

**NTSB Statement:** Joel Kain; TEMSCO Helicopters; Director of Safety

On May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016, I travelled to Skagway to assist in pre-season training for our Ground Crews. The training was for first-year employees including pilots, tour attendants, glacier guides, and van drivers. I arrived just before noon. The training began at 1300 in our hangar. Chris Maggio was the primary instructor for the class. We spent approximately two and a half hours in the hangar with the staff orienting them to the AS 350 (A-Star aircraft.) This training is an annual requirement supporting our membership in the Tour Operator's Program of Safety (TOPS). During the class we focused on general helicopter awareness and safety. There were approximately 15 personnel in attendance other than Chris and myself. That number included all three of the assigned mechanics in Skagway (who were available to assist with orientations). This training familiarizes the staff with the proper functioning of all doors, cargo storage areas, and access to the fuel tank for aircraft refueling. We conduct this initial block of training in the hangar where we can control the environment. Less noise. No phones. Protected from the elements. As all of the new employees were completing the hands-on portion of accessing the aft cargo compartment and the fuel cap, I excused myself from the hangar and went back to the main Skagway office to meet with the base leadership. I met with the Base Manager, Lead Pilot, Tour Manager and the Office Manager about early season expectations, and our implementation of a new web-based reporting system for Safety Reports and Flight Risk Assessments. The weather at this time was windy and overcast. There were numerous "musher" trucks in the parking lot and it was obvious if the weather would allow, we would be flying dogs to camp later that afternoon. At approximately 1600, Chris poked his head into the Base Manager's office and said that he would stick around to see if the weather improved and then he would fly dogs to camp.

I can recall two separate times in the next hour when I heard discussions between Chris and the Base Manager as to the weather conditions. It was still very windy at the base which is located on the waterfront. Although I do not recall the specific weather being reported at Dog Camp, I recall there was a discussion as to the ceiling and visibility on the Denver Glacier. Just before 1700, the weather conditions had improved enough that Chris decided he would begin flying the Dogs and the remaining Dog Camp staff to the glacier.

Just after 1700 Chris departed with the first load of Dogs and one member of the camp staff. At this point, I was in the Office Manager's office (second floor, directly adjacent to pad 1, Chris' point of departure). I was having a discussion with the Lead Mechanic Rob Vuille. Rob and I were in that office for Chris' first two or three flights. We noted the wind had not died down as we had expected. At approximately 1730 Rob and I left the second floor and moved to the dispatch office on the first floor where we joined Kelly Healy and the Dispatcher.

Chris' flights to support Dog Camp continued. I have been a part of these dog flights in previous years and nothing at this point seemed to be out of order. It was still very windy at our Base.

Those of us in Dispatch were discussing our Emergency Response Plan (ERP). Specifically we were talking about precautionary landings and forced landings. I had the ERP open and in front of me on the dispatch counter. After a ten to fifteen minute discussion we put the ERP back on the shelf directly in front of the Dispatcher on duty. Sometime around 1800 Kelly dismissed the Dispatcher and took over the role himself personally. Chris arrived and departed two more times while we were sitting in Dispatch. At some point on Chris' fourth or fifth trip I did overhear him comment on the radio that he was getting a small amount of ice on his windscreen, but that it would not persist as he descended. I made a mental

note of the icing comment, but did not discuss the issue with Kelly Healy as it seemed to be an isolated case that cleared upon descent to a lower altitude. On the next trip to Dog Camp, Kelly asked Chris directly about the ice situation and Chris said, that “the ice had abated.” For these last couple flights the weather at the base appeared to be improving slightly.

At 1840 (Verified by our flight log and the manifest) Chris departed on his 6<sup>th</sup> trip to camp. There was some radio traffic between Chris and the Dog Camp. Personally the only call I remember hearing was Chris saying “Don’t count me out just yet”. That was the last radio call I remember hearing. I did not hear any previous calls nor could I hear the response from the Dog Camp.

Kelly had been planning and prepping for an external load flight to bring more supplies to the Dog Camp, however due to the high winds he decided to make the trip with internally loaded cargo only. Kelly and the Camp Staff loaded his aircraft for the internal load mission while Chris continued to fly Dogs and Crew. As Kelly and the Dog Camp staff readied the second aircraft, Rob Vuille took over duty as the Dispatcher.

At is approached 1900, we realized that Chris’ icon on our satellite tracker had not updated. Kelly immediately tried to contact Chris on the radio with no response. He also contacted Dog Camp and asked them if N94TH had made it to camp. The camp manager Peter Bartlett replied that N94TH had in fact landed, off-loaded and departed. Peter commented that he watched the aircraft climbing toward the west wall on departure. This was a different route for departure than Chris had been using on earlier flights.

Kelly continued to attempt contact with Chris via the radios. At 1905, I took over duties as the Dispatcher and Kelly asked the Dog Camp staff to help him unload his aircraft so it could be used as a Search aircraft if necessary. Shortly before launch I asked Kelly if he wanted to take a second person with him as a second set of eyes. (This process is part of our ERP) He said yes and opted to take Rob Vuille. At this point, we also activated our Emergency Response Plan (ERP) using the “Overdue or Missing Aircraft” checklist.

Jesse Dominick, who had been at home eating dinner, returned to the base to provide any needed assistance. We used 1855 as the last known contact. (That was the final “ping” on our satellite tracker that provided locational data) Jesse and I began the notification process in our ERP. At this point we assumed Chris might have landed to wait for conditions to improve. At 1914, Kelly Healy and Rob Vuille took off from the base to attempt to contact or locate Chris and aircraft N94TH. After repeated attempts to get to the last known location via our normal access route (Paradise Valley to the toe of the Denver glacier) Kelly elected to fly north of Skagway and attempt to get to Chris’s location using the East Fork of the Skagway River or the Reid Falls area. Kelly was continually hampered by ceilings that seemed to be between 4000 and 4200 feet MSL. During this timeframe, both Jeremy Jansen (Office Manager) and Paul Reichert (Tour Manager) returned to base after receiving phone notifications. Jesse Dominick was in Operational Control. Kelly Healy was flying in aircraft OTH along with Rob Vuille as an observer. I was handling both Dispatch and Phone Coordinator duties. There were no other operations at that time so we did not designate a Base Coordinator. At 1930 we began to make the ETA + 30 minutes overdue notifications. This included calling our Director of Operations, Joe Hicks in Ketchikan. Additional calls went out to our Chief Pilot, Eric Eichner, our Media Coordinator, Tim McDonnell, and our CEO Bob Berto. By 1953 all of those people had been notified that Chris Maggio and N94TH were overdue, and that a search aircraft had already been launched. Also at 1938, I called Latitude Technologies

(Vancouver BC) to adjust the “ping rate” to every 15 seconds on aircraft N970TH, the search aircraft. Our default “ping rate” is every 120 seconds for nearly all of our fleet. The change did not happen immediately, but had taken effect by 1950 hours.

At 1945 hours, we still did not have positive contact with the aircraft, so we continued with the “Overdue or Missing Aircraft” checklist. We called the TEMSCO Base in Juneau, but no one answered. Having already notified all our appropriate company leadership, I called the FAA Regional Office in Anchorage at 2000 hours and requested a conference call with the NTSB. That first call included myself, Kevin (operating initials “AU”) from the FAA Regional Office in Anchorage, Shawn Williams of the NTSB and Doug Prior from the Juneau FSS. I informed them of our overdue aircraft and that we had in fact launched a search aircraft from our location. I answered some standard questions as to the type of aircraft, its last known location including Latitude and Longitude coordinates, its color/paint scheme, and whether or not the aircraft was equipped with a 406MHz Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT). The aircraft was equipped with an ELT, but no signal was being heard by our search aircraft and the FAA/FSS did not report any other ELT activations. At this time, we did not call the USCG or the Alaska State Troopers because we were still searching the area where we knew the aircraft to have been operating.

At 2009 hours Kelly Healy radioed our base that he had located aircraft N94TH and that it had definitely been involved in an accident. He stated the aircraft appeared “destroyed” and that the tailboom was severed. He said he could not clearly tell how the aircraft fuselage was oriented. He was unable at this time to observe any occupants or movement on the ground. High winds and blowing snow continued to prevent him from landing anywhere near the site. Nonetheless he made several passes and attempts to get on the ground. At that time, we shifted our ERP focus from our “Overdue or Missing Aircraft” checklist to our “Accidents Involving Aircraft” checklist. Jeremy Jansen took over as the Dispatcher and I continued as the Phone Coordinator. I immediately began making the appropriate calls to our company leadership to notify them the aircraft had been located and had definitely been involved in an accident. At this time, we also called the local 911 and requested assistance in the form of a Search and Rescue team. I have this called logged at 2012 hours and I believe it was Paul Reichert who actually made contact with the 911 service. At that same time I called the USCG and spoke with Petty Officer Lopez at Sector Juneau. She offered their support and I passed along the initial information I had shared with the NTSB and FAA at 2000 along with the revised details of the accident site, aircraft condition, and prevailing weather in the Skagway area. She said the USCG would prepare an aircraft and crew from Air Station Sitka and she would call me back with the details as soon as she had an ETA.

At 2031 I initiated a second teleconference with the FAA and the NTSB. This second teleconference included myself, Kevin (operating initials “AU”) from the FAA Regional office in Anchorage and both Shawn Williams and Brice Banning from the NTSB. I notified them the aircraft had been located, and had been badly damaged, but that our crew could not land due to high winds and turbulence. I also informed them the status of our pilot was still unknown. During this second teleconference Kelly Healy and Rob Vuille returned to base to refuel and departed a second time to attempt to get to the downed aircraft. At some point prior to this, a team from Dog Camp also attempted to reach the scene via Snow Mobiles. Kelly reported being able to see their headlights and the team could occasionally see the lights from the search aircraft however, neither the team on Snow Machines or Kelly and Rob in aircraft N970TH, were able to get to the site. The winds and turbulence were still unmanageable.

Just prior to 2100 hours we received a call from Sector Juneau that informed us a rescue helicopter was being sent from Sitka and that we should expect it to arrive at approximately 2200 hours.

By 2100 hours Kelly and Rob returned to base and Kelly picked up four Search and Rescue Personnel that had been contacted via the local police and fire authorities. Kelly departed the base with the four SAR personnel at 2120 hours and took them directly to Dog Camp without incident. Rob Vuille remained at base with us and did not fly back on Kelly's third flight. After dropping off the SAR team, Kelly returned to base.

We were in nearly constant contact with our Company and Corporate leadership in Ketchikan at this point. The USCG aircraft arrived right at 2200 hours flying up Taiya Inlet. We made radio contact with them and provided a revised aircraft location (actual site vs. the final "ping" from our SAT tracker). The USCG aircraft appeared to fly directly toward the Denver glacier)

During this same timeframe the SAR Team with the assistance from some Dog Camp personnel made another attempt via Snow Cat to get to the accident site. By 2230 the SAR team had returned to Dog Camp unable to get close to the site. They informed us they intended to remain at the Dog Camp for the night.

We did not hear from the USCG aircraft during this time. Approximately 2215 hours the USCG crew radioed that they needed to "dump some fuel" before they made another rescue attempt. We observed the USCG aircraft fly north and west over Skagway. They continued well up the Skagway river valley and then turned toward the East Fork and proceeded to fly back to the site. The next radio call we heard from the USCG at 2249 notified Sector Juneau that they were departing the scene and were enroute to Juneau. Then at 2252 hours, we received a call from the Alaska State Troopers which informed us the USCG had hoisted a rescue swimmer down to the accident aircraft and confirmed there were no survivors.

I made one call at this point to our Company and Corporate leadership in Ketchikan. I informed them of the fatality.

We began recovery operations the following morning (5/7/16). The company sent another aircraft from Juneau along with two additional pilots to handle the initial recovery.