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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ATTACHMENT 9

NTSB Interview Summary

5 Pages

Interview:	Mr. Frank Loprano, Airport Certification Safety Inspector, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Eastern Region
Date/Time:	18 February 2016, 1408-1528
Location:	Telephone Conference Call
Representative:	Mr. Brooke Lewis, Senior Attorney, FAA
Present:	Eric Pricco (Delta Air Lines), Kelly Slusarski (FAA), Chris Rhoads (Port Authority of New and New Jersey)

Airport Certification Safety Inspector (ACSI) Loprano stated that he had worked in his current position since September 27, 2010. Prior to that he worked for 32 years for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PA) as an entry level supervisor, terminal supervisor, ramp control supervisor, assistant airport duty manager, and terminal service general supervisor for the international arrivals building at John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK). He worked at LaGuardia (LGA) for 3 months in 1980 before going back to JFK to take charge of the international arrivals building. He then moved to Newark International Airport (EWR) as airport duty manager. The last 14 years of his career at the PA he was chief of operations at EWR. Prior to his time at the PA he worked at the Essex County Airport as an assistant manager (1976-1978).

After his arrival at FAA, his supervisor informed him that he would not be allowed to inspect PA facilities for 3 years. Since September 2013 he had inspected Stewart International Airport (SWF) once, Teterboro (TEB) airport once, and LGA for the last three inspection years. He conducted LGA's 2016 annual inspection on November 17-19, 2015 and the 2015 annual inspection on February 10-12, 2015. He believed that he had conducted the 2014 annual inspection in February 2014 but did not recall the exact dates. When asked how the FAA determines each inspector's annual caseload he explained that the lead inspector assigned the airports at the beginning of the fiscal year (October). For 2016 he was assigned 20 airports which was a little higher than normal because they were down two inspectors. Three years was generally the maximum amount of time an inspector would be consecutively assigned to one particular airport, but the decisions on assignments were made by the lead inspector.

After being assigned an airport, it was up to the inspector to ensure that he performed the annual inspection for that airport within 3 months on either side of the previous inspection date. After picking a date within the 6-month window, the inspector would contact the airport to see if that date was acceptable. Mr. Loprano stated that he usually scheduled an airport for an entire week and then took whatever time he needed to complete the inspection. Larger, more complex airports required more time. He attempted to construct his schedule with a week between inspections.

Mr. Loprano stated that LGA's inspections began prior to his arrival at the airport. While in his office he would review the airport's documents including the airport certification manual, airport emergency plan, wildlife hazard plan, and correspondence with the airport.[1] He also checked the wildlife database, the airport's NOTAMs, and the runway safety area data sheets. During his

[1] Throughout the year, any page changes to these documents would be sent to him for his approval and stamp and then returned to the airport. He would update his copy of the document at that time so that it should always be current. He recalled receiving page changes from LGA a "couple times a year."

first day of the on-airport inspection he attempted to perform a "100% record check." That check included a page-by-page comparison of the airport's ACM, AEP, and other documents to ensure the FAA copy matched the airport's copy. He also checked training records for the personnel, NOTAMs, and any training for individuals who had access to the airport's movement areas. He examined the self-inspection sheets for the previous year to make sure the inspections were conducted and find out how any issues were addressed through work orders. He used an inspection checklist from FAA Order 5280.5C to ensure he did not miss anything.

During the second and/or third day of an LGA inspection, he would usually arrive at 0200 or 0300 in the morning to perform the night inspection. He checked the retroreflectivity of the runway and taxiway markings and all of the obstruction lights. He would step the runway lights through all of their setting and checked the fixtures and in-pavement lights to ensure they were installed properly. He made sure all of the lights were color-coded correctly.

Later in the morning he would perform an ARFF response drill that he would time from the tower and then do a daytime inspection of the signs, markings, and pavement condition. The fixed base operators (FBOs) and fuel farm would be inspected as well as their paperwork. He would visit the ARFF station, inspect all of the equipment and vehicles, and ensure that the ARFF vehicles were mixing the proper consistency of foam. He would also inspect the snow removal equipment. Finally, he would perform a perimeter inspection of the airport. He stated that LGA's on-airport inspection usually took 2.5-3 days.

When asked if FAA inspectors directly observed winter operations at airports during snow events he stated that sometimes they did[2], but he had not done so in his time at the FAA. He believed it was up to the individual inspectors to decide if they wanted to observe snow operations in person. He stated that the 2015 inspection at LGA was unique because he cancelled inspections on February 2nd, February 9th, and February 16th – all due to snow events either the day prior to or the day of the scheduled inspections. He stated that there was "a lot to look at" regarding snow operations when he arrived.

Mr. Loprano was asked about the information included in FAA Advisory Circular (AC) 150/5200-30C *Airport Winter Safety and Operations* that stated that airports were "required to comply" to all portions of the AC after April 30, 2009. He replied that "an advisory circular is just that, advisory." He added that, from his previous experience, airports put together their snow and ice control plans with the minimum possible so that they would not be held to a higher standard by the FAA than what was required. He believed sections of the document that included phrases such as "the airport should" and "the FAA strongly recommends" were not intended to be regulatory and it was up to the airports to decide whether or not to comply with the guidance.

Mr. Loprano explained that a Snow and Ice Control Plan (SICP) was a basic guide to how an airport intended to move snow and mobilize equipment during winter operations. He considered the document part of (or an extension of) LGA's ACM because it was referenced in the ACM. He stated that only parts of the "ACM proper" were required to have an inspector's stamp and, in this case, the SICP was not. When asked if LGA's SICP was an FAA-accepted document or an

[2] He based this statement on knowledge he obtained while working at EWR.

FAA-approved document he replied, "that's a good question… I would just refer to it as an extension of the ACM." He further stated that he would not review the SICP plan prior to the inspection, but only while at the airport during the inspection; therefore, he would not be aware of any changes until the day of the inspection. He believed that the SICP was usually updated annually and the changes were generally minimal.

During his inspection he based his assessment on the adequacy of the SICP by comparing it to the requirements in 14 CFR Part 139.313, which he referred as a "high altitude look" at what a SICP should be. He added that an airport can decide how detailed they want to be and the inspector would decide whether it was sufficient or not. For example, the plan must address when snow operations should begin. He recalled that LGA's plan called for snow removal operations to begin when snow began to gather on the pavement. He stated that some of items listed in the AC that the FAA recommended be in a SICP could reside in other locations in the ACM – such as the driver's training plan.

Mr. Loprano stated that it was up to individual airports to decide how to conduct runway assessments. Some airports did visual assessments between arrivals while others closed the runway for such assessments. When the assessments were completed the information would be transmitted to the operations office who would put out a NOTAM and call the ATCT and provide them with the information to pass on to pilots. Some airports had sensor systems that provided information about the runway condition. That information would not qualify for a runway condition report, but it provided information about the runway condition when no one was present conducting a visual assessment.

When asked for the additional ways in which an airport can conduct runway assessments, Mr. Loprano stated that pilot braking actions were also a source of data. When asked about the use of Continuous Friction Measuring Equipment (CFME) and decelerometers, he agreed that would be another way to establish a trend whether the runway was getting more slippery or whether conditions were improving. He confirmed that CFME use was not required by the FAA but, based on his experience running snow crews at EWR[3], believed that it was a "more scientific way" of determining the conditions on the runway than slamming on the brakes of his operations vehicle. It allowed him to make more informed decisions about the need to treat the runway with chemicals or sand or whether he could save money and not apply it because he knew runway conditions were improving.

He stated that the FAA's current guidance to airports about the use of CFME was that there was no correlation between the friction coefficient values and how an airplane would decelerate when it touched down. However, in his personal opinion, he stated that he believed CFMEs were useful tools for trend development about runway conditions. When asked if he was aware that LGA was not using its CFME during winter operations he stated that he was not aware of that fact during his last three inspections of LGA.[4] He was aware of an FAA memo that came out

[3] At the time, EWR had both a SAAB friction vehicle and a "larger truck" CFME.

[4] He stated that he learned this fact during the February 19, 2016 interview. He noted that LGA's ACM had a letter of agreement with the ATCT that said that airport operations "may" conduct friction assessments when necessary. That statement left him with the impression that LGA was using CFME during winter operations and he did not inquire further.

while he was employed by the PA at EWR about mu values not relating to aircraft performance. At the time EWR was using CFME to conduct friction assessments during winter operations and Mr. Loprano directed his employees to continue using the CFME after the memo was received. When asked if he had a rough idea of how many of the airports he had inspected that were using CFME he stated that he did not know although he said it was "normally" in the airport's ACM or SICP if the airport was using CFME. Although he had inspected both SWF and TEB he did not know whether or not they used CFME during winter operations. He stated that it was permissible for airport operations to use the information obtained from a CFME for trend analysis but did not know whether it was permissible to provide the information to the ATCT. He was also unsure whether it was permissible to provide the information to airlines that might request it and suggested that the Port Authority's policy be examined.

Mr. Loprano felt that a "physical inspection" (including depth measurement) was the best way for an airport to assess the condition of the runways and report the type and depth information via NOTAM. He admitted that it was difficult for an inspector to assess a particular airport's effectiveness without being present during winter operations. He stated that he considered airplane braking action reports extremely valuable and believed they should be given quite a bit of weight. A NIL report or two consecutive POOR reports required the airport to close the runway until the conditions could be improved.

Mr. Loprano stated that CFME use was not discussed at LGA's (postaccident) annual inspection in November 2015 nor was the DAL 1086 accident mentioned. He stayed "hands off" from the investigation because he was the inspector of record. He believed that his lead inspector and another inspector from his office had a post-accident discussion with the Port Authority, but he did not. He did not seek out any information from them because he was taking a "hands off approach," nor was any provided. When asked if it was standard procedure for an inspector to discuss an accident that an airport may have experienced during the next annual inspection he stated that "I guess it could be, or should be." He was not aware of any changes made to LGA winter operations since the time of the accident.

Mr. Loprano stated that way primary way to report runway conditions was through a NOTAM but that LGA had a backup system to disseminate information directly to air carriers as well. He agreed that the FAA emphasized the timely dissemination of this information in its guidance material. When asked how often an airport should update field condition reports via NOTAMs in winter operations, he answered "as conditions change." He added that sometimes runway conditions will not change "over a period of hours" even though an airport was plowing and adding chemicals. He acknowledged that, depending on the rate of fall, one end of a runway may be back to its previous condition by the time the runway pass was completed. He believed that LGA's practice of leaving NOTAMs current for several hours "could be an accepted practice."

He described a scenario in which a runway with ¼ inch snow was cleared to "thin patchy" and by the time the vehicles were ready to plow again, the depth had increased back to ¼ inch of snow. He considered this "maintaining the condition" and, therefore, the airport operator would not have to change the NOTAM "every five minutes." He was asked if, under such a scenario, an airport could keep a NOTAM open for 5-6 hours if they were maintaining the conditions. He

answered "it's possible," be he felt it would be "prudent" to update the NOTAM (by changing the time/date stamp) even if they were maintaining the condition "just so the carriers know you're looking at it." When asked how frequently he believed NOTAMs should be updated during winter operations he stated that he would need to "give it some thought" but LGA's postaccident change to one hour seemed acceptable to him.[5]

When asked about LGA's practice of performing snow removal operations by using gaps in arrivals (rather than closing the runway) he stated that intersecting runways were challenging and that practice was probably the most efficient way of going about it because closing a runway via NOTAM has a "ripple effect" through the system. He could not recall any FAA guidance on the topic and stated he would need to review the advisory materials.

When asked how an airport would close a runway in an emergency, he stated that someone only needed to pick up a radio and inform the tower. Then a further discussion would usually ensue between the airport operations office and the ATCT about the reason for the closure. He stated that the ATCT might be surprised if they did not know there was an accident, but that the runways belonged to airport ops and when they called for a closure, the runway should be closed.

Mr. Loprano stated that a Snow and Ice Control Committee (SICC) was composed of airport tenants, airlines, the ATCT, and the PA. A preseason meeting was convened to review the SICP, get their input, and discuss any problem areas. The committee also would have meetings after storms and after the winter season as a wrap-up. He was not aware of any guidance or requirements that an airport provide a complete copy of the SICP to airlines.[6]

[5] Mr. Loprano was informed of this change, which occurred after his 2016 inspection, during the interview.
[6] Mr. Rhoads commented that LGA conducted a preseason meeting with the airport tenants in October and distributed a copy of the SICP for review and comment. The plan distributed was an abbreviated version that omitted PA staffing levels during the various levels of PA response.