

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: KOREY COX

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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 National Transportation Safety Board
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I N T E R V I E W

INTERVIEW OF KOREY COX

BY MR. BRENNER:

Q. Tell me about the accident flight, what happened.

A. Actually, I wasn't here when the crash happened. It was -- it happened after I left for the day.

Q. Um-hum. Well, Korey, if you could start with any contacts you had with that flight before you left?

A. I took the request for the aircraft, toned out the pilot. The pilot accepted. He flew to the pick-up hospital and upon his arrival, he called me. When he lifted off, I talked to him on his liftoff, and that was the last contact that I had with him.

Q. Okay. So if I understand, you talked to him to find out if he accepted the flight. Did you actually talk with him at the time of acceptance?

A. Over the radio.

Q. Um-hum. Okay. And then you talked to him again when he lifted off?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. And that's, that was the extent of your contact with him?

A. I talked with him when he landed there.

Q. Tell me about that.

A. He called to verify that he landed there safely and that

1 he was going to need to go get fuel.

2 Q. Okay. And then what's your role then in terms of the
3 getting fuel?

4 A. Calling the facility to make sure that they're available
5 to fuel the aircraft, adding a leg into our flight plan.

6 Q. Is that a routine request?

7 A. Yeah, it can be. It depends on the length of the
8 flight, et cetera.

9 Q. In terms of your background, do you have -- are you a
10 pilot?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Do you have an aviation background?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Have you worked with this pilot before?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. How much?

17 A. I think he's probably been with the company around a
18 year.

19 Q. How was he to work with?

20 A. Very similar to every pilot. Just make a flight
21 request. They accept it and I talk them on the radio, they go.

22 Q. Did you have any problems with him?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Any things he did that were especially helpful?

25 A. I'm sorry. Can you say that again?

1 Q. Was there any experiences with this pilot that you felt
2 were especially helpful or deserve recognition or commendation or
3 anything like that?

4 A. Very friendly guy from my limited contact with him.

5 Q. How can you tell that?

6 A. I mean, phone conversations similar to this one.

7 Q. Have you dealt with that hospital before?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. How are they?

10 A. I wouldn't say there's anything special.

11 Q. And how about this type of mission, anything special
12 about this mission?

13 A. No.

14 Q. The pilot down on the ground said that he had less fuel
15 than he expected. What were his options at that point?

16 A. I don't know, sir. I'm not a pilot and -- obviously, he
17 needed to get fuel.

18 Q. Okay. Does he consult with you in terms of, you know,
19 what his options are?

20 A. No. He's supposed to just tell me what he's doing.

21 Q. If he wants someone else to give concurrence on his
22 flight decisions, who would he contact?

23 A. Someone up the chain from him.

24 Q. Would he go through you or on his own?

25 A. He could ask me to connect him with someone via the

1 phone.

2 Q. Has that happened?

3 A. Yeah, I've had pilots call before and ask to be
4 connected to someone.

5 Q. Give me an example.

6 A. A pilot call in to say connect me to so and so. I mean,
7 you know, it could be somebody from their -- you know, their boss
8 or it could be the OCC or --

9 Q. How often do they contact their boss?

10 A. It's not a common thing.

11 Q. And what do they contact for?

12 A. That they don't tell me. They say can you connect me to
13 whoever.

14 Q. Sure. And what about OCC? How often do they contact
15 OCC?

16 A. I mean, occasionally.

17 Q. About the same as the boss or more or less?

18 A. I've probably connected more to the OCC than anyone
19 else.

20 Q. And do you know what the nature of the consult is?

21 A. Most of the time it's about weather.

22 Q. What's your schedule there?

23 A. I work a rotating schedule of 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

24 Q. And when you say rotating, how often does it rotate?

25 A. Like, for example, this week I work Monday and Tuesday;

1 have Wednesday and Thursday off; work Friday, Saturday, and
2 Sunday; and next week, I only work Wednesday and Thursday.

3 Q. And do you always work 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. or do you do the
4 back shift, the 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. as well?

5 A. No, I only do the dayshift.

6 Q. I see. How does the schedule work out for you?

7 A. It's a nice schedule.

8 Q. And do you know, on the day of the accident, where were
9 you on the rotation then? What was your schedule that week?

10 A. That was a Friday. It was my Friday, Saturday, Sunday
11 to work.

12 Q. Okay. So this was towards the end of your shift, the
13 first day back after -- I'm sorry, did I -- Wednesday and Thursday
14 you have off?

15 A. Of that week, yes.

16 Q. Um-hum. And when do you usually eat during the shift?

17 A. I usually eat lunch.

18 Q. And what about breaks?

19 A. I get a 15-minute break every couple of hours, depending
20 on flights.

21 Q. Anything unusual about that day in terms of sleep or
22 lunch or breaks? Anything else?

23 A. No.

24 Q. At the time were you working by yourself or were there
25 other people working with you?

1 A. I have two partners that work the same desk as me and
2 both my partners were here that day.

3 Q. What were the different functions compared to you?

4 A. My primary function is LifeNet. We also cover five
5 other flight programs between the three of us.

6 Q. I see. Do you hand off cases or -- how do you
7 coordinate with them, I guess, is my question?

8 A. Well, my partners sit right next to me.

9 Q. Um-hum.

10 A. They have primary programs and then they're trained to
11 back me up; as well my primary program and I'm trained to back
12 them up.

13 Q. How is the workload at the time of the -- during this
14 period?

15 A. I would say normal.

16 Q. How much were you handling?

17 A. Me personally, I had two other aircraft in the air.

18 Q. And when the pilot contacted you and said he'd have to
19 stop for fuel, did that seem unusual to you?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. And why is that?

22 A. I mean, it's not common to need fuel after the first leg
23 unless it's an extremely long flight.

24 Q. Has it happened to you before?

25 A. No.

1 Q. If -- did your partners assist you in handling this
2 flight?

3 A. No.

4 Q. If you think there's a -- did you think there was a
5 problem here? Disregard. Let me say it again.

6 If you feel that there's something out of the ordinary,
7 who would you consult?

8 A. I'd notify my supervisor.

9 Q. Okay. Did you notify your supervisor?

10 A. Yes, I did.

11 Q. At what point did you notify him?

12 A. After I spoke with the pilot.

13 Q. Okay. And after you spoke with the pilot, this is at
14 which point? Describe what happened. Describe what you said with
15 the pilot and what you said with your supervisor and how it all
16 happened.

17 A. I mean, the pilot called and stated he was going to need
18 to get fuel and he told me that he would contact me upon liftoff.
19 When he lifted off, I answered his radio transmission and I called
20 my supervisor on the phone and told him what was happening.

21 Q. What did your supervisor say?

22 A. He asked if I would contact the medical base supervisor.

23 Q. And did you do that?

24 A. I notified the supervisor that the medical base
25 supervisor was on the flight.

1 Q. Um-hum. And what did he say?

2 A. He said that he would take care of it.

3 Q. How often does a pilot refuel with a passenger on board
4 -- patient on board?

5 A. I mean, it's -- I don't have exact numbers or anything.
6 It's not a common thing, but it does happen.

7 Q. Has it happened to you before?

8 A. No, I don't believe so.

9 Q. Did you have to fill out paperwork because of the event,
10 because of the situation?

11 MR. SILLIMAN: Can you repeat that, Malcolm? I didn't
12 hear that.

13 MR. BRENNER: Yeah, yeah. Let me try and say it over.

14 BY MR. BRENNER:

15 Q. You say you contacted your supervisor. So what happened
16 next?

17 A. After I spoke with my supervisor, I gave a pass-along to
18 the nightshift person and made her aware of all the flights that
19 were happening and I clocked out.

20 Q. I just heard in the last interview there's an alert, a
21 post-accident/incident alert. When do you fill that out?

22 A. That happens -- that gets filled out at the time of any
23 extraordinary incident.

24 Q. I see. So that would be -- that was not during your
25 handling of it?

1 A. No. There was, to my knowledge, there was no problem
2 with the flight.

3 Q. Um-hum. Korey, now I'm going to talk about the company.
4 How is pay?

5 A. I would say it's competitive.

6 Q. How is morale?

7 A. I can't speak for anyone else, but I love my job.

8 Q. What do you love about it?

9 A. The fact that I come into work every day and make a
10 difference in people's lives.

11 Q. Yeah. Yeah, that's the nature of that industry. It's
12 very nice. How would you characterize the schedule?

13 A. I happen to love the schedule.

14 Q. How about the size of the workforce compared to the
15 workload you have to perform?

16 A. I would say it's -- I don't have any problem with the
17 workload that I have.

18 Q. How's the turnover rate of communications specialists?

19 A. That, I don't know.

20 Q. Um-hum. How about turnover of managers?

21 A. I've had the same management and supervisors since I
22 started here.

23 Q. What's special about this company?

24 A. Like I said, we're making a difference in people's lives
25 every day.

1 Q. And the St. Joe's area, how competitive is that area?

2 A. There are two or three other competitors in the area.

3 Q. Um-hum. How's that compared to some of the other
4 districts you handle?

5 A. It's similar.

6 Q. Has the company experienced any previous accidents?

7 A. I know there was one last year.

8 Q. Tell me about it.

9 A. I wasn't here when it happened. I know there was a
10 crash in Arizona.

11 Q. Did it affect any of your procedures?

12 A. Did it what?

13 Q. Any of your procedures, did it affect any of your
14 procedures? Were there any changes that came as a result of that?

15 A. Not to my knowledge. It's with a different flight
16 program.

17 Q. Does the company have a safety office?

18 A. To my knowledge, they do. Not here in communications.

19 Q. What interaction do you have with them?

20 A. None.

21 Q. How are relations with the FAA?

22 A. I don't deal with the FAA, so I --

23 Q. How often do you see FAA personnel inspectors or
24 anything?

25 A. I personally never have.

1 Q. Okay.

2 MR. BRENNER: Jim, do you have some questions?

3 MR. SILLIMAN: Yeah. Hi, Korey.

4 Yeah, I do.

5 BY MR. SILLIMAN:

6 Q. Let's see. Going back to the notification from the
7 hospital, what -- when -- how did you get notified that Harrison
8 County Community Hospital needed assistance?

9 A. I believe it was a nurse from the ER called.

10 Q. And then what do you do with that request?

11 A. I take -- just to take information, where the patient
12 is, where they're going, their name, their weight, what their
13 diagnosis is. I create a flight plan. I alert the aircraft.

14 Q. And when you alert the aircraft, is that when you send
15 out what you refer to as a tone or some other type of thing?

16 A. Yeah. We send tones via the radio and after the tone --
17 the tone is to alert them, and after that, let them know where the
18 pick-up is and where the drop-off is.

19 Q. Okay. When you send out the tone, can you actually hear
20 the tone in your facility there at AirCom?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. So you send out a tone and you can actually hear the
23 same tone that the pilots and the flight -- or medical crew would
24 hear in their -- at their base?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. So the tone goes off, and then you -- after you hear
2 that the tone goes off, then what do you say, typically?

3 A. Typically, I have an inter-facility request. Tell them
4 the name of the pick-up, the name of the drop-off, and depending
5 on their weather status, if their weather status is green, I'll go
6 ahead and give them the patient information if they're checking
7 the weather, or a yellow status.

8 Q. If I remember right, in this circumstance, you -- well,
9 I actually can't remember for sure, but I think you said weather
10 check. And so you provide the pilot an opportunity to check the
11 weather before they give an affirmative whether or not -- they're
12 going to flight or not?

13 A. That's correct.

14 Q. When you do that, do you make sure that they're able to
15 take the flight before you give them patient information?

16 A. Yes. The pilot has to accept the flight before he's
17 given any information --

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. -- about the patient.

20 Q. And then once he accepts the flight, then is there any
21 responsibility as far as -- when you're giving him patient
22 information, he then can hear the details, just like the medical
23 crew, about what the condition of the patient is then?

24 A. That's affirmative.

25 Q. So they find out the age of the patient, the problem,

1 the weight, and I guess that's -- maybe there's some other
2 information, but that's basically it?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. So in this circumstance, then, the pilot accepted
5 the flight, and then they get in the aircraft, and then they --
6 the next -- is the next thing that they do is that they call you
7 with the time off that they departed from their base?

8 A. Yes. When they lift off --

9 Q. And --

10 A. -- they call me over the radio.

11 Q. And what information are you expecting from the pilot at
12 that time?

13 A. Their risk assessment, their fuel on board, and souls on
14 board.

15 Q. Okay. And when you -- if you have further
16 communications with the medical crew, do you have -- is there --
17 are there times when you have to talk to the medical crew about
18 the patient or additional information about the patient? Does --
19 do you just talk to them directly on a separate line or do you
20 talk on the same radio frequency that you'd talk through with the
21 pilot?

22 A. The same radio frequency. After they're 5 minutes of
23 sterile cockpit, they can ask for further information.

24 Q. Okay. So they have to take off and be in route, then,
25 and that gives the pilot the time to -- is it to get established

1 in his flight and get -- go in the right direction, that type of
2 thing, before they contact you again about the patient?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Is it common for them to call you to get more
5 information about the patient?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Can they, if they need to talk to the hospital or
8 wherever the patient might be, can they contact them directly
9 without going through you? Like, do they have another frequency
10 or way of doing that or do they have to go through AirCom to do
11 that?

12 A. Some hospitals, they're able to talk to directly; some
13 they're not. Typically, if they have questions, they will ask me
14 and I will clarify it for them.

15 Q. Okay. I would guess that that increases your workload
16 then if there's -- if people are calling -- I mean, it sounds like
17 you have -- how many -- I wasn't real clear. Do you have five or
18 six operations that you're responsible for coordinating EMS
19 activities for?

20 A. The total program that I work is known as the Heartland.
21 There are six flight programs, however, my primary responsibility
22 is LifeNet, which is five aircraft.

23 Q. Okay. So typically, then, you could be working five
24 different flights at the same time or five different EMS
25 situations at the same time, then?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Is it very common that you all have multiple flights at
3 the same time?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. It's -- from listening to the tapes, it sounded like you
6 had another two or three flights going on at the same time as the
7 St. Joe aircraft was in the air. Is that about right?

8 A. Yes, I had two flights, two other flights.

9 Q. And they are also calling and asking about patient
10 conditions or getting details about their -- where to pick up and
11 drop off the patient, that type of thing?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. So it sounds like it can get pretty busy, then, trying
14 to keep everything going at the same time?

15 A. It's a typical workday.

16 Q. But that's what you do, you balance all those demands
17 and keep people informed?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. When the aircraft finally arrives at the hospital, is
20 the -- does the pilot call you before he shuts down or after he
21 shuts down to let you know that he's at the hospital?

22 A. It depends on the hospital. Some, they're able to talk
23 to me while they're landing on the helipad and let me know that
24 they've landed safely. If they're unable to make radio contact,
25 they call via cell phone after the aircraft is shut down.

1 Q. Okay. And in this case, they shut down and the pilot
2 called you on the, I guess -- was it -- do you know if it was on a
3 cell phone or another telephone line?

4 A. I'm not sure if it was the aircraft phone or his phone.

5 Q. Okay, but he calls you. And from your memory, what did
6 he tell you about the predicament that he was in?

7 A. He said that he was incorrect on his fuel, that he
8 needed to stop somewhere and get fuel, and that he was looking in
9 the Excelsior Spring area, where he wanted to stop and get fuel.

10 Q. And you started helping him trying to figure out where
11 the fuel was available, right?

12 A. I wanted to confirm that there was jet A fuel at that
13 airport and get the telephone number for them so that I could make
14 that arrangement.

15 Q. And what program do you use to find out, you know,
16 telephone numbers and, you know, the -- what program did you use
17 to get that information?

18 A. I used a website known as AirNav.

19 Q. And so that -- then you just went through the -- once
20 you went to AirNav, did you look at these other airports to see if
21 there were -- was fuel available and the facilities, that kind of
22 thing?

23 A. The initial time that I looked was at the airport in
24 Bethany. I confirmed that there was no jet A there. Then I had
25 the pilot restate where he intended to go. Apparently, they

1 changed the name of the airport, so he had to restate it a couple
2 of times until I found it, confirmed there was jet A there. And I
3 just told him, you know, that they did have jet A.

4 Q. Right. And then -- and when the pilot departed the
5 hospital pad, do you recall how much fuel he told you that he had
6 on board the aircraft?

7 A. When he lifted from --

8 Q. Harrison County.

9 A. -- Harrison County, he stated he had four souls on board
10 and 45 minutes of fuel.

11 Q. Okay. And then did you contact the airport near Mosby
12 or did somebody else contact the airport concerning the fuel truck
13 being available?

14 A. That was passed on to the night shift, and Justine is
15 the one that called.

16 Q. Okay. So the pilot then departs, tells you that he has
17 four souls on board, that he has 45 minutes of fuel on board.
18 Now, was it soon after that that you gave the -- you did the shift
19 change with Justine?

20 A. I believe I had already given Justine the pass-along
21 before that.

22 Q. Oh, okay. So you had already given Justine the pass-
23 along, but then you went -- and then -- but you were still on the
24 -- it sounds like you must have still have been on the station
25 then because you confirmed that -- you answered the pilot when he

1 called in with your --

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. -- the souls on board?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Okay. And so, already, you're -- this was a little bit
6 after 6 p.m., so you're kind of, you know, kind of -- well,
7 basically, you're supposed to be off shift at 6 p.m., but because
8 you had this situation going on, you stayed there and made the
9 pass-on to Justine then?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Is that -- yeah, okay. And then was it then that you
12 decided to contact your supervisor about the situation?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. So you'd done the pass-over with Justine and then
15 contacted your supervisor somewhere?

16 A. I contacted my supervisor after the liftoff.

17 Q. Okay. But you had already made the pass-off to Justine
18 as far as the -- your -- for your pass-down, I guess?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay. And who is your supervisor?

21 A. Lowell.

22 Q. All right. And is -- does he also have a supervisor or
23 is he kind of the person in charge that you would go to for all,
24 everything that you're doing there or --

25 A. He is the night shift supervisor.

1 Q. Okay. He mentioned something about an AOC, or maybe you
2 mentioned an AOC in Arizona. What is an AOC?

3 A. I believe an AOC is the administrator on call.

4 Q. And is that on the flight side or is it on the medical
5 side? Who would that be typically?

6 A. LifeNet doesn't have an AOC.

7 Q. Okay. Does anybody in -- that you work with there in
8 Omaha, your flights, do they have AOCs? I guess, well, I guess
9 you go all over the place in your, in --

10 A. There are other programs that have AOCs.

11 Q. Okay. Is that a medical person or a flight person
12 typically?

13 A. I believe it's a medical person.

14 Q. Okay. You know, I -- that really helps out a lot. I
15 appreciate that, Korey. I can't think of anything else I need to
16 ask.

17 MR. SILLIMAN: Malcolm, do you have anything else
18 further?

19 MR. BRENNER: A little bit.

20 BY MR. BRENNER:

21 Q. How was the weather for that mission?

22 A. To be honest with you, I don't remember what the weather
23 was. I mean, the pilot was on yellow weather status. It's his
24 job to check the weather.

25 Q. Sure. Have you listened to the tapes since the event

1 itself?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. When did you listen to the tapes?

4 A. Yesterday.

5 Q. How did the pilot sound?

6 A. To be honest with you, it was a little creepy.

7 Q. Why is that?

8 A. Because the pilot's no longer with us, sir.

9 Q. Yeah, of course. How did your supervisor sound?

10 A. Normal.

11 Q. Anything else that we haven't discussed that could help
12 us in the investigation?

13 A. I can't think of anything.

14 MR. BRENNER: Jim, I think I'm done.

15 MR. SILLIMAN: Yeah, that should cover it.

16 Korey, we certainly appreciate your help in the
17 investigation. I'll turn off the recorders now.

18 (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 Korey Cox

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