UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *		
Investigation of:	*	
	*	
AIR METHODS CORPORATION	*	
-IFENET HELICOPTER ACCIDENT	*	Docket No.: CEN11FA599
AUGUST 26, 2011	*	
NEAR MOSBY, MISSOURI	*	
	*	
* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *		

Interview of: CHRIS BASSETT

Air Methods Corporation
7301 South Peoria
Englewood, Colorado

Thursday,
December 8, 2011

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: MALCOLM BRENNER, Ph.D.
Senior Human Performance Investigator

APPEARANCES:

JIM SILLIMAN, Investigator-in-Charge
National Transportation Safety Board
31 West 775 North Avenue
West Chicago, IL 60185

MALCOLM BRENNER, Ph.D.
Senior Human Performance Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'Enfant Plaza East, SW
Washington, D.C. 20594
(202) 314-6000

I N D E X

I N T E R V I E W

INTERVIEW OF CHRIS BASSETT

BY DR. BRENNER:

Q. Mr. Bassett, could you -- when did you start with the company?

A. 2002.

Q. And just a brief summary of your aviation career?

A. I'm currently director of operations. I have been since early part of this year. Prior to that, for nearly 5 years, I was a chief pilot. Prior to that, I was flying a contract that Air Methods had in Miami, Florida. I was a training captain and check airman, as well as a line pilot in Sikorsky and Bell Helicopters. Prior to that, I had my own company. I had a helicopter construction company, long line, using old Sikorskys. Prior to that, I worked for a number of different operators in Florida and in Dallas, construction work, Part 135 charter work, offshore news gathering, firefighting, utility, quite a lot of different civilian applications. I'm also fixed wing rated at the ATP level. I'm also an A&P mechanic.

Q. All right. How did you learn to fly?

A. Like everyone else, in an aircraft with an instructor.

Q. About how many hours do you have?

A. About 7,000.

Q. And how many rotor in that?

A. Most of that's rotor.

Q. And how many EMS rotor?

A. About 1,000.

Q. Um-hum. Great. What are your responsibilities, briefly?

A. My primary responsibility is to ensure that our operations are safe and compliant with all -- various regulations and notices, orders, so on, so forth, op specs. I'm ultimately responsible for the operations within this company, the aviation operations.

Q. How do you promote a safety culture encouraging pilots to accept only the flights that they can do safely, prudently, and legally, and turn down those they cannot?

A. You're quoting me. Those are my words.

Q. You talked to the NTSB several years ago and I thought it was well said. How do you achieve that?

A. We achieve that in a number of ways. First of all, it's ongoing. It's not something that we can set forth and then walk away from it. So, to promote it in a continuing fashion, all of the aviation operations' personnel must subscribe to what you just stated. So that starts with me. I teach it to every new hire pilot that comes through this company and we continue to teach it on a recurring basis. This is what we're after.

Q. How long is the initial training --

A. A pilot who hires on with Air Methods will go through approximately 8 days of basic indoctrination training. The class

size dictates whether it's 7 days, 8, or 9. And from there, the pilots will go into an aviation aircraft ground school and those vary in length depending on complexity of the aircraft that they're going to fly. Then they go into the flight training program and the number of flight hours is -- varies based on whether it's VFR, whether it's IFR. Then there's an NVG portion of it. Subsequent to that, check ride successful. Passing of the check ride, the pilot will then go through local area orientation. So, the entire training process for a new hire without any delays would take approximately 3 weeks. But we work against weather, unscheduled maintenance, so sometimes that gets extended out to 4 or 5 weeks.

Q. How much of that training focuses on safety culture?

A. Quite a lot of it. Everything we do is intertwined with safety and safety culture.

Q. And how do you monitor safety culture, safety compliance with the pilots?

A. A number of different ways that are encompassed within our safety management system: programs such as internal evaluation program, IEP; LOSA, line operation safety audit. FOQA, flight operations quality assurance, is a program that is not fully matured. We're in the early stages of it, but that will be an excellent tool for us to monitor safety culture. We meet in person and monitor safety culture. But all of these various programs inside of an SMS are designed to help us monitor safety

culture to ensure that our operations are in compliance with what you initially stated.

Q. Do you have problems with fuel exhaustion or fuel issues in the operations?

A. We had an incident of exactly what you've stated, a fuel exhaustion problem.

Q. Tell us about it, please.

A. Well, first, I was not party to that accident investigation, so I don't know much more outside of what the general public knows, what's been released in a probable -- I'm sorry, in a initial report. I have read those and the accident appears to be related to fuel exhaustion.

Q. The Mosby accident, is that what we're talking about?

A. That's what we're talking about.

Q. Okay. Have you had any other accidents? Or any other reports –-

A. None that I'm aware of. We have –- I do recall an incident where a pilot landed and had to call a mechanic to bring him some fuel at the hospital in order to make it back to base due to head winds that were not forecasted, but no other problems other than those, that I'm aware of.

Q. What changes have been made since this, since Mosby, as a result of the Mosby accident?

A. Well, we've made some changes to our training program, specifically to the methods of teaching engine failures within the

AS-350 series helicopter. There have been other -– I'm trying to recall now –- primary one is the changes to the technique in managing engine failure. We're also looking into being able to simulate full down autorotations using full motion simulator. And I'm excited about being able to get into simulator training for a number of reasons, not just for the touchdown autorotation, but for many reasons.

Q. If a pilot has a difficult launch decision, who do they consult with?

A. Pilots have resources. They have peers; they have colleagues; they have managers; they have a chain of command that is always available for them to consult with, but ultimately, pilot-in-command is the decision maker.

Q. What about the OCC? Is that part of the resources?

A. OCC, OCC's function is a resource. They're not a dispatch center. They're not a go/no-go center. They're resources.

If a pilot is away from base and has limited capability to evaluate weather situations, then they have that resource, to be able to use OCC to get additional information; or en route, flying an aircraft without onboard radar, which is very common in VFR helicopters in all aviation sectors. They do, in essence, have instant radar by being able to just call OCC and have it -- a radar map textually described to them.

Q. There's evidence that the pilot did not sign the daily

flight log. Is that common or uncommon, or --

A. I don't know if he signed it or not. I haven't seen the document. And to answer your question, is it common? No, it is not.

Q. Okay. In the hypothetical that he did not, what does that mean?

A. If he did not sign the document, it's -- it would be speculation. You could say that he simply forgot to sign the document, that he –- what he is signing on the document is attesting to the airworthiness of the aircraft. If he did determine the aircraft to be airworthy, then he would sign the document. If he did determine it to be airworthy and forgot to sign the document, it's just that.

Q. Who monitors that? Is that monitored?

A. Yes, it is.

Q. By who?

A. By the base lead pilot. Those documents are retained for 30 days and they are electronically transmitted to us. They're scanned and sent to us and they're monitored by pilot records as well. So, there are at least two sets of eyes that look at those documents.

Q. How often are they monitored?

A. Daily.

Q. What are the procedures for the pilot to check the fuel state of the aircraft?

A. Fuel status is determined during the airworthiness inspection and prior to flight. It's a preflight item.

Q. All right. What about during flight?

A. During flight, pilots monitor fuel as a normal course of pilotage. We monitor all systems, including fuel system.

Q. In this case, the pilot landed with a passenger and he called up Flight Service and said, look, I made a mistake; I've less fuel than I expected. So he did, he did acknowledge it. If he had stopped the flight at that point, what would have been the company's reaction?

A. I don't know that that occurred, but if it did, the company's reaction to it would be, good job; that's exactly what we want you to do. We don't want any of our pilots to push any of the rules. I tell the pilots that we hire, don't come to work and plan to follow 99 percent of the rules and bend one. We're not going to do that. We come to work to follow all the rules.

Q. What if the pilot had elected to transport the passenger –- oh, what he did elect: Suppose he transported the passenger, fueled up on the way, and then delivered the passenger, what would the company's reaction have been?

A. That's perfectly acceptable. We have allowance for that in our operations manual. I've done that myself.

Q. Suppose he had landed at the hospital, delivered the passenger, and then called for a fuel truck, what would have been the company's reaction?

A. That too would have been acceptable because the outcome is never in doubt. If you're concerned about your fuel status and you're on the ground and you call for a fuel truck or a mechanic to bring two jerry jugs, or whatever it may be, as I mentioned happened in the past, that is a desirable outcome. The other one is not. And in the past when that happened with that pilot, he was not admonished; he was not reprimanded. His planning was looked at to ensure that he did do proper planning. But while that might be –- well, it's an acceptable practice. Anything that leads to a safe outcome, this is what we're after.

Q. Suppose he had autorotated successfully with the patient, but was out of fuel, what would have been the company response?

A. When we have things that happen like this -- that's never happened to us before, so I can't just say, well in the past, we've done this, that, or the other. But when we have things that happen out of the ordinary, there's no one individual that says we're going to do this or that. We discuss it as a group. Well, we would discuss it: the chief pilot, myself, probably a training manager, an HR representative. We're going to think about what's happened here and how do we move forward from this point.

Q. A possible recommendation that could be considered would be that the company looks at either some sort of procedure or enhances procedures to have the launch decision shared or have

someone else available. If a pilot calls in and says, I'm not sure what to do here, that somehow either OCC or OCC connects him to someone, someone like you, or some other thing, would that be a fair recommendation?

A. That would impede upon the pilots-in-command, the pilot-in-command's authority and responsibility to have somebody removed, sitting 2,000 miles away to make that decision. Because it works two ways. It could be that's an acceptable condition, go ahead and fly, and that pilot might feel, I don't know that I would really make that decision. We don't operate in an airline world. We operate in a Part 135 on-demand system, wherein the pilot-in-command, it's critical for him or her to maintain the ultimate responsibility for the decision making. During the course of the flight, they have the up-to-date information, which I would not have, which someone in the OC would not have.

Q. How would you characterize pilot pay in the company?

A. Well, pilot pay currently, I know about, but there is a contract that's out to the pilots currently for ratification and I don't know the details of that contract. I was not involved in the negotiations of it, but I worked under the other contract, the current one that we're honoring. I worked under that contract as a pilot and I was very satisfied with the pay.

Q. How would you characterize pilot morale?

A. I would characterize pilot morale as very good, very high. Pilots enjoy this type of work and they take away from

this, from the day's work, more than just a paycheck. We perform a service that, honestly, makes you feel good, more so than when I used to fly giant air conditioners up on top of tall buildings. The flight that I take today is going to have -– I worked at a children's hospital –- it's going to have a profound effect on that child and that child's family and it's -- it does, it really does boost morale, makes you feel good to go to work.

All of the Omniflight pilots -- company that we acquired in August of this year -- have -- I've met every one of them, except for about 30 when I was unable to attend that class because I was in the hospital, but otherwise I'd have been there -- are very happy becoming Air Methods. They're seeing improvements and changes from the way that they're currently operating under the Omniflight company and that boosts morale. And I think the contract that's out for ratification, I think that's going to help with morale as well.

Q. What's special about this company?

A. Where do I start? I bleed blue. This company has a very high ethical standard. They treat people very well, very fairly. The positions that Aaron Todd, our CEO, has with regard to things like pay, he will tell you, I want the pay in the different homogenous groups to be at or near the top, which is a nice standard for a CEO to take.

The safety initiatives that this company has voluntarily taken, they cost money. I have a bullet in my presentation where

-- what is priority one? And I ask the group, what's the next bullet? Everybody's going to know what it is. Safety, right? But then I challenge that group to challenge me. Why do you think that? Why do you believe it? And again, it's because this company has taken the initiative to explore everything that we can think of and determine whether or not it would improve the safety and lower the accident rate.

And then we compete with our safety and we don't compete with our safety. We take things that we have done here that have been successful and share them with the industry. I sit on various groups, director of ops committees, and we share ideas and Air Methods is very willing to share these ideas to, again, to promote safety within this industry. And I think that sets us apart from others, that we're not so engrossed in running an operation and not thinking about all of the industry to improve the safety.

Q. For the record, what are some of the safety initiatives?

A. Well, we'll take a brand new aircraft, like a Bell 407 -- we ordered 15 of them this year -- and we'll bring them to Denver and we'll spend about $2 million on safety equipment. Well, that's $2 million including the medical interior, but a lot of that expense is safety equipment. And then we'll put that aircraft out into the field where we're competing against other companies running 30-year-old 206s with hand-held GPSs. That's one of them.

And then that equipment we're talking about: night vision goggles, HTAWS, wire strike prevention systems, satellite tracking, satellite telephone, satellite weather, night vision goggles.

And then we've matured our SMS. We meet -– initially we met every week for a year to exit Level 2, and we're meeting now -– the frequency is appropriate at once a month there's a big group, and once a month is breakout groups, and we're making a lot of progress to become proactive and predictive to exit Level 3 into a fully-matured SMS, along with only two other airlines. And I think that's a significant achievement and it doesn't come cheaply.

The safety department, when I came on board in this company, was one individual. Today it is a real department. We have people that man up and chair certain programs within our company, such as ASAP, MSAP, IEP. Those are some of the initiatives that we've undertaken in order to continue to enhance the safety.

Q. When you say two other airlines with SMS. Is that within this industry or overall?

A. Every airline in the United States, there are only two that have exited Level 3, that I'm aware of. And that's as current as of maybe 3 months ago. In this industry, we're the only ones that have exited Level 2. Many haven't even begun the program. You can't get in the program any longer. There are too

many waiting in line and Washington can't fund it, but we still share the ideas with others.

Other initiatives, the -- I lost my thought.

BY MR. SILLIMAN:

Q. Can you tell us about the FOQA program you're developing?

A. Yes. We have signed an agreement with the Flight Safety Foundation and our pilots union to establish a FOQA program. Our safety department has funding for a full-time employee to develop the program for 2012 to, you know, to get it started. Somebody's got to grab it and get going with it. We have approximately 30 aircraft that have recording devices installed currently. We have evaluated the equipment. I chair a group called Technology Review Group and this is a group of engineers and pilots that come together and we look at the latest state-of-the-art equipment. And we've done that with different recording devices and made recommendation on what we should install into our airframes.

And I'm hopeful that next year, we've got the 30 devices feeding us data that we can react to in a -- or rather, be predictive with. We can see trends. We have, you know, a culture within our company where they fly lower than everyone else. So, we can intervene and find out what's going on and why that is.

Partnering with the Flight Safety Foundation, they have an endowment they want to use to develop a helicopter FOQA program and they've partnered with us to do this. So, it's exciting. I

think it's -– if you were to rate or build a wish list of what I wanted when I was chief pilot, now director of operations, we'd put night vision goggles at the top. We would put HTAWS probably underneath that, along with some other things. But where we are now, is FOQA, recording devices. I want to become preventive and predictive. They go hand in hand and we have to have data to do that.

So, we have all these different reporting mechanisms. Some are appropriate to be reported with this venue, which is SilentWhistle, and this one may with ASAP and this one may be with MSAP, but now we're going to gather all that data through a data management system and it's going to give us what we need, I think, to be able to get there. And the data we collect out of the FOQA program, same thing. It's going to go into that data management system and we're going to be able to look at that and have meaningful data, which we have, but use it in a preventive and proactive stance, so that we can get out there and stop stuff from happening if we have somebody that isn't following the creed: safe, legal and prudent.

Q. What recording devices are you using?

A. The one -- the 30 that we have now are the Apario (ph.) devices.

Q. And can you explain that, what's special about those?

A. Well, I don't know that they're –- well, the special thing about the Apario device is it's very light. It's very easy

to install. It's self-contained. It has its own accelerometers and GPS and a small media card that can capture –- I can't tell you how much data at this point. I don't recall. But the special thing about it is it's easy. It's easy to install. It doesn't take up a lot of space. It doesn't take up -– it doesn't weigh a lot, so it doesn't have those impacts that we would if we went with a full-up cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder. They just, they wouldn't fit in our little helicopters. So, that's what's special about it.

Apario kind of pioneered these little devices, but a lot of other companies now have seen the value and they're hoping that the NPRM calls for the, at some point, the requirement for this device. They're hopeful for that. So a lot of companies are making them. Companies that are providing a certain service, such as satellite tracking, have expanded the capability to include some recording capability and even uploading so you can get live stream. They're exciting, what's out there on the market today.

So, I don't know that we'll stay with the Aparios for the balance of our fleet. We're looking to capture more than what the Aparios are. But they were what was available just as recently as about 3 or 4 years ago. And in the last 3 or 4 years, these other companies have really, you know, progressed tremendously with the capability of those recording devices.

Q. Is the union pushing back on the video recording capability of Aparo?

A. I don't know, to be honest. I know they signed the FOQA document and they're very -- the union leadership that I've met with over these devices are very on board with it. I believe it's a significant piece of safety equipment, but specifically speaking of the video, I don't know.

MR. SILLIMAN: I'm done with that.

BY DR. BRENNER:

Q. How are relations with the union?

A. I have, I have good working relations currently with the union leadership. I had nothing to do with the negotiations over the contract, so I couldn't speak to that. But as far as when they meet us out here and we talk about things like FOQA, we talk about things like professional standards and so forth, the level of cooperation is very good. We met most recently over the integration of the Omni pilots, for example, and we were seeing 99 percent of that together.

Q. How's the quality of new hires for pilots?

A. The quality of the new hires? Excellent quality, just not enough of them.

Q. How many more would you like?

A. Well, I'd like to see -– we're starting to see an uptick in retirement. You know, for years, people have said, oh, the Vietnam pilots aren't going to retire. But I think we're -- I know it's a performance measure that I look at and we're seeing more retirements. So, I'd like to see our pilots come home from

Afghanistan and Iraq, come back to work. We've got quite a few of them out doing that, so I'd like to see them come back.

Q. How would you characterize the competitive environment of this industry? How competitive is it?

A. I don't know that I could characterize it. I have a very dark line in operations with a dotted line over to business. We interact and speak and communicate, but I don't go out and pound on the doors and look for more work. I've never done that. I -- they take pizzas to 911 centers, but I don't know, I couldn't tell you how -- I couldn't characterize that.

Q. Mr. Todd, what are his greatest strengths as a CEO?

A. He's a superb leader. He is a brilliant individual. He challenges all of his reports and his executive staff and holds us to performance measures so that when we make recommendations and decisions, they're the right decisions. Those are some of his strengths. He is a very visionary individual and, in a self-effacing way, he'll say he's a bean counter, but the man is brilliant. If I bring him something that's aviation-related, it's uncanny how quickly he catches on or the questions that he'll ask that are very meaningful.

Q. How does the company communicate safety to the pilots?

A. I'm sorry?

Q. How does the company, the safety office especially, how do they communicate safety to the pilots?

A. Oh, we have a number of different ways that we do it.

We have safety alerts, safety notices, and safety bulletins. We have different ways to disseminate information. One of the best ways that we disseminate to the pilot-tasked -- pilot group and to the maintenance group is through our 411 system, which is a -– well, it's an application that was developed initially to track pilot currency and qualifications, but it has been expanding and growing into different areas. But that's a way that we know we're going to hit every pilot and every mechanic because they access that application every day when they come to work.

We do safety connect newsletters on a monthly basis, disseminated to all employees. That's a great tool for putting out new information. We do attaboys. We do "There I was" sometimes. Next year –-

Q. What was a recent "There I was"?

A. A recent one that comes to my mind: A pilot who took off without a flight release, and why that happened, the distractions thereof. Another one was a pilot who inadvertently hit a highway marker, highway -– it's actually a snowplow marker on the side of the road on a scene landing with the tail rotor. And he wrote a "There I was" for us on how he managed to do that as experienced as he is, a 10-, 11,000-hour pilot.

Q. (Indiscernible) stuff. How are relations with the FAA?

A. We had some –- we had a team of 27 dedicated people in our Certificate Management Team, our CMT, and they had some turnover and some people moving up and moving down for a bit,

which can be sometimes difficult to get things done. But we now have three principal inspectors for operations, maintenance, and avionics that are excellent that we have an excellent relationship with. They are always there for us. They, like myself, work holidays, work nights, and work weekends, and we're working, I think, very well together. We meet on a monthly basis and it's rare a day goes by I don't talk to somebody on our FAA team. So, we have a good relationship. They keep me well informed. They're out in the field beating the bushes.

Last year, we had 8,000 inspections across the board over all of our certificates and when they find things, they let us know. We get letters of investigation or it may just be something that's corrected on the spot. We get a phone call: your airworthiness certificate was -– the sun had bleached out the signature, so we provided a signature. It could be something minor; it could be something bigger, but they do keep us informed of their findings.

Q. All right.

DR. BRENNER: Jim?

BY MR. SILLIMAN:

Q. Early on in the conversation here, we -- you said that you didn't know very much about this particular investigation. Can you kind of expand on your role in this process? It sounds like you've been able to divorce yourself of the particulars. Could you explain that?

A. Well, I wouldn't use that word, divorce myself from it. I've got to be kept informed, obviously, but when we get into specifics -– well, let me back up a little bit. We had a fatal accident. I know exactly where I am when I get that phone call. It never leaves my head. And I got that phone call on a Friday afternoon: we have an overdue aircraft. When that phone rings and it's a 402 exchange, because their telephone trunking system comes out of Omaha, I get a pit in my stomach.

And when I hear –- like the other night when they called me, we had a tail rotor hit a mound of dirt on a scene call. They're on the ground safe, a little tear rotor damage, you get a sudden relief. That's all it was. Okay. But when it's an overdue aircraft, it's a horrible, horrible feeling. When it was confirmed, the fire departments found the aircraft, there are fatal injuries, we launch -- and it's not only a fatal accident -- we have an accident response plan and we trigger it. So we get into the manual and I run my responsibilities as director of operations; Dennis runs his as chief pilot; Chris Meinhardt runs his as the director of maintenance, and others. Michael Benton, who's our compliance coordinator, he has a bag packed all the time and he goes. He's on a plane right now, along with Chris Meinhardt, along with a member of safety department. They're on their way.

Our local managers are our first on the scene. They have their responsibilities as well. Well, Michael Benton goes

and signs in as party to the investigation and he has a requirement for confidentiality. So, there are certain things that he cannot talk about as discussed with -- it could be you or one of your colleagues. But I do -- I am made aware, as the senior team is, of things that need to be addressed immediately. I can't wait for your report 2 years from now. I can't do it. I've got to know right now if I have something that's -- that needs to be fixed or stopped right now. Those are the kinds of things that I would get notified of.

I would participate in the root cause -- well, not in the root cause analysis itself, but in the board's review of the findings and recommendations. I have that level of participation. But unless I sign on to an investigation, the particulars, not necessarily until those confidential points are made public.

Q. You mentioned root cause analysis. I think I was talking with Mike Koenes back in Fort Worth and he was mentioning that as part of the SMS process, they were looking at root cause analysis. And I asked if it would be possible to get that information and he seemed to think it was. Now, he may have been speaking a bit out of turn there, but if it's possible I would like to have discussions or, you know, information about that and some of the stuff that, as result of the SMS process, what changes have been looked at and that kind of thing. So, you know, that's kind of something that we'll just kind of throw up as a balloon here and then just see if there's the possibility of –- you know,

if it's not possible, then I just want to know about it, but --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well -- and we'll talk to you about that. Okay?

MR. SILLIMAN: Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'll talk to Crystal about it. I understand your request.

MR. SILLIMAN: Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: See what we can work there.

MR. SILLIMAN: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Because there's other implications that really don't involve you guys, but --

MR. SILLIMAN: Right. I understand.

BY MR. SILLIMAN:

Q. What about your OCC? You have AirCom in Nebraska, OCC here. In this circumstance, the OCC basically didn't know about the aircraft because, from what I understand, is that the dispatcher had created a new flight plan and so OCC was essentially unaware until they got the call from AirCom that they had a missing aircraft. Should -– from what I understand, OCC probably would have picked that up had they not entered that second flight plan; is that correct?

A. I don't know. I don't think so. From what I understand about where he initially intended to go and the second revised flight plan to the airport, were almost on the same track --

Q. Right.

A. -- just a shorter distance. So he would not have swayed 4 miles off center, off course line, to trigger an alert. But let -- if -– even if it had been in a perpendicular direction and 4 miles out they received an alert, the alert is he's off course. The call would be, why are you off course? The answer would be, deviating to get fuel. And the conversation would stop.

Q. With OCC?

A. Um-hum.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes? You said um-hum. Just for the purpose of the tape --

MR. BASSETT: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- you said yes.

BY MR. SILLIMAN:

Q. In this situation, the pilot called AirCom and said that he had a problem with his fuel and AirCom did not contact OCC with that information. Is that something that the company is looking at as far as changing operations on that, or changing procedures?

A. Oh, correction. LifeCom has a requirement now to make that call when the aircraft is in flight. There's no requirement to make that call when the aircraft's on the ground. We did discuss whether or not we were going to change that language in the manual, but without going back to my notes, I can't recall if we were going to do it or not.

Q. Okay.

A. It's not uncommon for a flight plan to change. We're a

very, very diverse operation. This is totally unlike the airlines. Tomorrow morning at 10:04, I expect to push back on United Airlines for Newark and everybody knows about this. And they've known about it. The captain will -- he bid that flight line a month ago, and he knows exactly where he's going. He could probably, with the weather report, predict what runway he's going to land on. He's probably going to predict about when he should start getting vectors for the ILS. It's just all completely planned. So for them to change –- I fly 100,000 miles this year and we diverted once to Pueblo. So, it's very uncommon for those things to happen. But in our world, it's common. Something changes: the weather, the destination, cancel that inner facility transport request and hang a left turn because we have a scene call we need to respond to.

So, now that pilot in command has a lot of decisions to make. Well, he has a lot of things to evaluate to make a decision. The request just came in, I want to go -- okay, what are the coordinates? What's my minimum -- or, I'm sorry, what's my en route highest obstruction? What's the weather doing there? Do I have the fuel to get there? Will I have the fuel to get back from there to where they want to go? All these kinds of things that a pilot-in-command is evaluating and then going to respond back to the person that made the request. Most often it's the communication specialist at LifeCom or at one of our hospital communication centers. So, it's with him right there. It's

unpredictable in a lot of cases.

Q. The AirCom people, they're basically focused on EMS coordination; is that correct?

A. Yes. They're call-takers and they find the most suitable aircraft to respond to the call request that came in and then they reach out to that pilot and offer it up. If the answer is yes, now their responsibility includes the flight following requirements.

Q. In this situation, the pilot called the dispatcher at AirCom and said I've got a fuel problem, and then they tried to resolve the fuel problem. In this situation, is that a question, when it comes to, you know, piloting the aircraft and fueling and those questions, would that be one where -- that AirCom and that EMS dispatcher there would say, that's more of a pilot question and maybe Leah up at OCC, since she's a pilot, could, you know, provide better assistance than I can?

A. I don't know what conversation took place between those two individuals, but if I were either one of them, if I were the pilot and I'm discussing what's happening with my fuel situation and what decisions I'm going to make about it, I don't need any input from Leah. If I know what my fuel status is, I have my flight, my charts; these are the kinds of things that I would do as the pilot. If I was the communications specialist, I would listen to what the pilot's telling me, but I really don't have any input. He's telling me I can't get to the hospital; I got to

deviate for fuel. That I need to know and that's something I'm going to have to enter in, but I don't see where that's going to raise the ire of a non-aviator when being told in a confident manner, I have to assume, that we're going to do this because of fuel. Be the same on, you know, on a commercial flight. People in the back are not involved in any decision making because they're non-aviators.

MR. SILLIMAN: I'm thinking about -- if there's other questions. I don't know, do you have anything?

MR. ALLAYHAR: I'm okay.

MR. SILLIMAN: You're okay?

DR. BRENNER: Anything else that we haven't discussed that might help us in the investigation?

MR. BASSETT: Not that comes to mind. You know, we participate fully, cooperate fully because we want to get to the right answers, learn, so I –- nothing's coming to my mind that I could add to this to help.

MR. SILLIMAN: And we appreciate that. You guys have been very cooperative and we appreciate it. I don't have anything else.

DR. BRENNER: All right. Okay. I guess --

MR. BASSETT: Thank you.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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 Chris Bassett
DOCKET NUMBER:	CEN11FA599
PLACE:	Omaha, Nebraska
DATE:	December 8, 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.

_____

Vanita Tildon
Transcriber