



National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Aviation Safety
Washington, D.C. 20594-2000
April 18, 2012

ATTACHMENT 8 to the METEOROLOGICAL FACTUAL REPORT ANC12IA024

Interview: Mr. Dave Hadley, Lead Forecaster – Alaska Aviation Weather Unit/National Weather Service [via telephone]

Represented by: Mr. Don Moore – National Weather Service

Date: April 18, 2012

Locations: National Transportation Safety Board headquarters, Washington, DC
National Weather Service Alaska Region headquarters, Anchorage, Alaska
Alaska Aviation Weather Unit, Anchorage, Alaska

Start time: 1400 EST

Present: Mike Richards - National Transportation Safety Board
Jeff Osiensky – National Weather Service

Mr. Hadley stated that he has been a Lead Forecaster at the Alaska Aviation Weather Unit (AAWU) since 1995. Mr. Hadley stated that as a Lead Forecaster he is responsible for text and graphical weather products provided to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), general aviation pilots, and the international community. Mr. Hadley also stated that as a Lead Forecaster he is responsible for issuing advisories such as AIRMETS¹ and SIGMETs², which include advisories on volcanic ash. On days where work is very busy, Mr. Hadley stated that the issuance of warnings (advisories) take priority. Mr. Hadley indicated the AAWU was busy in a weather-sense on the evening of March 5, 2012. Mr. Hadley stated that his duty hours that night were from 2300 Alaska standard time (AKST) on March 5, 2012, to 0700 AKST on March 6, 2012, and that he was in the middle of a string of “graveyard” shifts. Mr. Hadley also indicated that the Lead Forecaster is also the supervisor on duty when the regular supervisor is not present. When asked what time of the day the regular supervisor leaves, Mr. Hadley indicated between 1600 and 1700 AKST.

¹ Airmen's Meteorological Information

² Significant Meteorological Information

Mr. Hadley stated that when a forecaster comes on duty and relieves another forecaster at their position, a shift change briefing is performed. Mr. Hadley indicated that such a briefing would normally consist of the out-going forecaster identifying situations out of the ordinary to the incoming forecaster. Mr. Hadley also described such a situation as “briefing by exception,” unless the situation was not out of the ordinary, in which case the out-going forecaster would indicate that “everything was status quo.” Mr. Hadley stated that during the in-brief to his position on the night of March 5, 2012, the out-going forecaster did not brief him on icing. Mr. Hadley stated that the subject of icing was not touched and that the out-going forecaster told him that he was unaware of any significant icing.

Mr. Hadley stated that he had become concerned with the potential for aircraft icing during his drive to work that night, which commenced when he left his residence about 2030 AKST. Mr. Hadley indicated that he encountered freezing precipitation during his drive to work, which resulted in a coating of ice on his windshield that he could not keep clean and slick roads. Mr. Hadley stated that it was during this time that he became highly suspicious that a significant icing hazard to aircraft might be present. Mr. Hadley stated that the freezing precipitation that he experienced was rare and that it was on the severe-end of freezing precipitation events that have occurred in the area.

Mr. Hadley stated that after his in-brief from the previous forecaster, he immediately checked for pilot reports (PIREPs) using the previous forecaster’s workstation profile³. Mr. Hadley indicated that he immediately checked for PIREPs and saw several severe icing PIREPs. Mr. Hadley indicated that he was responsible for issuing a SIGMET for severe icing at 2306 AKST on March 5, 2012. Mr. Hadley was asked about the situational awareness of freezing precipitation in his office (which includes the Weather Forecast Office), and Mr. Hadley was not aware of any situational awareness on this situation. When asked about the criteria for issuing a SIGMET, Mr. Hadley stated that it would depend on the forecaster and the conditions. Mr. Hadley noted that one could issue a SIGMET on a single report of severe conditions.

When asked about what information he utilizes with regard to identifying an icing hazard, Mr. Hadley indicated that he uses “RAOB” soundings, weather model data, PIREPs and the Interactive Calibration of Four Dimensions (IC4D). Mr. Hadley stated that Tropospheric Airborne Meteorological Data Reporting (TAMDAR) data is available to forecasters but that they must take time to find it on their own and is outside of the normal suite of products available at their workstation. Mr. Hadley noted that TAMDAR data can be useful at times when trying to identify front position or areas of turbulence, but that it is not always useful.

Mr. Hadley stated that PIREPs are received at their workstations via the National Airspace Data Interchange Network (NADIN) as well as the Aeronautical Information System Replacement (AISR). Mr. Hadley stated that the NADIN fails to supply all available PIREPs to the AAWU and that he believes that there is a special issue that plagues Alaska when it comes to receiving PIREPs via the NADIN, but he was not sure what that was. Mr. Hadley indicated that PIREPs received via the NADIN are plotted geographically for the forecaster, but that the forecaster must

³ Mr. Hadley noted that it can as much as 15 minutes to log out of another workstation profile and then log back into the workstation under a different profile.

manually refresh their workstation window to get updated PIREPs. Mr. Hadley stated that on a busy day, he may refresh to update his PIREPs once or twice an hour. Mr. Hadley indicated that the AISR system is available because it does a good job of providing PIREPs issued near the Anchorage area, but that it does not totally fill the gap left by the NADIN. PIREPs received via the AISR system will not be plotted geographically, but will present an indication to the forecaster's workstation screen when the PIREP is for low-level wind shear, severe turbulence or severe icing. When asked about latency, Mr. Hadley stated that on occasion he has seen PIREPs come in late. Mr. Hadley also stated that he takes reports of "moderate/severe" conditions as severe reports. When asked about the importance of PIREPs to their work, Mr. Haldey exclaimed that they were "extremely important!"

When asked about communication with the FAA, Mr. Hadley stated that there is a scheduled call with the FAA every night at 0100 AKST for weather support. Mr. Hadley noted that sometimes the AAWU will call the FAA when the Center Weather Service Unit (CWSU) is closed and the forecaster would like to be informed of ride reports from the air traffic controllers. Mr. Hadley indicated that when they communicate with the FAA, it is with the FAA supervisors. Mr. Hadley also noted that sometimes the FAA supervisors will call the AAWU.

Mr. Hadley stated that the CWSU will issue Center Weather Advisories (CWAs) for situations that do not meet SIGMET-level, and that he believes the CWSU actions add positively to what the AAWU does. Mr. Hadley stated that he believes CWAs are made available to pilots much the same as SIGMETs are.

Mr. Haldey indicated that it is only "once in a blue moon" that he talks to the weather people at Elmendorf Air Force Base.

Interview ended at approximately 1515 EST