**Factual Report – Attachment 1**

**Interview Summaries**

# AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

DCA20MA059

**Interviewee:** Nicholas Zajac (ZJ)
**Representative:** Christopher Adams – NATCA FACREP

**Date / Time:** January 30, 2020 / 0930 Pacific standard time (PST)
**Location:** Burbank Airport Traffic Control Tower (BUR ATCT)
**Present:** Regan Rasband – FAA and Dan Meyers – NATCA
**Investigator:** Brian Soper – NTSB

During the interview, Mr. Zajac provided the following information:

He began working at BUR ATCT in 2015 and was a certified professional controller (CPC). He held no collateral duties and had not been on any recent details.

He described his overall health as "good," with no waivers or restrictions to his medical clearance and had not taken any prescription or other medications on the day of the accident. In the past 12 months he had not had any significant changes to his health, finances, or personal life, good or bad, that would have affected his performance on the day of the accident. He recalled nothing remarkable about the 72 hours leading up to the time of the accident noting normal daily routine with adequate sleep and meals.

A relief briefing was conducted when he assumed the position, and when he was relieved from the position. The briefing was recorded, and a checklist was utilized. He recalled no unusual distractions around the time of the accident. On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the heaviest) he classified the traffic volume as 3 around the time he provided services to N72EX. On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the most complex) he classified the traffic complexity as 3 around the time he provided services to N72EX. He considered the traffic volume and complexity normal for the time of day and tempo of operations.

He recalled the weather conditions around the time of the accident as being IFR and had been the same all morning since he had arrived at work. He could physically see N72EX under the cloud layers during the transition through the airspace. He could not tell if there was any variation to the ceiling and did not recall if there was precipitation. He had received the pre-duty weather briefing (PDWB) and did not recall anything from it. He felt the PDWB was often inaccurate because they were in a valley explaining that the weather was rapidly changing and difficult to predict. The controller in-charge (CIC) would call into the Los Angeles Air Route Traffic Control Center (ZLA ARTCC) stand-up daily and felt that information was more accurate.

He first learned there may have been an accident when someone that has been on break called up and advised the supervisor that Kobe had died in a helicopter crash.

Mr. Zajac provided the following recollection surrounding the time of the event:

N72EX first called up south of the Los Angeles Zoo and requested special VFR (SVFR) transition through the class C airspace en route to Camarillo (CMA). He instructed the pilot to hold outside of the class C and advised that BUR was IFR. He instructed him to hold outside of the class C because he was dealing with an IFR go-around. After he coordinated the go-around with

SCT, he had another departure or two, and in between called VNY ATCT and asked how they wanted N72EX to transition. The tower controller at VNY ATCT said she had some departures and wanted to take him north of the airport. All the while, N72EX was still holding. He then took care of all the other traffic including one awaiting IFR release at the end of the runway. He then cleared N72EX to transition SVFR north of the airport, via interstate 5 to route 118. He observed the helicopter transition north of the airport until it was out of sight to the northwest. It was a routine transition, and nothing stood out as being "off". He then handed off N72EX to VNY ATCT.

The group then asked Mr. Zajac a series of questions and the following documents the questions asked, and answers provided:

Group: When did you learn there had been an accident?
ZJ: I was still on position when somebody that was on break called up and told the supervisor that Kobe had died in a helicopter crash.

Group: How frequently do you have SVFR operations at BUR?
ZJ: SVFR is infrequent, but when we do have it, it is usually during this time of year.

Group: Do you recognize N72EX as a helicopter you have worked before?
ZJ: The call sign stands out, so I know I have worked him.

Group: What is the PIREP life cycle at BUR ATCT?
ZJ: As a local controller we will ask the previous arrival for bases or tops and will put on the NIDS[1] where it remains until a subsequent PIREP replaces it. We also pass the information to SCT TRACON, and they will also pass tops reports to us that they receive. SCT TRACON can also see what we put into NIDS so they can see our PIREPs there as well.

Group: Do you disseminate those bases/tops reports outside the facility and into the National Airspace System (NAS)?
ZJ: If it is bases or tops, we just keep them in house because they only apply to us here. For other types of PIREPs like wind shear or turbulence, they get put into the system.

Group: How frequently do you enter PIREPs into the system here?
ZJ: I truthfully do not know

Group: When you do get PIREPs, how do they make it into the system?
ZJ: The CIC enters them into AISR[2], and for wind shear there is a button on NIDS that tells us how long it must continue being read, and it also goes on the ATIS[3].

[1] NIDS – NAS Information Display System – Replacement tool for the Information Display System (IDS-4) that integrates a number of systems displaying traffic, weather, and surveillance data, into one easy-to-use and fully customizable workstation with a touchscreen display.
[2] AISR – Aeronautical Information System Replacement - a web-enabled, automation means for the collection and distribution of Service B messages, weather information, flight plan data, Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) messages, Pilot Report (PIREP) message, and other operational information to all FAA Air Traffic facilities.
[3] ATIS – Automatic Terminal Information Service – A continuous broadcast of current, routine information to arriving and departing aircraft by means of continuous and repetitive broadcasts throughout the day or specified portion of the day.

Group: How does the CIC get the PIREP information - verbal or paper?
ZJ: The CIC is monitoring LC and hears them.

Group: Do you always have a standalone CIC here?
ZJ: Yes, we always have one except on the mid-shift when everything is combined. We only have one operations supervisor (OS), but a lot of CICs.

Group: Are you a CIC?
ZJ: Yes.

ZJ: I just want to be sure you know that I did issue the weather to N72EX, and I also let him know that the weather at VNY was similar as well.
Group: We do understand that from listening to the audio recordings.

Group: Did you ever get a reason why SKW191A executed a go-around?
ZJ: I do not think we got a reason.

Group: When you received the PIREP of bases at 1,500 feet, did you disseminate that information outside the facility?
ZJ: No. It might have been put in NIDS, but if it was, it was done by the CIC and not by me.

Group: Was the CIC monitoring you on LC that day?
ZJ: Yes.

Group: You mentioned that bases and tops get put into NIDS and that SCT TRACON can see that information, is there a follow up call to that information when it is entered?
ZJ: Yes, generally there is a phone call or landline call follow up from the originating facility to back it up.

Group: How far is I-5 from tower cab?
ZJ: Well it starts out further away then gradually gets closer.

Group: What was the closest point the helicopter ever came to the tower?
ZJ: The closest point of the helicopter was probably 1/4 - 1/2 mile.....it was “right there.”

Group: Once the helicopter had turned off the I-5 and was heading west bound along 118, could you see still see it?
ZJ: No. By the time it got up to Whiteman Airport (WHP), I could not see it, but even on a clear day you can hardly see an aircraft that small there.

Group: How far is the I-5 and 118 intersection from tower?
ZJ: Between 5-6 miles.

Group: When SKW191A executed the go-around, did you see that airplane?
ZJ: I do not remember, but I think he went around before ever coming into visibility range.

Group: Did everything look normal when N72EX made the SVFR transition?
ZJ: It appeared so; I had no concerns.

Group: Do you notice any difference procedurally between the tower here and when you worked at AMA ATCT?
ZJ: Yes, we are very “proceduralized” here, and they were “cowboys” there.

Group: What is your biggest ATC challenge here?
ZJ: The many and varied procedures with all the adjacent facilities, with no "free flow" as the NATCA FACREP put it. And getting releases from SCT TRACON is difficult.

Group: How is the working relationship with the adjacent facilities?
ZJ: Not bad, but the issues that do exist are more "controller to controller" rather than "facility to facility.” It has been getting better, recently SCT TRACON had a "hard nose" retire, and that has been good.

Group: Do you own the entire class C, or is part of it delegated to SCT TRACON?
ZJ: Part of it is delegated to SCT TRACON vertically and sectorized. I am not sure how much they own but we own from the surface to 2,500 feet south of the airport and from the surface to 3,000 feet north of the airport. We do not own above 3,000 feet anywhere.

Group: Do you radar identify VFR airplanes?
ZJ: Yes, including SVFR.

Interview concluded at 1030 PST.

**Interviewee:** Kathy Treadway (KT)
**Representative:** Christopher Bellmas – NATCA FACREP

**Date / Time:** January 29, 2020 / 1012 Pacific standard time (PST)
**Location:** Van Nuys (VNY ATCT)
**Present:** Mike Richards – NTSB; Dan Meyers – NATCA; Regan Rasband – FAA
**Investigator:** Brian Soper – NTSB

During the interview, Ms. Treadway provided the following information:

She began working at VNY ATCT in August 2007 and was a certified professional controller (CPC). She held no collateral duties and had not been on any recent details.

She described her overall health as “good,” with a requirement to wear corrective lenses while performing ATC duties, which she stated she was wearing on the day of the accident. She had not taken any prescription or other medications on the day of the accident. In the past 12 months she had not had any significant changes to her health, finances, or personal life, good or bad, that would have affected her performance on the day of the accident. She recalled nothing

remarkable about the 72 hours leading up to the time of the accident noting normal daily routine with adequate sleep and meals.

A relief briefing was conducted when she assumed the position, and when she was relieved from the position. The briefings were recorded, and a checklist was utilized. She recalled no unusual distractions around the time of the accident. On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the heaviest) she classified the traffic volume as 1 around the time she provided services to N72EX. On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the most complex) she classified the traffic complexity as 1 around the time she provided services to N72EX. She considered the traffic volume lighter than normal, and the complexity less than normal for the time of day and tempo of operations.

She recalled the weather conditions around the time of the accident as being IFR. She said the ceilings were high enough, but the visibility was what caused it to be IFR. She was not sure if it the obstruction to vision was mist or fog but was something she had seen in the past. She had received the pre-duty weather briefing (PDWB) and did not recall anything from it

Ms. Treadway provided the following recollection surrounding the time of the event:

She said it was all very routine from start to finish. BUR ATCT had coordinated via land line that they had a helicopter requesting SVFR and informed her of the requested routing, and she asked the BUR ATCT controller to transition him north of VNY ATCT. She then took the handoff on N72EX via the TDW[4], and when the pilot of N72EX called it was quite routine. The pilot requested to enter the class D SVFR, and she provided him the current weather and cleared him in to transition the class D SVFR. Once he was following the 118, he requested to fly south, and she approved his request. She then noticed on the TDW that he was several miles away from the airport and thought it would be a good time to change frequencies so she asked if he would like flight following from SCT TRACON and if he would be transitioning VFR. The pilot said he was VFR and wanted flight following so she handed off the tag to the SCT TRACON Woodland sector via automation (this was not a radar hand-off since VNY ATCT is not authorized to provide radar services, this is instead considered silent automated coordination).

The group then asked Ms. Treadway a series of questions and the following documents the questions asked, and answers provided:

Group: When did you find out there had been an accident?
KT: I found out while in the break room, when another controller called for information wanting to know the time N72EX transitioned, and I informed them there was a strip in the bin.

Group: Do you routinely have requests for SVFR here?
KT: Yes, mostly helicopters.

Group: What are the requirements for SVFR operations?

[4] TDW – Tower Display Workstation – A tower situational display that is a part of the Standard Terminal Automation Replacement System (STARS) which displays radar data that has been collected by various sensors and processed by the radar data processor (RDP), combined with flight plan data, and then presented on a color monitor.

KT: The field must be IFR and the pilot must request SVFR.

Group: You mentioned earlier that you "took the handoff" from BUR ATCT, are you a radar certified tower?
KT: No, we are not a radar facility, we only use the radar as a tool for automated coordination and as an extended eye.

Group: Are there any SOP or letter of agreement (LOA) requirements with regard to radar tag formatting or automated coordination?
KT: I could not give you specifics.

Group: How do you coordinate with SCT TRACON via radar?
KT: Before I flash a tag, I enter the type aircraft, destination, and if it is a local transition I put "LCL" in the scratch pad. In this case I had the “N number”, type aircraft, and transition and flashed it to SCT TRACON Woodland sector and they accepted the hand off.

Group: Did you pass any SVFR information about N72EX to SCT TRACON?
KT: I confirmed with the pilot that he was in VFR conditions when I switched him, so did not have to coordinate anything additional with them.

Group: Were you soliciting PIREPs?
KT: Yes.

Group: What do you do with PIREPs when you get them?
KT: I will tell the Flight Data/Clearance Delivery (FD/CD) controller verbally, and they will put it on the status information board. The desk (CIC position) would ensure that information gets typed into AIS-R.

Group: Are you a CIC?
KT: Yes.

Group: Do you remember receiving PIREPs from anybody while N72EX was in the transition?
KT: I do not recall any during the transition, and nothing immediately before or after.

Group: Is this a LAWRS[5] facility?
KT: Yes.

Group: Do you augment the automated weather from the system on the field?
KT: Yes.

Group: Who normally does the augmenting?
KT: The FD/CD position usually does the weather.
Group: Which was not you during the time you were in communication with N72EX?

[5] LAWRS – Limited Aviation Weather Reporting Station – An airport weather station that utilized various degrees of automated sensors and/or other automated equipment (ie; AWOS) and is often augmented/backed up by certified tower weather observers at these locations.

KT: No, I was not the FD/CD controller at the time.

Group: Do you recall who it was?
KT: I do not recall.

Group: How does augmenting the weather work when you do it?
KT: At 45 minutes after the hour the system will start processing and then transmit at 51 minutes after the hour. During that time if I notice a difference in the reported weather and weather as observed from the tower, I will augment it.

Group: Is there an alert at 45 minutes after the hour when the system starts to process?
KT: Yes, audible, and visual alerts.

Group: If you do nothing what happens?
KT: Whatever is on the screen will transmit at 51 minutes after the hour.

Group: Concerning SVFR routes, was the route N72EX took normal or are there other routes?
KT: It was normal, and yes there are also other routes.

Group: Could you give some examples?
KT: The 405, or the 101, or Balboa are all routings.

Group: Are the routes normally generated over roads or major highways?
KT: Yes.

Group: Is there a reason for that?
KT: Those are the helicopter agreements that they are over roads and highways.

Group: Is that due to noise or other factors?
KT: I do not know.

Group: Could you see N72EX as it transitioned?
KT: No.

Group: Do you think that was due to how far north he was or because he was above a layer of clouds?
KT: It was the visibility; it is common when visibility is restricted that you cannot see aircraft transitioning.

Group: How do you prepare or brief yourself on weather before starting your shift?

KT: I will look through CEDAR[6], view the required PDWB, then when I get in the tower cab, I will look at the TAF[7] projection and look at what the ASOS[8] is showing. When I open in the morning, I like to look at other facilities weather as well such as Burbank, Los Angeles, or Santa Monica.

Group: Was the weather the same the whole time you were there on the day of the accident?
KT: It was IFR when I arrived at the facility.

Group: How do you normally pass PIREP information?
KT: Normally verbal.

Group: Do you pass PIREPs you receive to adjacent facilities?
KT: BUR ATCT will ask sometimes but not in this instance.

Group: Do you ever go outside as part of the LAWRS weather observer duties?
KT: No.

Group: On the day of the accident when N72EX was transitioning, do you recall what the ceilings looked like (not from the METAR but visually looking out the window)?
KT: Hard to say, but it was definitely IFR conditions, and appeared similar throughout all quadrants.

Group: Did the ceiling seem uneven or "ragged" or could you tell?
KT: No. They were not up and down.

Group: When N72EX checked in you read the weather, is that normal with aircraft transitioning SVFR?
KT: He did not have the current ATIS, so I provided him the current weather.

Group: Is your ATIS verbal or digital?
KT: Digital now but would rather go back to verbal. It is quite long now, and while I have not heard any specific remarks, some pilots have mentioned the difference in length.

Group: How often do you put remarks in the weather observation?

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[6] CEDAR – Comprehensive Electronic Data Analysis and Reporting - The CEDAR system provides air traffic management with an electronic means of capturing safety-related information, events, and metrics. It streamlines several facility managers' responsibilities, including assessing air traffic employee performance and managing resources, and provides a standard interface for the collecting, retrieving, and reporting of data from multiple sources. CEDAR automates the creation, management, and storage of facility activities and events; briefing items; occurrence reports; technical training discussions.

[7] TAF – Terminal Aerodrome Forecast – A concise statement of expected meteorological conditions at an airport during a specified period of time (usually 24 hours).

[8] ASOS – Automated Surface Observing System – Automated sensor suites equipped with meteorological instruments to observe and report wind, visibility, ceiling, temperature, dewpoint, altimeter, and barometric pressure. These systems generally report at hourly intervals, but also report special observations if weather conditions change rapidly and cross aviation operation thresholds.

KT: We will put in sector visibility or cumulonimbus (CB) clouds in the summer. Routinely no, but something significant like CB clouds yes.

Group: N72EX did not have the ATIS when he checked in, is that normal or do transitioning aircraft usually have it already?
KT: It happens sometimes.

Group: Do you take tower visibility observations?
KT: Yes if it differs from the official observation.

Group: How would you make changes to the official observation? In the body directly or in the remarks?
KT: In the main body.

Group: Was the day of the accident routine outside of the accident?
KT: It was routine up until we were notified of the crash.

Interview concluded at 1105 PST.

**Interviewee:** Kyle Larsen (KA)
**Representative:** Alex Cisneros – NATCA FACREP

**Date / Time:** January 28, 2020 / 1510 PST
**Location:** SCT TRACON
**Present:** Mike Richards – NTSB; Dan Meyers – NATCA; Regan Rasband – FAA
**Investigator:** Brian Soper – NTSB

During the interview, Mr. Larsen provided the following information:

He began working at SCT TRACON in October 2016 and was a certified professional controller (CPC). He held no collateral duties and had not been on any recent details.

He described his overall health as "excellent," with no waivers or restrictions to his medical clearance and had not taken any prescription or other medications on the day of the accident. In the past 12 months he had not had any significant changes to his health, finances, or personal life, good or bad, that would have affected his performance on the day of the accident. He recalled nothing remarkable about the 72 hours leading up to the time of the accident noting normal daily routine with adequate sleep and meals.

A relief briefing was not conducted when he assumed the position because he was the first to open the position that day. A relief briefing was conducted when he was relieved, and it was recorded, and a checklist was utilized. He recalled no unusual distractions around the time of the accident. On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the heaviest) he classified the traffic volume as 2 around the time he provided services to N72EX. On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the most complex) he classified the traffic complexity as 2 around the time he provided services to N72EX. He considered the traffic volume and complexity normal for the time of day and tempo of operations.

With regards to the weather conditions surrounding the time he had provided services to N72EX, he recalled BUR and VNY were both IFR, both showing ceilings of about 1,100 feet overcast and 2.5 miles visibility. He had received the PDWB and said nothing stood out.

Mr. Larsen provided the following recollection surrounding the time of the event:

He was working normal IFR operations when he accepted a tag from VNY ATCT on N72EX VFR and Mr. Larsen acknowledged. The pilot of N72EX then said he was at 1,500 feet, and Mr. Larsen asked if he was going to stay low level all the way to CMA, and he said yes. He then informed the pilot that he would lose radar and radio communications on him that low and instructed him to squawk VFR and to contact CMA ATCT when he was closer. That was the extent of his involvement with N72EX.

The group then asked Mr. Larsen a series of questions and the following documents the questions asked, and answers provided:

Group: Did you recognize N72EX as a helicopter you had worked before?
KA: No. We do not really have a lot of helicopter traffic.

Group: Do you see this a lot, helicopters requesting flight following services?
KA: No, while there is a lot of helicopter traffic in southern California, most never talk to ATC or request services.

Group: When do you normally lose radar and radio in your area (range and altitude)?
KA: When traffic is greater than five miles from VNY and below 1,500 feet, or below 3,000 feet to the west where N72EX was heading.

Group: Do you take a lot of tags or automated coordination from VNY ATCT?
KA: Yes, VFR tags all the time.

Group: Do you know if VNY ATCT radar identifies aircraft?
KA: No.

Group: How do you handle VFR aircraft coming from the towers?
KA: On initial check in I give them the altimeter and have them ident, radar identify them and ask the pilot for the altitude requested.

Group: Do you say “radar contact” when radar identifying an aircraft?
KA: Yes.

Group: How do you terminate a radar identified target?
KA: Advise them that radar services are terminated, squawk VFR, change to advisory.

Group: When do you do that?

KA: Whenever they cancel flight following or when they are about to go into terrain or below altitudes where we will lose radar on them.

Group: Do you normally use a checklist when conducting a pass down relief briefing?
KA: No.

Group: How do you ensure a pass down relief briefing is complete?
KA: I go through the weather, active runways, outages, training, and any special activities.

Group: Are you confident that you can give a thorough briefing without using a checklist?
KA: Yes.

Group: You asked the pilot of N72EX if he was going to stay low, what did you know about the weather at that time?
KA: The whole entire area was overcast, and that was in the NIDS and in the METAR.

Group: Did you take any PIREPs that session?
KA: No.

Group: Do you normally solicit PIREPs if it is overcast?
KA: No, except for obtaining bases and tops reports.

Group: What do you do with bases and tops reports when you get them?
KA: I pass them to the towers via landline, and to FD verbally.

Group: How often do you solicit PIREPs?
KA: Not very often.

Group: How do you disseminate PIREPs you do receive?
KA: I tell the supervisor and any adjacent facilities the PIREP may affect.

Group: Do you know what the supervisor does with it?
KA: No.

Group: How much value do you find in the PDWB?
KA: Not much.

Group: Is there anything that would make the PDWB more valuable to you?
KA: No, I do not think so.

Group: How often have you worked with low ceilings?
KA: Not often, but it is a little more frequent during this time of year.

Group: Does the supervisor provide you any weather focused briefings during conditions of low ceilings?

KA: No, we get the weather ourselves.

Group: Do you see a lot of VFR traffic transiting the 101 corridor out to the west?
KA: Yes, a lot transit, but we do not necessarily see them, it depends on distance and altitude.

Group: What is your main source of weather briefing materials?
KA: The PDWB and NIDS.

Group: In what area do you most often tend to lose radar and radio coverage?
KA: We will frequently lose radar coverage over Woodland Hills and up to the northwest by the Filmore VOR[9].

Group: After completing a position relief briefing, is there any requirement to overlap or do you just unplug?
KA: There is a required 2-minute overlap.

Group: Did you do this when you were relieved from the WDLR position that day?
KA: Yes.

Group: Is there a requirement to document the overlap in any way at this facility?
KA: You can document it, usually by hitting the relief button and giving initials, cannot recall if I did it that day.

Group: When is it appropriate to notify the supervisor when experiencing a simultaneous loss of radar and radio communications?
KA: Whenever I lose radar, I let the sup know immediately. I will also keep trying to get a hold of the pilot.

Group: Do you do that regardless of whether they are IFR or VFR?
KA: Yes, IFR or VFR.

Group: Would you have notified the sup had you lost radar and radio on N72EX when he was coming over from VNY?
KA: Yes.

Group: Even if he was not radar identified?
KA: Yes.

Group: What does the supervisor do with that information?
KA: I do not know.

Group: Are you a CIC?
KA: No.

[9] VOR – VHF Omni Directional Radio Range - A type of short-range radio navigation system for aircraft, enabling aircraft with a receiving unit to determine their position and stay on course by receiving radio signals transmitted by a network of fixed ground radio beacons.

Group: Did you drop the tag when you instructed N72EX to squawk 1200?
KA: Yes.

Group: For the area where the accident occurred, that area from generally VNY to CMA, is there anything familiar about this area when there are VFR aircraft?
KA: I would not know because we do not talk to VFR aircraft that remain low, we still were not even really talking to this guy, so no.

Group: When accepting a tag from VNY ATCT, what do you consider that aircraft?
KA: Just an aircraft that is looking for services, and they usually include some other information in the data block as well.

Group: Where is Filmore sector in relation to Woodland sector?
KA: Just to the right of Woodland.

Group: And Moorpark sector is above Woodland sector?
KA: Yes.

Group: In your position relief briefing you said *"weather was the same as it was all day"*. What did you believe the relieving controllers understanding of that statement would be?
KA: The other controller had worked other positions that day already, so that would have told him to expect the same weather he had earlier.

Group: Looking back now, seeing the news post event, any thoughts you would like to share about what happened, something you feel we should have asked or people we should talk to?
KA: No.

Interview concluded at 1615 PST.

**Interviewee:** Matthew Conley (CO)
**Representative:** Alex Cisneros – NATCA FACREP

**Date / Time:** January 28, 2020 / 1140 PST
**Location:** SCT TRACON
**Present:** Mike Richards – NTSB; Dan Meyers – NATCA; Regan Rasband – FAA
**Investigator:** Brian Soper – NTSB

During the interview, Mr. Conley provided the following information:

He began working at SCT TRACON in December 2011 and was a certified professional controller (CPC). He held no collateral duties and had not been on any recent details.

He described his overall health as “excellent,” with no waivers or restrictions to his medical clearance and had not taken any prescription or other medications on the day of the accident. In the past 12 months he had not had any significant changes to his health, finances, or personal life,

good or bad, that would have affected his performance on the day of the accident. He recalled nothing remarkable about the 72 hours leading up to the time of the accident noting normal daily routine with adequate sleep and meals.

A relief briefing was conducted when he assumed the position, and when he was relieved from the position. The briefings were recorded, and a checklist was utilized. He recalled no unusual distractions around the time of the accident. On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the heaviest) he classified the traffic volume as 3 around the time of the accident. On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the most complex) he classified the traffic complexity as 2 around the time of the accident. He considered the traffic volume and complexity normal for the time of day and tempo of operations.

He recalled the weather around the time of the accident was IFR with low ceilings and instrument approaches were being conducted. He had received the PDWB and did not recall anything from it.

Mr. Conley provided the following recollection surrounding the time of the event:

He had relieved Mr. Larsen at the WDLR position and noticed a handful of air carriers were going into BUR. He made a handful of transmissions setting up the arrivals into BUR, then received a call from N72EX. He remembered the pilot just talking to him like he had already been in contact and was receiving services, but he had no record of him. He did a quick scan of his radar display to find out where he was at, then had him ident. All the while he was still monitoring the arrivals going into BUR. He observed the ident and advised the pilot he was still on a 1200 code and asked him to say intentions. The pilot said he was climbing, but that was only half the information he needed to finish typing him into the system. He directed his attention back to the arrivals into BUR once again, then returned to N72EX to get the pilot's intentions. At some point the pilot said he was climbing to 4,000 feet and did not recall any further communications with him after several attempts to contact him.

The group then asked Mr. Conley a series of questions and the following documents the questions asked, and answers provided:

Group: Did you let anybody know that you had lost radar and radio communications with N72EX?
CO: No, I did not give it much thought, we have spotty radar and radio coverage in that area, and I did not think there was a problem. This happens routinely here because of the mountains and spotty coverage, especially down low, so I just moved on and did not really think about it.

Group: Do you remember what altitude N72EX was at when you observed the ident?
CO: No.

Group: Were you required to be soliciting PIREPs around the time you were talking to N72EX?
CO: Yes, and I do not recall if I received any.
Group: What is the PDWB comprised of here?
CO: It is a quick video we are required to watch before starting our shift, then we acknowledge with our operating initials in CEDAR that we have received it.

Group: Was there anything that stood out about the PDWB that day?
CO: No.

Group: Do you recall how you used the checklist during the position relief briefing when you took the position?
CO: I do not recall how it was used on that day.

Group: Where is the position relief briefing checklist located?
CO: In NIDS.

Group: Did you use the NIDS checklist when you assumed the WDLR position?
CO: I know a checklist was used, but I do not recall if the controller being relieved used the one on the clip board above the scope [radar display], or the electronic one in NIDS. I used the hard copy one above the scope during my relief briefing when I was relieved from the WDLR position.

Group: Do you find the PDWB Helpful?
CO: It is not the most helpful. In all honesty - no, mainly because it covers such a broad area.

Group: Is there something that would make the PDWB more useful?
CO: If they would put in the same projected weather that the towers use for making runway changes, and wind information, that would be helpful. It is just too broad for handling all the weather for southern California.

Group: Do you access the TAF?
CO: No.
REP: Some of the TAF is available to them, but only for the Los Angeles and Ontario areas because they work a lot more traffic.

Group: Do you recall any weather information during your position relief briefing when assuming the WDLR position?
CO: No.

Group: What is your main source for bases and tops information?
CO: Pilots.

Group: What is the life cycle of a PIREP at SCT TRACON?
CO: When receiving a tops report, I will verbally tell the FD controller who will put the information into NIDS with the time. With bases, I tend to rely on what is in the ATIS, unless a rapid change occurs. Actually, I do not recall ever getting bases reports here, so I do not do anything. Supervisors will normally fill out a form for icing or turbulence PIREPs.
Group: How do you disseminate PIREP information?
CO: I tell the supervisor verbally and will tell the adjacent facilities or sectors that are affected verbally as well. I do not know what the supervisor does with the PIREP information.

Group: Do you ever receive PIREPs from adjacent facilities? If so how?
CO: Yes, verbally the same way we pass PIREPs to them.

Group: Are you a CIC?
CO: No. There are motivated CIC's in the area that enjoy being one, so there is no need for additional fills.

Group: How often do you experience weather like that present on the day of the accident?
CO: Roughly 20 times a year dealing with fog.

Group: Is it common that you are unable to provide flight following services due to the limited radar and radio coverage in certain areas?
CO: I cannot speak for others, but I will ask pilot's intentions to find out if they plan on staying low and when leaving my area will tell them to go on their own.

Group: What do you consider "low level" here?
CO: It depends on the area, in the area of the accident, I would consider under 2,000 feet to be low level.

Group: Did you just overlook radar identifying[10] N72EX?
CO: No. Because of the way he checked on, I was just trying to verify everything before issuing radar identification.

Group: Were you going to use position correlation to radar identify N72EX?
CO: Yes, well I had already seen the ident, so I knew where he was.

Group: What altitudes do you expect to lose radar and radio coverage in the Woodland sector?
CO: It varies greatly, I am not certain what altitude exactly, I just know there is a very good chance of losing radar on them low level, sometimes they might even drop off and return.

Group: When the pilot of N72EX said he was climbing to 4,000 feet, was it your expectation he would have done that in VMC?
CO: He would have had to. I Assumed there was a hole he was climbing through or something.

Group: What positions are you qualified on here at SCT TRACON?
CO: Every position in the Burbank area.
REP: 95% of the people qualify and remain in the same area.

Group: You have seen the media reports I am sure and have some awareness of the weather in terms of what has been reported. Can you think of any reason why the pilot would have said he was climbing to 4,000 feet?

[10] Radar Identification − The process of ascertaining that an observed radar target is the radar return from a particular aircraft.

CO: Purely speculation, but if he was familiar with the area, 4,000 feet is the approach altitude we would issue arrivals into CMA due to the MVA[11].

Group: What were you thinking when the pilot of N72EX said he was climbing to 4,000 feet, and then you were unable to contact him again?
CO: It happens quite often here that someone will go nordo or lose radar. Once he went away I really had not given it any thought, the fact that he did not respond when I called back did not register as being problematic.

Group: Considering the location and direction of N72EX around the time of the accident, have you seen in this area, a place where a decision has to be made to either turn around or climb?
CO: Nothing that rings a bell as being a situation I have seen.

Group: What shift were you working that day?
CO: I was working a 0700-1500 overtime shift that day.

Group: Do you recall what other positions you worked that day before the accident?
CO: I do not remember what positions I worked at before the WDLR position, but I do know it was not my first position that day.

Group: Do you recall there being any weather issues earlier in the day?
CO: I noticed it was foggy and there were low ceilings when I came into work that morning.

Group: Regarding SVFR transitions with the towers, we noticed they had "flashed" him to the previous controller via automation like a hand off, is that how it normally goes?
CO: We would not know if an aircraft was transitioning or if had originated from VNY. Half the time they are VFR on a 1200 code, and half the time they were transitions.

Group: What is your primary means of briefing yourself on weather when coming into work?
CO: I look at the NIDS and get a good grasp of the weather affecting the airports in the area, then whatever I get from the position relief briefing.

Group: Regarding simultaneous loss of radar and radio communications; can you describe a situation where it would be pertinent to be reported?
CO: Anyone on an assigned beacon code would be reportable or anyone already receiving flight following and subsequently lost communications would also be reportable.

Group: Even if the airplane is VFR?
CO: Yes.
Group: You did not report this occurrence because he had not been tagged up yet, and therefore had not yet begun receiving flight following?
CO: Correct.

[11] MVA – Minimum Vectoring Altitude - The lowest msl altitude at which an IFR aircraft will be vectored by a radar controller, except as otherwise authorized for radar approaches, departures, and missed approaches. Vectors below the MVA were not authorized at CRG for this procedure.

Group: So, you did not consider him radar identified?
CO: No because I did not advise the pilot he was "radar contact[12]."

Group: Hindsight being 20/20, when you look back is there anything you would have done differently, or anything you think could have been done differently?
CO: I think the circumstances were beyond control of anyone in this building.

Interview concluded at 1250 PST.

[12] Radar Contact – Used by ATC to inform an aircraft that it is identified using an approved ATC surveillance source on an air traffic controller's display and that radar flight following will be provided until radar service is terminated. Radar service may also be provided within the limits of necessity and capability. When a pilot is informed of "radar contact," he/she automatically discontinues reporting over compulsory reporting points.