

**Docket No. SA-538**

**Exhibit No. 6-E**

**NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD**

**Washington, D.C.**

Interviews  
(9 Pages)

United Parcel Service  
Airbus A-300-600  
Birmingham, Alabama  
August 14, 2013  
DCA13MA133

**National Transportation Safety Board  
Washington, DC**

**Survival Factors Group Chairman's Factual Report**

**Attachment 4**

Interviews

7 pages

**Interview Name:** Shelia Bates, Supervisor, Airport Operations

**Date:** August 16, 2013

**Time:** 1:17pm

**Location:** Birmingham – Shuttlesworth International Airport Operations Center

**Representative:** Declined

**Interview conducted by:** Mark George- NTSB, Emily Gibson- NTSB, Jim Price- FAA, Jim Payne- BHM Airport Ops, and Ken Hoff- UPS

Shelia Bates had worked for the Birmingham Airport Operations for 5 ½ years. She held the position of supervisor.

On the morning of the accident, Ms. Bates was working on payroll in the supervisor office. She heard Laurie Boyd, who was driving on the general aviation ramp, say over the frequency “Did I hear what I think I heard”. The tower reported back yes, alert 3 and it was a UPS cargo plane.

Ms. Bates spoke to Ms. Boyd over the radio frequency to confirm the Alert 3. She asked where and was told UPS cargo at 18 approach. Ms. Bates ran out of the office, as she was leaving the facility she heard the crash phone ring.

On the way to the crash site she called Jim Payne, the Director of Operations and Planning. With Laurie Boyd following in a separate vehicle, Ms. Bates drove to the east side of the ramp. She asked the tower for permission to proceed north on bravo crossing 6-24. Once at the north end, she asked to cross the approach of 18. As she waited, she noticed the REILs were flashing. Ms. Bates called the tower twice to cross the approach.

When Ms. Bates arrived at Gate 1, it was already open and monitored by a construction contractor. She drove through. She spoke to another airport operations person and was advised that runway 6-24 was open.

As she approached the crash site, she saw the aircraft on fire. She stated it was a small fire but grew much larger. She was the first on scene. Ms. Bates stated multiple large fire trucks began to arrive shortly after she arrived. She radioed the tower to let them know that ARFF had arrived. The fire fighters asked how they could into the fenced area. Ms. Bates explained there was a gate, but needed keys to access. She had keys and offered them to the firefighters. However, she also said they could tear down the fence to access the wreckage. Ms. Bates mentioned the firefighters first on scene were not wearing “silvers” so she thought they might have been city fire fighters. She noticed other fire trucks moving up the hill, past where they were standing,

heading north up the road. Ms. Bates looked down toward the airport and noticed the PAPI was on.

A city fire official told Ms. Bates and Ms. Boyd to leave the area for their safety. She drove to the intersection of Airport Road and East Lake and set up a command center there. She saw a lieutenant at the intersection who asked her how many souls were onboard. She called the tower via her cellphone but they did not know. She told the lieutenant at the minimum there were two. Other people began to arrive at the intersection, including members of the police department and the media.

Ms. Bates called airport operations to ensure someone was blocking the other access points to the scene. She remained at the command center and called Redbird (ARFF Call sign) to confirm they were maintaining index. Redbird replied they were within the index. Ms. Bates spoke to airport operations to ensure they were going through the contact list for an Alert 3.

Ms. Bates stated that at one point, she looked up and could see water or some kind of substance being put on the fire. She mentioned that when she first arrived at the scene there was a small explosion and two more occurred later on. She was standing by on the street during the second explosion. She described the second explosion as small and sounded like a shot gun. At the intersection, she saw a larger explosion. She said it was so large she felt it.

Ms. Bates stated the FAA wanted to speak with someone from airport operations who knew about the accident. She was patched into a conference call with the FAA and the NTSB. The 3-way call with Bob Gretz (NTSB) and Myra (FAA Southern Region) confirmed a UPS A306 was down.

Ms. Bates said that the city called her to ask about the sewer lines. She said Jim Payne spoke to a UPS representative who was able to read the cargo manifest to him. UPS later sent the cargo manifest. Mr. Payne was also able to confirm the souls on board with UPS.

Ms. Bates and Mr. Payne spoke about the NOTAM for runway 18. She was not sure if the FAA or the tower was supposed to issue a NOTAM. She checked the website and did not see one so she called and issued a NOTAM to close runway 18.

A city fire department lieutenant called Ms. Bates to tell her they found two people in the cockpit and they were deceased. Other organizations began to arrive at the airport intersection, including her airport operations relief, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the UPS Manager. Ms. Bates remained on scene.

Ms. Bates decided to walk up the hill past the wreckage. She received a phone call from the city utility. She handed the phone to the fire chief who stated they were on their way to the scene. Ms. Bates continued up the hill, stopping briefly to take some photographs of the wreckage for

her report. She continued to take photographs. At approximately 0700 hours, she noticed [Birmingham police department] "homicide" had arrived. Looking back down the hill, she noticed maintenance was putting X's on runway 18.

Ms. Bates asked permission to swing wide across the wreckage to take some additional photographs with her phone. At this time she stated the fire was out but it was still smoldering. Fire fighters were still spraying agent on the wreckage. At approximately 0725 hours Sheila noted the runway 18 PAPI was on and the REILS were off.

She noticed the tree tops were clipped at the top of the hill. She went to the house next to the trees and spoke to the residents there. The residents stated they heard a loud boom and saw a flash of light. They thought it was thunder. She did not know of the accident until someone saw it on the news and called to tell them. When she went outside she saw debris from the accident. Ms. Bates took photographs of the wreckage for her report up until her phone battery charge had depleted.

**Interview Name:** Jesse Williams, Airport Firefighter/Watchman

**Date:** August 16, 2013

**Time:** 3:56pm

**Location:** Birmingham Airport Fire Station

**Representative:** Declined

**Interview conducted by:** Mark George- NTSB, Emily Gibson- NTSB, Jim Price- FAA, Jim Payne- BHM Airport Ops, and Ken Hoff- UPS.

Firefighter Williams had worked for the BHM ARFF for 5 years with 19 years of total fire service.

Firefighter Williams stated he always took the watch when he worked his shift. He said the watch meant he dispatched the calls and answered the phones.

On the morning of the accident, Firefighter Williams was lying in bed when the crash phone rang. His Murphy bed was approximately 20 feet from the crash phone. He said that on the night of the accident it only rang for a half ring and that meant someone must have picked it up quickly. He stated the crash phone rings in multiple locations across the airport.

Firefighter Williams explained the crash phone flashes with a bright blinding light that strobes and rings loudly. The crash phone is checked every morning at 0800. Firefighter Williams stated he only knows of 2 times that since he has been with ARFF that the crash phone had failed the test. Firefighter Williams stated the phone rings at the Airport Authority, Air National Guard Base Command Post, ARFF Station, Kaiser Inc. (a private aircraft heavy maintenance facility).

Firefighter Williams stated that when he picked up the phone they were already talking. He said he heard UPS 3- something and some other numbers behind it, "Runway 18, 3 mile final." He said that Kaiser asked to have the information repeated and then it was stated "UPS Airbus - 2 mile final." Firefighter Williams said he did not hear anything about an Alert 3. Firefighter Williams assumed that because the controller stated 3 mile final that the aircraft was still in flight and on approach. Firefighter Williams also stated that his actions would be the same for an Alert 2 or 3.

Firefighter Williams stated the tower controller conducts a roll call at the end of the information given.

Firefighter Williams turned on the lights in the sleeping quarters and “hit the punch out bell” 3 times to alert the crew. He also announced the location as Runway 18/36.

Firefighter Williams said five Redbird trucks departed the station. He said Redbird 20 and 21 were P23s operated by one person each and cannot be taken off the base without permission. Redbird 22 is a T-1500 operated by one person, and Redbird 24 and 27 were quick response trucks operated by 2 people. Firefighter Williams recalled Truck 22 (T1500) was the first to run out of foam.

Firefighter Williams was driving Redbird 20, and once he learned the accident was off airport property he returned the truck back to the station and called the tower to ask about souls on board, fuel, and hazardous material. Redbird 21 was given permission to leave the airport to aid in the firefighting efforts. Firefighter Williams asked Kaiser to go to their standby positions on the other side of the runway to maintain their index.

The ARFF manpower during the event was: five fire fighters from the city, and two state fire fighters. The Air National Guard is only staffed by military personnel during weekend operations.

**Interview Name:** Donald Lewis Jones, Battalion Chief

**Date:** August 16, 2013

**Time:** 4:45pm

**Location:** Birmingham Airport Fire Station

**Representative:** Declined

**Interview conducted by:** Mark George- NTSB, Emily Gibson- NTSB, Jim Price- FAA, Jim Payne- BHM Airport Operations, and Ken Hoff- UPS

Chief Jones is the Battalion 3, C-shift Chief of the city of Birmingham. He works in Station 12 in Woodlawn. He has 2 ½ years of service as a Battalion Chief and 20 years of total fire service.

Chief Jones has 7 city fire stations under his command. Groups responsibilities include DECON, HAZMAT, Structures and Mutual Aide.

Chief Jones was not the initial commander for this accident. A captain from Station 28, Andy Beardon, established command. Chief Jones assumed the command once he arrived at the scene.

Chief Jones thought he received the call around 0400. He received an 'all call', which is sent to the entire city, that airplane had gone down. He thought they said a large commercial aircraft.

Chief Jones initially received the wrong location. He was told at the intersection of Tarrant Huffman Drive and Airport Boulevard. The vehicles first on scene relayed the correct location while en route; Chief Jones stated the incorrect information did not hurt the response time.

Once Chief Jones arrived on scene he said he saw the fuselage section of the aircraft and the tail section first. He stated his first course of action was to establish search and rescue.

Chief Jones stated he needed to gain access to the site. He said the fire fighters cut the fence wires to access the scene and the fence was demolished within a minute and a half.

During that time, Captain Beardon was communicating via the radio. Chief Jones mentioned that he did not realize the scene was as big as it was. He could not see the lights of the other trucks. Chief Jones decided to divide the command into sections; Tactical Groups #1: cockpit, and #2: fuselages. He had Captain Beardon command the cockpit section of the aircraft.



Chief Jones also stated due to the number of people and everyone talking on the radio he gave Captain Beardon his own radio frequency. Chief Jones conducted search and rescue on his area of command and Captain Beardon conducted search and rescue on his side of command.

Chief Jones said while the firefighting efforts were continuing, he did not see any people. During his command he said that he heard three large explosions, one of which he felt the pressure wave. Chief Jones stated that during one explosion a section of the wing flew off the aircraft and landed just over one of the fire trucks. It landed 30 feet from the apparatus.

Chief Jones said he conducted a primary search of the area as close as he could get. He searched the north and east sides of the forward fuselage. He stated he could not find anyone. He set up a master stream.

Chief Jones said units Engine 19 and Engine 28 arrived but did not engage the fire. Openings in the chain link fence were created in about 1 ½ minutes. Redbird 21 arrived at the scene slightly ahead of him, and was the first ARFF on scene and first to engage the fire using foam. Redbird 21 and 22 both sprayed foam on the fire.

Chief Jones was called to the cockpit by Captain Beardon who said the crew was inside the aircraft deceased.

Chief Jones stated they cut another opening in the fence and applied foam to the wreckage.

When Chief Jones relief arrived (Battalion Chief Eric Smith), the fuselage was under control and the fire fighters were attacking the fire with hand lines.

Chief Smith returned the vehicles to service.

Approximately 1530 hours, City Heavy Rescue 10 and Rescue 3 extracted the bodies.

Chief Jones stated they made it to the accident site in a timely manner. He stated once they arrived at the incident location, they knew they needed to look for survivors but the challenge was getting there. He stated he did not know where the black boxes were located and if he did they could have focused on that area of the firefighting. He stated he thought the firefighting efforts went well.

City Mutual Aide and ARFF were on different frequencies but Chief Jones stated this did not hinder communications, as supporting captains were next to command chief and verbal instructions were provided, and then relayed.