Medflight pilot mentioned that NWS was seen at the airport on the 8th, but that they understood that the ASOS remained unrepaired.

I hope this information is helpful and thank you for your work on this unfortunate event.

Mike Coster

3/13/2019

3-21-2019

Witness Statement

My name is Tim Parish. I am the manager of Ely Jet Center at the Ely Airport in Ely, NV. (KELY)

On Friday, February 15, 2019 I was preparing to close up and leave for the day. The time was between 4:45 and 5:00 PM. The weather had just gotten worse due to a fast moving storm. We had gone from 4-5 miles visibility to under ½ mile visibility in just a few minutes. I base that measurement on the fact that the windsock was not visible at all, and it is about ½ mile away from the FBO. The time is clear in my mind because I was preparing to leave at 5 PM. Just before 5PM I heard someone keying a mike to turn the lights on. I was surprised that anyone was out there in the weather we were experiencing at the time.

I went to the Unicom radio and said, "Ely area traffic do you read Ely Jet Center?" The pilot answered that he was trying to turn the lights on. I told him that the lights were on, but our visibility was poor, and the storm was that bad. He responded that if he could just see the runway that he could land. I responded that I understood, but that the visibility was that bad. There were no more transmissions from the pilot. I waited a little while before leaving and assumed he had gone on to another airport. At no point, did he identify himself or give his tail number. I did not find out about the crash until seeing it on the news on Monday evening. I contacted the Airport Manager and told him. He also had not heard that there was a crash. Neither of us had been notified of a missing aircraft.

The meteorological conditions reported in the Preliminary NTSB report, are not accurate. At 5 PM, the ceiling was solid at maybe 200'. The visibility was under ½ mile. Our ASOS here on the field had not been accurate regarding visibility for at least 2 weeks prior to the 15th. The problem had been reported by the Airport Manager, as well as pilots. I had more than one pilot upset because the reporting was not correct. On jet pilot came in the week before and the ASOS reported 9 miles visibility. When he got on the ground, he was very upset and said that it was 1 ¼ mile at best. He called Flight Service and Salt Lake Center while he was in our office to complain about our ASOS. The week after the accident, the ASOS was changed to simply list the visibility as "missing". It was that way for a couple of weeks. I understand parts had to be ordered to make the repairs. The repairs are complete now, and everything is working properly.

Tim Parish

[REDACTED]

Ely Jet Center Manager

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]