

S T A T E M E N T
Weather Forecast Office
Grand Junction
January 9, 2013

The following is a report concerning the accident involving aircraft N115WF at the Aspen/Pitkin County Airport in Colorado. The accident occurred on Sunday, January 5, 2014 at 1922 UTC or 12:22 pm Mountain Standard Time (MST).

My name is Tom Renwick and I am employed as a senior meteorologist at the Grand Junction Weather Forecast Office. I was on duty as the short-term and aviation forecaster during the period from 7:00 am to 4:00 pm MST on January 5, 2014. My duties included the issuance of Terminal Aerodrome Forecasts (TAFs) for eastern Utah and western Colorado to include the Aspen/Pitkin County Airport (KASE).

I arrived on duty about 10 minutes before 7 am and was briefed by the previous forecaster on weather conditions, trends, and what was expected during my shift. After my briefing, I reviewed the current weather situation, latest radar and satellite data and also checked the current forecast and TAFs.

At about 9:55 am, I began preparing the routine TAF package valid for the period beginning at 11 am (1800Z, January 5th). Analysis showed a strong jet moving over Colorado which was steadily moving eastward. Winds from the previous day at KASE had gusted to around 20kts but this was mainly due to some snowshowers moving over the airport. When I wrote the TAF for KASE I did not include gusty winds for a few reasons. First, ASE sits in a bowl and is fairly sheltered from winds. Also, the jet was continuing to move eastward so winds would start diminishing and continue to do so over the next 24 hours. Finally, both MAV and MET guidance suggested winds around 10 to 12 kts at KASE. I did expect an occasional gusty wind from the showers but did not expect them to last long enough or be strong enough to include in the TAF. Thus, the portion of the KASE TAF valid for the period from 11 am to 2 pm included a forecast for winds from the northwest at 10 knots, visibility of greater than 6 statute miles with vicinity showers and scattered clouds at 4,000 feet and a broken cloud deck at 6,000 feet.


Shortly before 12 pm, the ASOS at KASE started reporting gusty winds of upwards of 30 kts. KEGE also started reporting gusty winds at about this time though the winds were gusting around 20 kts. I examined webcams from around the area and saw plenty of areas with breaks in the clouds, other areas that were overcast while a few webcams showed some snow showers. The visible satellite at the time showed some shallow convective clouds moving over the northern and central mountains. During this time frame, I also received a PIREP of LLWS of +/- 10kts for the airport. I amended the TAF at approximately 12:10 pm for surface winds of 10G30kt which was occurring at the time. I then amended the TAF again at around 1 pm as the surface winds became predominantly 15kts.

At approximately 12:40 pm (19:40Z), I received a call from the CWSU that an aircraft accident

had occurred at the Aspen airport. A few minutes later I received another call from the Aspen tower stating the same thing. I then called AOMC and requested data to be archived for KASE.

After the accident, I continued to amend TAFs as needed for KASE and all of our other sites though winds did diminish at KASE at 4 pm.

My replacement came in at 4 pm and I briefed him on the current weather situation and provided him with all the information we had on the aircraft accident. I left the office around 4:15 p.m.



Thomas Renwick
Senior Meteorologist