



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Elliott Simpson
Aviation Accident Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Interview Date: February 10, 2011
Person Contacted: Captain Jeffrey Sakkatos
NTSB Accident Number: WPR11LA058
Accident Information: SkyWest N614SK, Salt Lake City, November 23, 2010

Present for Interviews:

Mike Eisenstat (Manager Safety Investigations) SkyWest Airlines
Shannon Masters (Air Safety Investigator) – Delta Air Lines. Present for first 10 minutes of interview
Elliott Simpson – NTSB

The following is a summary of a telephone conversation with Captain Jeffrey Sakkatos.

Captain Sakkatos reported that while at the gate, with the airplane attached to the tug, he performed an 'air start' for both engines. After the start, he subsequently gave the tug driver clearance to push back. The tug driver subsequently attempted to push back the airplane but was unable to due to a lack of traction. The tug driver then communicated to the flight deck that he would change to a larger tug. The Captain became concerned that disconnecting the tug with both engines running in the slippery conditions could cause the airplane to move. He considered shutting down one or both of the engines, however he attempted to communicate his concerns with the tug driver, however the tug had already been disconnected. He reported that by this time the air-start equipment had also been removed from the gate area. The airplane remained firmly in position at the gate, so he decided to keep both engines running.

The tug driver returned with a larger tug, and the airplane was successfully pushed back from the gate. The airplane began to move back appropriately, and while it was not moving fast, he could sense that it was being moved with some force. He then began to feel a sensation that the airplane was turning, followed by a slipping motion. He asked the tug driver if he still had control of the airplane, to which he replied in the affirmative. He then observed the tug rotate to the right of the airplane and he felt a collision. He reported that he was not, 'heads down' at the time of the accident, and that although he did not believe the airplane was moving forward, the events transpired so quickly that it is possible he may have missed any forward motion. As such, he could not definitively confirm if the tug struck the airplane, or if the tug was struck by the airplane.

When asked why he started both engines at the gate, Captain Sakkatos stated that he made a judgment call based on the inoperative APU. He was concerned that if he started one engine only, then he would encounter control problems if he taxied in the slippery conditions. He reported that he could also have attempted to start the second engine in the gate alleyway using cross-bleed, however, he was concerned that attempting such a start would require increasing the power to the running engine and could be disruptive to ground personal and other traffic within the alleyway. Additionally, he had recently had a hot start while attempting to cross-bleed an engine, and he therefore did not want to risk damaging this engine with a cross-bleed start.

With regard to weather, he stated that the ramp area at the gate the was plowed and mostly clear although snow was falling; however the alleyway where the airplane was pushed back to was contaminated with snow and ice. Although there was snow falling prior to the pushback, his view was not obscured during the maneuver, and he could clearly see the tug.



RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Elliott Simpson
Aviation Accident Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Interview Date: January 21, 2011
Person Contacted: Mateaki (Matt) Latu
NTSB Accident Number: WPR11LA058
Accident Information: SkyWest N614SK, Salt Lake City, November 23, 2010

Present for Interviews:

Mateaki (Matt) Latu - Delta Air Lines
Bill Howard (Performance leader) – Delta Air Lines
Mike Eisenstat (Manager Safety Investigations) SkyWest Airlines
Shannon Masters (Air Safety Investigator) – Delta Air Lines
Elliott Simpson – NTSB

The following is a summary of a telephone conversation with Mateaki Latu

Mr. Latu explained that his position at Delta Air Lines is that of an Airplane Load Agent, and that he has been employed with Delta at Salt Lake City Airport since November 2000. He stated that Mr. Howard would be his representative for the interview.

Mr. Latu stated that on the day of the accident, the airplane loading had been completed, and the airplane was being prepared for pushback. The captain requested an, 'air start' at the gate, and reported that he was going to start both engines. Mr. Latu was seated in the tug, which was connected to the airplanes nose wheel. He was in communication with the flight crew via the interphone, and additionally the crew could see him from their position on the flight deck. The gate was B4. With regards to the weather conditions, he reported that the ground area had been plowed earlier in the evening, however it had been snowing for at least 1/2 hour prior to the push back, and the ground had not been cleared or treated with salt since the snow began to fall. He reported the ground conditions to be slick. Snow was falling, and he observed a member of the flight crew performing a walk-around prior to push back in the snowy weather conditions.

The engines were started, and the captain reported that the brakes were released, and they were cleared to push. Mr. Latu began the process of pushing the airplane back, but due to a lack of traction with the tug, the airplane would not move. He subsequently informed the flight crew, and decided to use a larger tug. He changed the tug, and began the push back procedure. The larger tug was able to move the airplane, and they began to back out of the gate area. He was about to turn the airplane to the south when it started to skid to the left, "on its own" in the direction of the turn. The airplane then subsequently began to move forward, towards the tug, and pushing it to the right. About this time the captain asked over the interphone if the airplane was pushing the tug, to which he responded yes. The airplane continued to move forward, subsequently overtaking the tug, which remained connected to the airplane nose wheel. The tow bar then severed at the nose wheel about the time the tug struck the belly of the airplane.

Mr. Latu reported that two wing walkers were present at the time of the accident, and that neither tug was equipped with snow chains or traction devices.

He reported that he been trained in the use of the tug about 9 years ago, and that he was familiar with the ground operations manual, which he references from time-to-time. He could not recall if it is a Delta or SkyWest operations manual, but whichever manual was on the computer.

STATEMENT

SkyWest Airlines First Officer Daniel Tesfaw

Submitted on November 29, 2010

NTSB Investigation: WPR11LA058

“We were at the gate leaving SLC for OKC with a differed APU. We needed to start the engines at the gate due to the differed APU and started both engines. We started the push back and after a few feet the tug driver informed us that he needed to use a different tug. He brought back a bigger tug and we commenced the push. Part way through the push the captain asked the driver if he still had control and the tug driver replied yes. Very shortly after the tug started to slide to my right towards the airplane and came to a stop by striking the right side of the fuselage.

This is my statement as I remember the accident.”

Daniel Tesfaw

The following information being furnished to NTSB Investigator-in-Charge Elliott Simpson pertains to the SkyWest Airlines accident on November 23, 2010 at SLC where a tug damaged a SkyWest CRJ700 (N614SK) during push-back on an icy ramp.

SkyWest Airlines is a Party Representative to the NTSB investigation WPR11LA058.

STATEMENT

Delta Airlines Tug Driver Matt Latu

The textual account is taken from Mr. Latu's handwritten statement.

NTSB Investigation: WPR11LA058

Note: Since this textual account has been copied from Mr. Latu's handwritten statement, the spelling, punctuation and interpretation of incorrect forms of words have been corrected. The reader may refer to the copy of the original handwritten statement for comparison.

"As we were pushing out flight 4543 OKC, we started to turn. The engine of the plane was running and as we started to turn, the plane started to slide and as I tried to straighten the plane, the plane started to slide forward and the Captain asked if the plane was pulling the tug forward and I said yes. I stopped and the plane kept coming forward and it broke the tow bar and the plane kept coming forward and hit the push back tug and I called for supervisor."

The following information being furnished to NTSB Investigator-in-Charge Elliott Simpson pertains to the SkyWest Airlines accident on November 23, 2010 at SLC where a tug damaged a SkyWest CRJ700 (N614SK) during push-back on an icy ramp.

SkyWest Airlines is a Party Representative to the NTSB investigation WPR11LA058.