

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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AIR METHODS CORPORATION
LIFENET HELICOPTER ACCIDENT
AUGUST 26, 2011
NEAR MOSBY, MISSOURI

Docket No.: CEN11FA599

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Interview of: JUSTINE SKYLER

Telephonic Interview via
phone call to AirCom in
Omaha, Nebraska

Wednesday,
September 21, 2011

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: JIM SILLIMAN
Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

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<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Justine Skyler:		
By Mr. Brenner		4
By Mr. Silliman		11

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
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I N T E R V I E W

MR. SILLIMAN: All right, we're recording.

Malcolm, do you want to start out?

MR. BRENNER: Yes, okay.

INTERVIEW OF JUSTINE SKYLER

BY MR. BRENNER:

Q. Justine, when did you start work with the company?

A. September of 2010.

Q. And what attracted you to the company?

A. Well, it just seemed like something I was interested in.

Q. What's your background relevant to the job?

A. I don't know.

Q. Well, what did you do before this?

A. Admin work.

Q. Um-hum. Are you a pilot?

A. No.

Q. Any aviation background?

A. No.

Q. What are your responsibilities?

A. Flight following. It's call intake.

Q. Okay. And tell me about the event and just from the beginning to the end, if you would.

A. What -- starting from where?

Q. From your first involvement. I guess, when you first came to the facility in preparation for going on shift.

1 A. I came in and the flight was already in the air. My
2 first involvement was arranging fuel with John at Mosby Airport,
3 and then flight following until tracking stopped, and then taking
4 further measures from there.

5 Q. What time did you get to the position?

6 A. 6:00, 6 p.m.

7 Q. Oh, okay. What is your shift?

8 A. 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.

9 Q. And what days do you work?

10 A. A rotating schedule between 2 weeks.

11 Q. What are your days off?

12 A. One week, I work Monday, Tuesday, Friday, Saturday,
13 Sunday.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. The next week, I work Wednesday, Thursday.

16 Q. I see. Which -- oh, I see. So this was Friday,
17 Saturday, Sunday, right?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. How do you like the night schedule?

20 A. It's nice.

21 Q. What was -- how would you -- what was the workload like
22 when you arrived?

23 A. There were a few flights.

24 Q. How would you characterize it?

25 A. Normal.

1 Q. And when you arrived at 6:00, what happened?

2 A. Came on shift, was given a briefing on the flights that
3 were going out at the time, and then took over on the flights as
4 Korey left.

5 Q. Did Korey -- how long did Korey overlap with you?

6 A. About 20 minutes.

7 Q. Is that the normal shift period?

8 A. He's usually off shift by 6 p.m. That night, he was
9 still with the flight.

10 Q. Was that unusual? Was he trying to help out or is that
11 -- yeah, help me characterize why he was there 20 minutes with
12 you.

13 A. He was just there finishing what he had started.

14 Q. What was he doing?

15 A. Still speaking with the pilot, trying to get everything
16 arranged for where they would be going to refuel, and doing notes
17 into flights from other ones.

18 Q. Did you assist him with those activities?

19 A. No.

20 Q. Okay. So then at what point in the sequence -- what was
21 happening when he did finally finish?

22 A. 2-2 was on their way to the airport. They just had just
23 lifted off of Bethany.

24 Q. And what was your communication with the flight?

25 A. I advised to the pilot that fuel had been arranged, and

1 that was my only time speaking with them.

2 Q. How common is it that pilots need fuel for their trip?

3 A. Well, it's pretty normal for them to refuel somewhere in
4 the trip, either before or after.

5 Q. Do they usually involve your support?

6 A. It depends on the area. Sometimes fuel has to be
7 arranged. Other times, it'll be available at their base.

8 Q. How common is it to fuel with a patient on board?

9 A. It's -- it happens on occasion.

10 Q. Can you give me an example when it happened with you?

11 A. Well, in this incident. My area that they fly in isn't
12 big enough that they usually need to refuel during flight.

13 Q. Have you ever had to provide that service before? Have
14 you ever done that before?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. When was that?

17 A. A few times before this incident, and once since.

18 Q. And tell me about the two times before.

19 A. I don't actually remember off the top of my head.

20 Q. Okay, but those were instances where they refueled with
21 a patient on board?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Are there special procedures on your side when that
24 happens?

25 A. If they request, we arrange to have -- to pull the

1 patient off.

2 Q. Was the airport aware that there'd be a patient on
3 board?

4 A. I don't remember.

5 Q. How often do you contact the OCC?

6 A. It depends on weather and flight conditions. Usually,
7 it's per request.

8 Q. How often do you get a request?

9 A. That varies on the weather.

10 Q. Does it happen?

11 A. It does happen. It's not every day, but --

12 Q. Have you worked with this pilot before?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. How was he to work with?

15 A. He was fine.

16 Q. How do you determine that?

17 A. I never had any issues with him.

18 Q. Did you talk with your supervisor during this time?

19 A. When do you mean?

20 Q. In the handling of the flight. Once you took over
21 operational control until the accident, did you have any contact
22 with your supervisor?

23 A. Not at that point.

24 Q. Did you have any contact with any of your co-workers or
25 anyone else around?

1 A. Yeah. I had spoken with Korey and two of my co-workers.

2 Q. What did you talk with the two co-workers about?

3 A. Just giving them a heads-up with the flights that were
4 going on.

5 Q. Do you ever consult with a pilot in terms of flight
6 approvals, if decisions are concurrent?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Who would they contact for concurrence?

9 A. I'm not really sure.

10 Q. How often do they ask to talk with their supervisor?

11 A. I have no idea.

12 Q. Has it ever happened?

13 A. I don't know.

14 Q. How often do they ask to talk with OCC?

15 A. They can usually call direct on their own.

16 Q. I see. Have they ever called through you?

17 A. On a few occasions, but I don't remember specifically.

18 Q. So talk to me about this company. How is the pay?

19 A. Good.

20 Q. How's morale?

21 A. Good.

22 Q. How are the schedules?

23 A. They're good.

24 Q. How is the turnover of the co-workers, the specialists,
25 communications specialists?

- 1 A. It seems good.
- 2 Q. What's special about this company?
- 3 A. In terms of?
- 4 Q. In terms of a job, a place to work.
- 5 A. It's a great place to work.
- 6 Q. Why is that?
- 7 A. I've never had any issues with it and I enjoy what I do.
- 8 Q. In the St. Joe district, how competitive is that?
- 9 A. I don't know.
- 10 Q. Have you ever worked with this hospital before?
- 11 A. Yes.
- 12 Q. How's this hospital to work with?
- 13 A. They're fine.
- 14 Q. Has the company had any previous accidents?
- 15 A. I don't know.
- 16 Q. Anything in your work that's been -- that's changed as a
17 result of accidents?
- 18 A. I'm sorry? Say that again.
- 19 Q. Anything in your operations that changed because of
20 accidents or events or incidents?
- 21 A. I don't know.
- 22 Q. Does the company have a safety office?
- 23 A. I don't know.
- 24 Q. Do you have any contact with a safety office?
- 25 A. I don't.

1 Q. How are relations with the FAA?

2 A. I don't know.

3 Q. Do you ever see inspectors from the FAA?

4 A. Not on the night shift.

5 Q. Not on night shift? Do you remember the evening that
6 this happened, how were you in terms of rest?

7 A. I was fine.

8 Q. How about food?

9 A. I was fine.

10 Q. Anything stand out about that evening in terms of, you
11 know, as a work shift?

12 A. No.

13 MR. BRENNER: Jim, do you have questions?

14 MR. SILLIMAN: Yeah, a couple.

15 BY MR. SILLIMAN:

16 Q. Justine, you work from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., and I
17 understand that you arrived just about 6 p.m.?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And it sounds typical then that Korey, or whoever you're
20 relieving, would give you a debrief of what he was currently
21 working on then, or he or she was currently handling?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. How long does that take typically to do that handover?

24 A. Anywhere from 2 to 3 minutes to up to 10.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. It's sometimes more.

2 Q. All right. So the next morning, say, you had worked a
3 12-hour shift and at 6 a.m. you're going to go off duty and the
4 person that's going to relieve you arrives at 6 a.m. So you would
5 expect that you'll need to work another 5 or 10, 20 minutes, at
6 the most, to give them a debrief of what has occurred during your
7 shift then, I guess?

8 A. Yes, that's why we come in early.

9 Q. Okay. So, basically, you're going to be -- you
10 typically work a few more minutes over your 6 a.m. or after 6 p.m.
11 to give these debriefs, then?

12 A. Sometimes.

13 Q. Okay. Does -- sometimes does the person who's relieving
14 the other person come just a few minutes early to get it so they
15 can just get out of there right at 6 p.m. then or --

16 A. Yeah, sometimes.

17 Q. Okay. So in this case, however, you -- he gave a
18 debrief. And what does that debrief typically entail in a normal
19 night when there's, you know, they might be working two or three
20 aircraft?

21 A. The flight; where it's at, at that point; what weather
22 is around the area; and what the partner desks are also doing, and
23 if there is any admin work to be done.

24 Q. Okay. And the partner desk, what does that mean?

25 A. Just the other desks on the bank.

1 Q. But they'd be working the same hospitals or the same EMS
2 spaces that you work, then, or --

3 A. No, they're different states. They just help when they
4 need it.

5 Q. Oh, okay. So there's just kind of an overall situation
6 then?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Not specifically what you'll be working, but what other
9 people are working around you?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. And this one -- obviously, he was talking. When
12 Korey mentioned to you that, you know, the pilot was going to have
13 to stop to get refueled with a patient on board, did that surprise
14 you?

15 A. No, not really.

16 Q. Well, did you find that to be out of the ordinary?

17 A. I don't know.

18 Q. Okay. Did you question him about it or try to get more
19 details about it?

20 A. He gave me enough details.

21 Q. Okay. So with that, with the information that he
22 provided you then, what did you do with that information?

23 A. I applied it to where I needed it.

24 Q. Okay. And how did you -- and what did you do?

25 A. Arranging fuel and flight following closely.

1 Q. Okay. Then Korey informed Lowell about the situation.
2 Did Lowell come and talk to you and -- before Korey left, did
3 Lowell come over and start talking to you about the flight or --

4 A. I don't remember.

5 Q. Did he -- do you remember if he assisted on the radio
6 with the pilot or --

7 A. No, he didn't.

8 Q. Okay. When did you realize that the flight was taking
9 longer to get to the airport than you had anticipated?

10 A. It wasn't really taking any longer.

11 Q. When did you first realize he had a problem or there
12 might be a problem there?

13 A. After they stopped tracking.

14 Q. Can you see that track on your screens?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Okay. Did you inform Lowell that you couldn't see the
17 track?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And so he came over and started talking with you at that
20 point?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Okay. Did he give you any guidance at that point?

23 A. I proceeded with what I was trying to do --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. -- and he just looked what he needed to.

1 Q. So he went and he was -- was he trying -- do you
2 remember what he was trying to do?

3 A. He was following the steps of our PIP.

4 Q. Okay. And PIP is what?

5 A. It's -- I can't remember what it stands for. It's just
6 when there's an issue with tracking, an issue with the flight.

7 Q. Okay. So, it is kind of standard procedures of some
8 sort?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. Oh, you mentioned that you got hired in September
11 of 2010, and then you -- about this refueling with patients on
12 board, you seem to think that there was two times since September
13 2010 when you remember that aircraft had been refueled with
14 patients on board. Were those flights that you were particularly
15 operating or was it somebody in -- you know, that you heard about,
16 you know, from those other people that you work with there?

17 A. I don't really remember the events specifically.

18 Q. Okay. They opened up a base at Cherokee, Iowa not long
19 ago and I understand that there was a time that they had to
20 arrange for fuel because they were going to Rochester and because
21 of the length of the flight, they needed to refuel. Do you
22 remember if you were involved with that flight?

23 A. I was not.

24 Q. Okay. And then you said you arranged to have the
25 patients pulled off. I guess that means that the patients were

1 removed from the helicopter during the refueling of the
2 helicopter?

3 A. Yes. Per request, we can do that.

4 Q. Okay. Do you remember if that was done during those two
5 times that you talked about or kind of remember?

6 A. I don't remember.

7 Q. Okay. I can't think of anything else to ask.

8 MR. SILLIMAN: Malcolm, do you have anything else?

9 MR. BRENNER: I don't think so. She's been very
10 helpful.

11 MR. SILLIMAN: Justine, yeah, thanks. I'm going to turn
12 off the recorders here.

13 MS. SKYLER: Okay.

14 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: AIR METHODS CORPORATION
 LIFENET HELICOPTER ACCIDENT
 AUGUST 26, 2011
 NEAR MOSBY, MISSOURI
 Interview of Justine Skyler

DOCKET NUMBER: CEN11FA599

PLACE: Via phone call to AirCom in
 Omaha, Nebraska

DATE: September 21, 2011

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been compared to
the recording accomplished at the hearing.

Karen M. Galvez
Transcriber