

**Attachment 7**

**to Organizational Factors Group Chairman's Factual Report**

**CHI04MA182**

**National Transportation Safety Board  
Office of Aviation Safety**

**CHI04MA182**

**Organizational Factors**

November 23, 2004

**Interview Summary: Principal Operations Inspector**

Location: FAA FSDO  
17777 N. Perimeter Dr. Ste 101  
Scottsdale, AZ 85255

Interviewers: Georgia Struhsaker NTSB NWRA, Seattle, WA  
Aaron Sauer NTSB CMRA, Denver, CO  
Robert Drake FAA AAI-100, Washington, DC

Interviewee: Mr. Charles Prince FAA, Principal Operations Inspector

During the interview, Mr. Prince stated the following:

He received his private pilot license in 1968 and started with the Indiana State Police in aviation in 1969. He got all ratings including his helicopter rating with them. He retired in 1988 and got on with the FAA in Indianapolis, July 31, 1988. He came to Scottsdale in May 1990. He also has National Guard experience- flew Hueys, about 150 hours, some instrument time in Huey in clouds, did not like it at all.

His total flight time is about 5,000 hours, 2,500 helicopter, 2,500 airplane, most of this with State Police, some scene flying and transportation of neonatal babies, flying blood from hospital to hospital, 5% of helicopter time in EMS type flights.

He holds ATP airplane and helicopter, CFI airplane and helicopter, CFI instrument airplane and helicopter. He had all these but the CFI instrument helicopter before joining the FAA.

He became a POI after indoctrination training. He was given 2 or 3 air carriers; one was a helicopter operator, but not EMS. He transferred to Scottsdale at his request; he wanted to get out of the cold. He became familiar with the area, after that given certain operators as POI. He did certification of Med Trans in 1995. They started with St. Mary's Hospital base in Tucson. He has been POI for Med Trans since 1995. He is also POI for Southwest Helicopters, Gila Helicopters – single pilot operator, Arizona HeliServices, Arizona Helicopter Adventures, Classic Helicopters, Scottsdale Helicopters

and Quantum Helicopters. He has one airplane operator, Southwest Jet. He spends about 90% of his time on helicopters. This has been true since he arrived in Scottsdale. He was the only helicopter guy in Scottsdale for a while. Now there are 5 helicopter people on ops side.

Classic Helicopters has an EMS operation in Page with a 407. Classic has NVGs. They just got certification last month. They started 2 years ago. FAA out of Ft Worth came out to approve aircraft. He worked with them partially on this. A company out of Boise, ID, did the training.

Ray Murphy (Oakland FSDO) NRS for goggles looks at manual, and then he approves it. He sat in on the training. Ray is check airman for FAA in NVGs. Ray did check rides for the pilots of Classic Helicopters. This is first operator he has gone through certification process with. It took 2 years mostly because of Ft Worth FAA people. He stated "Why don't we make it a little easier for these people to get NVGs?"

He flew with NVGs with the Indiana State Police. When NVGs came out, they had problems and killed people in the military. "I don't think we (FAA) have kept up with technology." FAA is being too conservative with the process. The new goggles are great.

Classic is not strictly EMS. They do other ops as well.

Southwest Helicopter is also an EMS operator. They have 8 or 9 helicopters. They have 3 operations in Texas. They fly Astars and Twin Stars. Southwest used to have the St. Mary's contract, then Med Trans underbid them. They also do forestry work, other utility uses.

He spends about 40 to 50% of his time on EMS operations. As EMS ops have grown, it takes more time. He started with Southwest, then got Med Trans, then Classic. The percentage went up as he acquired operators and then they grew.

Arizona has a lot of EMS operators. A lot of money is involved in EMS, which has resulted in growth.

He has talked a little with Bert about NVGs. He is not sure if they want to do this for 16 aircraft. That is a lot of money. He is not sure how to handle it if they wanted to do it at one location. He is not sure if there is an op spec that would allow this.

Southwest Helicopters has not yet expressed an interest in NVGs.

The EMS industry is really bad on accidents.

*What has been his general experience with Med Trans?* They were a good operator. They are still a good operator. It is unfortunate they had these two accidents. Their training is good. There was a little animosity with Bert being the only check

airman for while, but Bert showed him that he could handle it. Bert was traveling a lot; Bert liked it that way because he could see whom he was hiring and what they were like. Following the accident, he pulled Bert's check airman authorization. Last week he certified two other check airmen. Bert did a good job, but he thinks he was getting overwhelmed, and he was gone a lot.

He was impressed with Don Savage. He sat in on training sessions Don gave 2 or 3 years ago. He sat in on training sessions with other people. They always had good people training. He observed Don giving training last week.

Bert was not always the DO; he started out as chief pilot. Tommy Moorehead was the DO when they got certified. He lasted a couple of years, then Bert moved to DO.

Bert was working on an instrument rating. Bert can go out and give unusual attitudes, put a hood on a pilot, do partial panels, etc. without an instrument rating. He does not think the accidents had anything to do with lack of training.

*What was his main reason for pulling check airman authorization?* It was the accident, and he wanted Bert to be closer to home so he could have more contact with him.

He flew with the two new check airmen, Don Rogers and Mike Lamee, last week. They are now authorized check airmen; both were very good. He stipulated they are not to give check rides at their base of operation.

He always got along with Bert. When Bert is asked to do something, he always does it. He has a good working relationship with Bert.

The issue of other bases is a logistics problem. His information comes from Bert and FAA field offices when geographic inspectors go in and do inspections. Prior to the accidents, not very often would a geographic inspection be done. Mainly when Med Trans needed a check ride, he would call the local office and see about getting someone over to do the check ride.

He would like to see the geographic inspectors doing ramp checks and a base inspection 2 or 3 times a year. During the base inspection he would like them to take a whole day and check training records, dispatch records, and trip records. Once geographic inspectors start covering, they might go on their own without it having to be an R item.

It is responsibility of geographic inspectors to find out which operators are in their area and plan surveillance.

*How do geographic inspectors know Med Trans has opened a base?* He has told Bert to notify the local FSDO when they open a base in their area. He could notify FSDO via e-mail. He was not doing that before accident. He was relying on Bert to do

this. He probably followed up with Bert on whether he had notified the FSDO. He did not follow up by calling the local FSDO himself.

He sat in on the new CRM training program last week. He was very impressed. He had discussed with Bert having a CRM program. Bert said we need that. Before this, Med Trans did not have a formal CRM training program.

The Western Pacific Divisional manager, Larry Kephart, in writing, requested that the POI not be involved with the in-depth investigation. This is how Will Willbanks became involved. It is standard protocol to not involve the POI when training program in question. When he was shown the findings, he got involved in taking action on the operator.

*Were you surprised by the findings?* Some of the findings he was surprised by, some not. He was surprised by:

- 4507, this may be fault of confusion with operator thinking insurance guy going to send it,
- hazardous materials manual,
- inadvertent IMC procedures – he knew each place had them, it was not in old manual
- briefing card.

Med Trans was writing new manuals before the accident. He had told them they needed to update the manuals. It had been 8 years since they started operations, and things change.

Helicopter pilots are different from airplane pilots – they all think they are the greatest pilots in the world. This attitude combined with trying to save a life, makes a helicopter pilot more likely to take a flight than an airplane pilot.

Regarding flight follower training, it was a separate training manual, and now it is incorporated into the training manual. As far as the list of trained flight followers, Don Savage contacted Bert by phone and had the information sent to the inspector who requested it. Bert has a copy of flight follower records, they are maintained in Tucson. No other geographic inspector responded with a problem about flight follower records, and no further checking at other bases was done.

He doesn't know if everyone responded to the e-mail calling for geographic inspections.

*What does he think about risk assessment for EMS flights?* You get up at 2 am in the morning, especially with weather, and it makes for a bad scenario. That might be an area nationwide that could be covered. Pilots could self assess or medical crew could assess the pilot. He has always preached to Bert that if anybody on the crew says no, then it is no go, even if the pilot wants to go.

*What are his plans for Med Trans this FY?* He has R items and P items, and he plans on doing more training observation. Bert is to notify him of any training anywhere – if he can't go to it, he will ask a geographic inspector to do it. He wants to do follow-up on the new check airmen. He wants to make sure on check rides they do the things he wrote about in his letter of July 21. He is going to try to get out to the satellites. He has tried to do this for the last 3 years. The last time he was scheduled to cover TN, KY and SC, and the accident happened and it got cancelled. The year before that his trip was cancelled due to lack of money, and the year before that he had an assistant, Larry Buchanan, who went to TX and did some check rides.

He has been notified of the following training as per his letter: the training last week in Tucson and the upcoming training in Aberdeen (CRM, Dec. 2).

He does not have an asst. POI at this time. He would like to have one. *Is anything in the works to get him one?* Two new guys are coming, one helicopter, one airplane, but neither one is coming to him.

*What is his experience with the Bell 407?* He has time in the 407 just from giving check rides. He has a lot of time in the Bell 206, a couple of thousand hours. The 206 and 407 fly about the same. The differences are FADEC and more blades.

*How is his workload?* He is kept pretty busy. One of the reasons is the point system. The point system allows for an assistant, which he does not have. Another thing on the point system – an operator starts with a 135 certificate and one aircraft – he gets points for the certificate and for the aircraft. Once the number of single engine aircraft gets to 20, the point total stops increasing. With Med Trans and Southwest Helicopter he has over 20, and he does not get credit for the other single engine aircraft he has. Complexity guide has these standards. Computer work takes up a lot of his time; 50% of his time is spent at computer.

He takes a formal airplane course every year, out of agency, Flight Safety. He takes a formal helicopter course every other year – Grand Prairie TX Eurocopter – AS355 and AS350. He has also taken CRM, accident investigation courses, professionalism courses, and other courses since he has been with the FAA. He went to Bell three times before coming to FAA and has been once since he started with FAA. His next planned helicopter course will be in the Bell 407.

*Has he flown with Bert?* He has done unusual attitudes with him. He has the person close their eyes and he makes turns, climbs, and descents, and then asks the person what they feel aircraft is doing. They usually answer the opposite of what the aircraft is doing; he then has them open their eyes.

He has not done ride-alongs with any EMS operators. He has gone with tour operators to see what they are doing. He would not really want to ride along with operators on some of the missions they do, too low and slow, counting sheep, fighting fires, etc.

*What are his ideas for enhancing safety in HEMS operations?* 1) If NVGs cannot be gotten a little easier, he is almost for banning night EMS, especially if there are going to be off airport landings. 2) Airplane drivers under 121 and 135 do a before takeoff briefing. He asked Bert and Don to come up with an additional checklist, not to replace the regular checklist, but similar to an airplane takeoff briefing. For example – pick up 20 feet, turn, depart to the east, if the engine quits I'm going to go to this area. He also asked them to develop a landing briefing. He plans to talk to his other two EMS operators about implementing this as well.