

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
Office of Aviation Safety
Washington, DC 20594

January 8, 2010

ATC GROUP CHAIRMAN FACTUAL REPORT ADDENDUM

DCA09MA021

A. AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

Location: Denver, Colorado

Date/Time: December 20, 2008, 1818 Mountain Standard Time (MST)

Date/Time: December 21, 2008, 0118 Coordinated Universal Time (UTC)¹

Aircraft: Continental Airlines (COA) Flight 1404, a Boeing 737-500

B. AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL GROUP

None required for this report

C. SUMMARY

On December 20, 2008 at 1818 mountain standard time (MST), Continental flight 1404, a Boeing 737-500 (registration N18611), equipped with CFM56-3B1 engines, departed the left side of runway 34R during takeoff from Denver International Airport (DEN), Denver, Colorado. The scheduled, domestic passenger flight, operated under CFR Part 121, was enroute to George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH), Houston, Texas. One of the five crewmembers was seriously injured. There were 37 injuries among the passengers and crew and no fatalities. The airplane was substantially damaged and experienced a post crash fire. The weather observation in effect closest to the time of the accident was reported to be winds at 290 and 24 knots with gusts to 32 knots, visibility of 10 miles, a few clouds at 4000 feet and scattered clouds at 10,000 feet. The temperature was -4 degrees Celsius.

D. DETAILS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The air traffic control group chair re-convened at the DEN ATCT on December 16, 2009 and met with Mr. Brian Reiter, the acting Air Traffic Manager (ATM) and Mr. Ric Wunn, the Denver FAA ATC District Manager. Also in attendance were Mr. Todd Luepker, FAA AOV; Mr. Jeff Rich, FAA AJS, Ms. Gloria Ibarra, FAA OCG WSA; and by telephone; Mr. Mark Tomocich, FAA General Counsel.

¹All times are expressed in mountain standard time (MST) unless otherwise noted.

1. Additional Information to the Investigation

New information made available since the beginning of the investigation reveal that a letter of agreement (LOA) existed between Denver Air Traffic Control Tower and the County of Denver for emergency procedures for Denver International Airport dated February 15, 2002. The LOA established procedures for dispatch and operation of vehicles on the movement area of Denver International Airport and procedures for ATCT notification of an airport emergency.

The LOA states that Denver ATCT shall alert Airport Operations Management (OPS 7) of aircraft emergencies or incidents by actuating the emergency crash net or, if inoperative, via FM radio through the Airport Operations Manager (Ops 7).

The initial notification of the COA1404 accident was by the local controller on the combined Local Control 3 and 4 position on the local control frequency. According to the LOA, this notification should have been made over the FM net in the tower to OPS 7.

The CIC activated the crash phone and that notified DEN ARFF that an aircraft accident had occurred at runway 34R and taxiway WB although runway 34R and taxiway WB do not intersect. When the CIC attempted to correct the previous information and provide the actual location of the accident via the crash phone, he did not receive a response and communicated the actual crash location to the B tower for relay to the ARFF vehicles. According to the Den International Airport Department of Aviation, the operation of the crash phone requires that, once activated, the crash phone must returned to it cradle or hung up, prior to reactivation. The CIC was not familiar with the operation of the crash phone or, that according to the LOA; the alternative notification method for an aircraft emergency was via the FM radio.

2. Corrective Action

As a result of the COA1404 runway excursion, and non-standard emergency reporting procedures by air traffic control, DEN ATCT conducted additional training regarding emergency notification standardization and interaction between DEN ATCT and the Denver Airport emergency response department. The training, completed on May 4, 2009, standardized the order in which emergency information is to be forwarded to the ARFF and that the location of the emergency is repeated twice.

On December 18 2009, DEN ATCT developed two briefing items for training with the first being Emergency Procedure for DIA LOA, which consisted of refresher training on the Denver Airport Traffic Control Tower and County of Denver Letter of Agreement on Emergency Procedures for Denver International Airport dated February 15, 2002 and the second briefing item a PowerPoint presentation addressing the Denver ATCT and Denver Fire Department Alert Notification.

As of January 5, 2010, 50 of 59 air traffic controllers assigned to Denver ATCT had completed training on both briefing items developed on December 18, 2009.

Dan Bartlett
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