



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Eastern Region – Ashburn, Virginia

Record of Conversation

Who: Meghan A. McDonald, CFI

Witness: Captain Reed McDonald

When: March 8, 2019

RE: ERA19FA116

Ms. McDonald was interviewed at FlightSafety Academy (FSA), in Vero Beach, Florida. Present for the interview was her father, Captain Reed McDonald.

Ms. McDonald stated that she had earned several of her flight certificates and ratings at FSA, including her CFI. She was scheduled to take her CFII check-ride on the day of the accident, March 5, 2018. Ms. McDonald had been employed FSA as a CFI since April 2018.

In February 2018, Ms. McDonald began flying with Yujia, who had been flying with another instructor who had recently left FSA. They only did two flights together, both of which were dual cross-country flights in preparation for Yujia's solo cross-country flights. Ms. McDonald said Yujia was a remedial student, but she found her to be very capable, proficient with weather, spoke good English and had good communication skills. Ms. McDonald described Yujia as very popular with the other students and they had a great relationship.

Ms. McDonald said Yujia was scheduled to do her solo cross-country flight the day before the accident. She met Yujia in the morning on March 4, 2019, reviewed weather, the navigation log, and flight planning. Ms. McDonald endorsed Yujia for that flight; however, the flight was cancelled at the last minute due to weather. She then requested via FSA scheduling for the student to have a block of time in the afternoon the following day to complete the cross-country flight. Scheduling was unable to book the flight for the afternoon and it was scheduled for 0630 the following morning. Ms. McDonald knew there was a high probability that the flight would not take place due to weather. Plus, she was taking her CFII check ride that day and elected to sleep in and rest for the flight. Ms. McDonald said when she didn't hear from the student (or from FSA) the following morning, she figured the flight had been cancelled due to weather. Plus, the student pilot was aware that she needed to have the instructor's endorsements before she could be released for the flight per FSA protocols. Ms. McDonald said she did not have any communications with Yujia after she last saw her at FSA on the 4th, and she regretted that.

Ms. McDonald said she received a call from Brian in the FSA Operations about 0800 on the morning of March 5, 2019, asking if she knew where Yujia was. Ms. McDonald then tried to contact Yujia, but there was no response. She then contacted FSS and saw that Yujia hadn't filed a flight plan and when she listened to ATCLive and didn't hear Yujia on any communications that morning, she figured that she probably didn't takeoff. Yujia was very routine and it was very much unlike her to not file a flight plan or talk on the radio.

Ms. McDonald mentioned that Yujia expressed concern that she had high flight hours and was worried she would be released from the flight program and sent home. She was behind and needed to get the solo cross countries completed. Yujia's was supposed to finish her training by March 1, 2019. Yujia put a lot of pressure on herself to succeed, but always kept a positive attitude.

Leah D. Read, Sr. ASI