



National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Aviation Safety – Central Region

Interview Summary: Pushback Driver – CEN15IA337

Date: August 13, 2015

Location: Denver International Airport

Interviewers: Jennifer Rodi NTSB, Denver, Colorado

Erin Carroll Southwest Airlines, Dallas, Texas

Interviewee: DeVonne J Jefferies

During the Interview, Mr. Jefferies stated the following:

Mr. Jefferies was a pushback driver with Southwest Airlines (SA) and had been with the company for 4 months. He had been out of training for 3 months and was a gate lead. Prior to working for SA he worked as a repossession driver.

On the day of the event, Mr. Jefferies had been on shift for 1.5 hours – it was his first push for the day. His normal shift was 1630 to 0100. He stated that his last day off was several weeks prior to the event. He had worked the day prior for a few hours and was sent home following a family medical emergency. The emergency had not resolved by the next day but he was concerned about calling in as he was a new employee.

In hindsight, he felt that he was stressed and shaken by the family emergency and felt off the entire day. He stated that it was a stressful week and his mind was not in the right place. He was on probation as a new hire and was concerned about losing his job.

Mr. Jefferies completed his walk around as he waited for the jet bridge to be retracted. He stated that during his walk around he had issues with his headset and could not clearly hear the captain speaking. He described it as a bad buzzing sound like on a telephone – cutting in and out. He was trying to communicate with the pilot that he was still conducting the walk around and he could not completely understand the pilot – the pilot could not understand him. He adjusted his headset multiple times to resolve the issue. He was not able to hear the wing walker at all.

He stated that his headset was wireless and depending on where he stood and who he was trying to talk to depended on whether or not there were always issues.

Mr. Jefferies understood from the captain that he was clear to start pushing the airplane back. Traffic behind the airplane on the vehicle service road was clear and the wing

walker indicated, through hand signals, that he was clear to push. During the push he felt a tug on the airplane. He looked to the right and observed that the airplane had hit the provisioning truck.

Mr. Jefferies was sitting in his enclosed pushback vehicle when the collision occurred.

Mr. Jefferies indicated that his responsibilities as a gate lead and pushback driver included the following:

- Ensuring all doors on the airplane were secured
- Looking for evidence of bird strikes
- Looking for any damage to the engine or airplane
- Examining the tires of the airplane
- Ensuring that the cargo doors were secure
- Ensuring that the safety zones were secure
- Picking up and disposing of FOD

He elaborated and stated that the safety zone was defined by a red and white line. Anything inside of these lines was not supposed to be there and needed to be moved before the airplane could be moved.

Mr. Jefferies stated that he did not recall the provisioning truck being in the safety zone during his walk around – he was unsure why. He stated that a second wing walker may have been beneficial and prevented this occurrence. He stated that he had a lot on his mind and felt rushed by the pilot, possibly due to the communication issues.