



SURVIVAL FACTORS ATTACHMENT

NTSB Interviews

Schoharie, NY

HWY19MH001

(4 pages)

An NTSB investigator interviewed emergency responders on October 10, 2018 at the Schoharie County Office of Emergency Services, located at 2783 State Route 7, Cobelskill NY, 12043.

The NTSB investigator conducted the interview in a group setting. The incident was described, with the appropriate participant making comments. The following notes summarize the conversation.

Interviewed were the Fire Chief Schoharie Volunteer Fire Department, the Schoharie County 911 Call Center Dispatch Supervisor, the Director of the SCOES, the SCOES paramedic, and present as an observer was the SCOES Fire Coordinator.

The group was asked to describe the incident. The call first came in as a 2-vehicle collision as a level "Bravo" crash. The levels consist of A through E, with variable standard response protocols. Alpha and Bravo will have Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulance support, while Charlie and higher will have BLS and Advanced Life Support (ALS) support. Level Delta and higher is a Mass Casualty Incident (MCI).

The on-duty paramedic heard about the call, and knowing that 2 vehicles were involved, figured there would be at least 2 people (drivers), and decided he would self-dispatch in case he was needed, and he was only about 10 minutes away, even though at this time, the call was only a level Bravo. Soon (identified on dispatch log) the call was elevated to a level Delta and declared an MCI.

The Schoharie County Office of Emergency Services consists of 4 departments: EMS, Fire, Emergency, and Safety. The 911 call center and dispatch for Sheriff, Fire, EMS is located at the HQ building, where the interview took place. The EMS structure is set up with 1 paramedic on duty 24/7, and a total of 7 paramedics that work for SCOES and cover the approximately 600 square miles of the county. Other paramedics can respond from private agencies if needed. The SCOES paramedic drives an SUV in a "Fly-vehicle" system. There is 1 paramedic in the vehicle, who responds to emergencies. The paramedic will typically ride in the BLS unit with the patient, provide care, and come back later to pick up the parked fly-vehicle once care is transferred. There is a mix of volunteer, public, and private professional EMS agencies in the county. FDs are mostly volunteer, with some paid staff.

The dispatch log has numbers with the first 2 digits designating the agency. State police vehicles start with "3G", Sheriff units start with "9", County vehicles start with "48", Central Bridge "30", Schoharie FD "14", Schowright "98", Middleburg "96", Esperance "70", AMR (private ambulance) "94".

A Central Bridge FD engine (number 1422) was the first to arrive. The assistant chief on that unit became the initial Incident Commander (IC). The Fire Fighter (FF) from that engine started assessing the scene and started extrications. The IC elevated the response. It was noted that a report of "CPR in progress" was heard over the radio. The responders were not sure if this was from a responder at this event or it could have been from another event in the county. It was noted that the area of the crash has poor radio reception and poor cell phone reception.

The paramedic got on scene about 10 minutes after the initial 911 call. He approached the crash and saw an ambulance in the parking lot with a victim laying on the ground near the ambulance. He conducted a rapid assessment, determined that this victim was not viable, and moved onto the limo. The responders were trying to identify any victims with a pulse and/or breathing. They removed a male that was deceased and then found a woman who had a pulse, who was moved to a Middleburg ambulance. When she was assessed at the ambulance, it became clear that she was actually not viable and no medical interventions were conducted. The determination was made to go ahead and continue transporting her to the hospital and she was pronounced deceased at the hospital.

A second woman was removed with a pulse and breathing. The paramedic began patient care, and she was taken to a Central Bridge ambulance. By this time an air transport Landing Zone (LZ) had been set up by one of the fire responders. The paramedic was preparing to have her moved to the LZ for direct air transport, but she lost heart rate at about this time, and the more urgent need became addressing the cardiac response rather than traumatic injury, which he felt would be better addressed by ambulance care and transport to the local hospital rather than a flight to the larger hospital. So instead they instructed the aircraft to prepare for flight from the hospital, and continued work at the ambulance. She reportedly lived for a number of hours and was airlifted from Cobleskill hospital to Albany. However she was pronounced deceased at Albany Medical Center.

There were no other victims deemed as viable. They decided to tow the vehicle out of the ditch in order to better access the deceased. They did this and started the extrication work. The primary access point was cut in the limo sidewall on the passenger side, aft of the front door. Another was cut on the driver side, also aft of the front door. Portions of the driver side B-pillar had to be removed in order to extricate the driver, as the only way to get him out was removing the driver seat backrest and pulling him out towards the rear of the vehicle. Upon completion of extrication efforts, the scene became a crime scene.

The group was asked where the 2 pedestrians were found. The Toyota came to rest on the southwest side of a dumpster that was in the back parking lot of the Apple Barrel. Then, to the northeast of the dumpster were two parked cars. One of the pedestrians was found in-between the

two parked cars. The other pedestrian was found just to the southeast of the ditch, in the Apple Barrel parking lot, and next to where one of the first arriving ambulances parked.

They were asked if there was a lot of roof crush that occurred and was evident while the vehicle was in the ditch, and if the roof then moved back upon towing out of the ditch. The response was no, that the limo looked the same in the ditch and after it was removed. They were also asked about evidence of belt use for any occupants. They believed the driver was belted. The pile of bodies and mixed with debris made it too difficult to determine if any passengers were belted. They did not hear of any restraints being cut in order to extricate anyone.

They were asked about anything found in the rear cargo compartment. Some of the responders had noticed the deformed rear bench seat, and noted that one passenger was found lying in the middle of the limo passenger compartment, while all the rest were bunched up in the forward/left corner. It was a very large male passenger who was found in the middle of the passenger seating area, just in front of the forward facing rear OEM seats. His head was toward the left (driver side) with his feet toward the right (passenger side), by the bar.

The group was asked if there were any questions they had, or could think of anything important that I did not ask about, and said no.