

Miami Air International
Jacksonville, Florida
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**NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

ATTACHMENT 8

EMERGENCY RESPONSE INTERVIEW SUMMARIES

12 Pages

Interview: Chief Mark Brusoe
Date: May 8, 2019
Location: Naval Air Station – Jacksonville (NAS-JAX)
Representative: None
Present: Emily Gibson (NTSB), Peggy Hurlbert (FAA), Bruce Wallace (Boeing), Deborah Wernert (Miami Air International), Tashana Brown (AFA)

He has been Chief of the Unit for 9 years. Started in 1982 after retiring with 26 years as an Air Force Firefighter.

He received a call at 9:56 “we have a plane in water”.

He was able to respond to the station in 11 minutes from his home and was making calls to other units while traveling to station. He called Security. Upon arrival at station, he proceeded to site in his truck to relieve Assistant Chief Chalmers.

Upon arrival at the site, he took command as the Incident Commander. There were still people in rafts in water coming towards the rocks. Those who were already off were standing around.

He was looking for a manifest as he wanted accountability. He also asked for a “second alarm” from Jacksonville Fire Rescue Department (JFRD).

He began the staging of assets including 3 marine rescue units. He had been told that the aircraft had been checked twice for anyone else who may be remaining on the airplane. There were still people in rafts in water.

His other concern was to find out the amount of fuel on board. When asked, he said the flight crew indicated there was 3500 pounds on board.

He then had a “face to face” with Assistant Chief Chalmers and indicated the most critical was accountability of passengers. He retrieved the manifest but does not know who had given it to him.

He decided to cancel the Clay County and Orange Park back up that had been called. Mainly because the JFRD (Chief Blanton) indicated they had 8 to 10 ambulances available and he did not need the suppression units and they were coming from a long way.

Chief indicated that he always felt it was the biggest mistake to not have enough assets but felt like they with the JFRD had it under control.

He did recall seeing the last person off of the raft, and they were having a real struggle; she had a cane and required several people to assist over the rocks.

The other passengers were scattered everywhere, and he wanted to triage. He did not know who decided on hangar 117 as the area to triage and stated it could have been because there were buses waiting at the base terminal. He requested JFRD to work to get people there.

He had requested a third check (from Ms. Pellerin) to make certain everyone was off; she reported 100% accountability.

Chief stayed at the site until 0500 and stated he started to release the suppression units in the 2400-0100-time span; JFRD beginning at 2430.

He had released the marine units by then but then requested they return to go back to aircraft to recover the cabin baggage. He had spoken to someone to get approval for this but could not recall.

When asked if he had water rescue on the base; he responded that the scope of service does not include water rescue. They rely on JFRD for water rescue. They do familiarization training together along with the other teams on aircraft that may come to field. They do not train mock river accidents.

He stated another concern was that while it looked intact it may not be stable and there were strong currents.

He stated “everyone did the right thing and it was about their respective comfort levels” with regard to the firefighters entering the water. Chief Chalmers was worried about the firefighters and firefighters were worried about passengers. Every commanding officer will draw the line on what they will or will not do. He would defend the actions for not wanting firefighters in the water and he would defend the firefighters for going into the water. The training does not include water, but it will in future. Everyone did the right thing. He recognized his risk management plan does not include going into the St. Johns River and he may want to address now.

He also indicated that they have decided to put 50 foot of rope on all trucks as result of the safety suggestion.

Chief spoke to the woman in hangar who had lost her pets. She was sobbing and he told her that they had tried. He did try to speak with all the passengers and firefighters who were still there.

He stated another concern was that someone and he was unsure who, had stopped the Salvation Army and Red Cross from responding.

Their trucks do not have video because the software is not allowed by Navy.

Interview: Eric Prosswimmer, Captain JFRD
Date: May 8, 2019
Location: Naval Air Station – Jacksonville (NAS-JAX)
Representative: None
Present: Emily Gibson (NTSB), Peggy Hurlbert (FAA), Bruce Wallace (Boeing), Deborah Wernert (Miami Air International), Tashana Brown (AFA)

He had been with JFRD for 19 years and had previously completed 6 months with Jacksonville Beach.

His current job duties were documentation. He worked 40-hour week but carried a radio 24 hours daily. He handled the social media.

On the night of accident, he had the radio on in his room, but it was set to “B” which only transmits if incident requires more than 5 apparatus. The transmission was calm, but he realized it was an aircraft. Notification came in as a marine incident but engine 23 had a guy with airport experience who realized they would need more help and a “1st and 2nd alarm” was issued.

He dressed and responded to scene but was unsure where to go.

When he arrived at the site, he saw lots of apparatus, lots of chiefs, a hazmat team, 2 boats in water and a plane. People were already off the plane and in the hangar.

JFRD had 3 marine stations and per Chief Wilson about 90 people responded.

JFRD Triage Officer was Terry Eaton (at hangar).

They establish three divisions, triage (in hangar), staging, and operations (on river).

Hos chief told him to “do what you do, just do not release anything” so he began to take video and pictures.

He remembered Chief Brusoe would not release JFRD until he had accountability. Once he had the manifest he called to confirm (3rd time) we have 100%.

He indicated these teams have responded together many times in past six months and they have a good relationship between everyone.

Marine 39 was first on scene and they had trained on a similar scenario that same day. The other two arrived later.

Interview: Fred Chalmers, Assistant Fire Chief
Date: May 7, 2019
Location: Naval Air Station – Jacksonville (NAS-JAX)
Representative: None
Present: Emily Gibson (NTSB), Peggy Hurlbert (FAA), Bruce Wallace (Boeing), Deborah Wernert (Miami Air International), Tashana Brown (AFA)

He was a supervisor of firefighters and the assistant chief. He has been with this unit since 2001 and moved to the Assistant Chief position 6 months ago.

He indicated he received notification that aircraft had slid off runway and then that it was a passenger airliner. The tower was unable to provide airplane or passenger count information.

When he got to the site, the passengers were already on the wing; he saw the left wing first and thought there were about 80 people. He saw two crash assets 141 and 143. He then realized there were people on other side and called back there was another 80 people on right wing.

He had 6 people from the airfield and himself; two had responded early. In total 17 personnel responded; 4 ladder, 4 engines, 2 on medical and 1 Assistant Fire Chief. He was notified through PA system “Passenger Airliner slid off runway”.

He established command and requested 3 ambulances. He indicated that passengers on site appeared to be “walking” and possibly “walking wounded”, it was hard to tell and request was made for buses for transport. He stated he thought Miami Air already had buses to meet flight.

He turned his attention to his team; Wade was on right side of aircraft and Lapine and Russ were on left. Russ had created a makeshift line using a firehose to get too victims. They had jumped into water to hold raft from drifting. He told them to get out as he did not know how deep water was.

Assistant Chief indicated he needed to “step back for a broader view” he felt he was getting “tunnel vision”; it was then that mutual aid arrived. He requested access to a hangar.

He did see a raft inflate and saw passengers getting into that raft and Russ assisted getting raft closer to ladder.

When he went to the right side; he saw a raft had been deployed. He never saw the third raft deployed.

He initially called for mutual aid from JFRD and Clay County as this was a Level 4 Mass Casualty. Divers were requested.

When Chief Brusoe arrived; the Chief took charge and the Assistant Chief became the Operations Officer at Hangar 117. By this time everyone was off plane and on shore.

Prior to his taking on the Operations responsibility; he accounted for his personnel; evaluated aircraft condition and the need for animal rescue and then his activity was centered back at hangar. Accountability roster was completed. He had medical units with 2 paramedics and 9 EMTs at hangar.

When asked about rescue boats; he indicated that unit was no longer in operation. This was why mutual support was called.

When asked about any personnel going onto aircraft; he indicated he thought that LaPine and perhaps Meeks or Boggess may have gone onboard to assist passenger with injury to leg.

Interview: Michael LaPine, Firefighter / EMT
Date: May 7, 2019
Location: Naval Air Station – Jacksonville (NAS-JAX)
Representative: None
Present: Emily Gibson (NTSB), Peggy Hurlbert (FAA), Bruce Wallace (Boeing), Deborah Wernert (Miami Air International), Tashana Brown (AFA)

He had been in the department for 3 years and at airfield station for 5 months.

He was working a 2nd 24 hours on the night of accident.

He was first notified when the crash phone rang and then the tower net message came over the PA “civilian aircraft in river”

He responded to truck 143 and arrived at same time as Firefighter, Russell Russ. Their third person had not arrived, but they decided not to wait and went as a first 2-man response team. Weather was a downpour with zero visibility. They did not realize how large aircraft was.

On arrival, he saw tail and then people on the left wing. He yelled to determine what medical help was needed. He went to pier and he had decided to get in water. He and Russ put ladder into water. There was no safety rope or lifeline, so he created a tether of sorts out of a 2 and ½ inch fire hose from his truck. He installed this tether to the ILS pier ladder and then to wing tip. He got into water.

He asked for women and children first. Raft made two trips and then there was no one on the left wing. He went over to the ILS pier to better assess if right side needed help since he was already wet. When asked if he swam; he said no because it was unsafe to go around front of aircraft, so he used the rocks. He was in socks only and felt it was not safe to be on rocks around the front of aircraft. They began to shuttle raft between wing and rocks. He felt the pier was a safer place to go. He remembers thunder but the rain had stopped. Water was up to his neck and the raft was very stable.

JFRD had arrived and the marine unit boat retrieved crew.

He was feeling there were so many unknowns and that rescue was the priority. We did not know depth of water and if plane was stable and that was reason for immediate rescue.

One injured woman was brought from right side by a raft with a tether line to allow her to get off on pier.

Once all passengers were off, he collected his gear and returned to truck 143; he estimated time was between 2430 and 0100. There was “no longer a fire threat” and he was released by Chief Brusoe.

JSO (Jacksonville Sheriff Office) wanted to take over responsibility since it was in river.

He was called out again at 0200 to secure luggage and then sent to hangar but it was mostly clear, so he was sent back to fire house on the field.

He was trying to understand why he went to left side. He doesn't remember seeing any people on the right wing; pier was on left side and all was extremely calm

He was concerned that there was no rope on truck and has already submitted a safety recommendation.

He received conflicting statements Chief Chalmers had said he did not want them to get into water. Firefighter LaPine chose to go into water. He knew Assistant Chief was showing concern for his people.

It was Firefighter Russ who asked for "women and children first". There was one passenger with an elbow injury; Firefighter LaPine helped him up the ladder to other firefighters on pier waiting to assist. Children and some adults just came up through rails and didn't need the ladder.

When asked about a baby; he said he didn't recall a baby.

Crew was asked if they had anyone needing medical and were told by someone on wing that there was one person with lacerations being treated on board.

Plane was not dark inside; aircraft was powered down. There were white lights lighting the airplane, but he did not see lights on wing or tail. Lights in window were on.

He did not go on aircraft; only members of the JFRD marine unit went through right wing and up to cockpit and then exited from left side. He remembers hearing a "pop" but not certain what the "pop" was.

He did see "bouncy ramps" (slides) up against cockpit; determined they would not be good to use. He did not see any lines from left wing of aircraft to the firefighters.

He indicated while he has some airfield experience, he is primarily a firefighter and is not trained specific to civilian aircraft. He suggested they should train on the commercial aircraft as currently they only train on aircraft here and some military aircraft that transit base.

When asked if they got information about aircraft coming on base, he indicated they did not.

Interview: Russell Russ
Date: May 7, 2019
Location: Naval Air Station – Jacksonville (NAS-JAX)
Representative: None
Present: Emily Gibson, NTSB; Bruce Wallace, Boeing Company, Peggy Hurlbert, FAA, Tashana Brown, AFA; Deborah Wernert, Miami Air International

He stated his length of service was eighteen years. He stated that his shift was Thursday and Friday. When asked what his shift was, he replied 48 on, 3 off, 2 on, 3 off, 2 on, 2 off. He was on his second day.

When asked when he was first notified, he stated that he was at the fire station at 2145 getting ready for bed.

He stated there were several issues with the ring of the phone. They were in a temporary shelter and the crash phone was outside a room. He stated that a year or 2 ago you would get 2 crash bells. One long tone from the tower is what he stated they should have got. He said the phone rang around 9:45 and he heard “we have a plane in the water”. He was the driver of 143 and went straight to his truck but he “forgot to wake everybody up”. He stated that “everybody forgot to knock on doors”.

He stated that the visibility down the runway was not very good. He went down the runway at a safe speed following the chief to the end and stopped 10 ft from the rocks in range to put foam on the aircraft. Once there I recall passengers coming out on the port side. One firefighter hopped out and then he hopped out too, which he stated may have been a tactical error. According to their training he should have stayed on the truck.

He went to a shouting distance of passengers and asked, “how many injured”. “A few” was the response. Once they got to the dock a ladder was put in the water. There was no rope and he grabbed 50 ft of hose from the truck and tied it to the rail. One firefighter took off his gear to get in the water and the Assistant Chief yelled, “don’t get in the water.” He got in the water and swam to the wing. He also said, the weather band was on its way out, it was raining and lightning pretty bad on the way there”. Kids were crying, he wanted to get them off as soon as possible. Passengers said that there was fuel in the water. The crew deployed a raft and he pushed it to a wing stating, “women and children first”. He stated that he pushed the raft, but the problem was stopping it at the dock”. The raft with the people in it wanted to go under the pier because of the current. Another firefighter jumped in to hold the raft.

The life vests were giving passengers trouble getting on to the pier. He stated it seemed like it took forever. Firefighters started to cut the vest off the children. They went back for a second load of about four and the men began to get in the raft. They got them on the dock. There was a woman on the starboard side who could not get out of the raft. They grabbed a black tarp from the medical truck and the woman was tied to the tarp and pulled up.

When he went back to the truck there as a captain sitting in the driver seat, so he took his position. He apologized as he should have stayed in the truck in case he had to “pull the trigger.”

He could only recall one raft on the port side. The slide on the port side was twisted. He made eye contact with 1 little boy, maybe 7 years old.

When asked if he had received training on the aircraft he replied “yes” they get training on mixed aircraft.

Passengers were very orderly.

He was asked how long he stayed out there and responded he stayed out there one hour until the Incident Commander relieved them.

Interview: Brince Wade
Date: May 7, 2019
Location: Naval Air Station – Jacksonville (NAS-JAX)
Representative: None
Present: Emily Gibson, NTSB; Bruce Wallace, Boeing Company, Peggy Hurlbert, FAA, Tashana Brown, AFA; Deborah Wernert, Miami Air International

He stated that he was a Lieutenant with thirty- two years of fire service. He stated that he had been at this unit for the last twenty years. His shift was in its second day.

When asked how he was notified he said that the crash phone rang, and he heard the radio from the tower “civilian plane in the river”, “aircraft ran off the runway”. He stated that it was “storming pretty hard”. He was the first truck to arrive. He could not see the tail number until they were on the scene. He instructed the crash crews and the structural crews to hold back because of ground stability. He approached the right-hand side and saw passengers on the wing. He then got on the radio for JFRD boats.

No rafts had been deployed yet. He never stepped onto the airplane. One of his peers could see into the cockpit; one to two minutes later the flight crew attempted to inflate the rafts. People stepped off the rafts; he stepped into the water and helped pull the raft to the rocks. He said he had enough bodies to help them to shore. Once the raft was done, he sent it back. The first raft had the woman with toddlers and children.

JFR boats went in for a secondary search fifteen to twenty minutes later. The cargo hold was opened; there was not much that could be done, regarding the animals.

Passengers were trying to paddle to the rocks. He waded out. The water was up to his chest and he was “a pretty tall guy”. He unloaded the raft and pushed it to the left. Second raft came in and he helped people off. There were children on both rafts; they were full. The infant was given to his right arm, his left arm had the mother. He had to cut off the life vests to allow people to see the rocks and to see where they were going. At that point the life vests were a hindrance.

A JFRD boat came to the wing for a secondary search; the boat came to the right side. He said the crew and pilot evacuated on the left-hand side.

Once everybody was off the wings, he got out of the water to see what was going on and he lost his radio. He spoke with a pilot and asked for a manifest. That is when he found out about the pets. He made contact with the Chief and that is when the JFRD opened up the cargo door.

He sat there until 0115 and said there was one crew on scene and one crew at the hangar. He stated that he kept the crew on hand and ready.

He has been trained on P8, C40; stating they’re the same as a 737. They do not get civilian planes to train on.

Interview: Kevin Fitzgerald, Firefighter/EMS
Date: May 7, 2019
Location: Naval Air Station – Jacksonville (NAS-JAX)
Representative: None
Present: Emily Gibson (NTSB), Peggy Hurlbert (FAA), Bruce Wallace (Boeing),
Deborah Wernert (Miami Air International), Tashana Brown (AFA)

He was at the hanger that night on an overtime shift. He had been with this unit since February 2016, in fire service since June 1998. He was notified by lights and speakers that there was an airfield emergency, a civilian aircraft over shot runway into the river.

He stated he followed assistant Chief Chalmers down the flight line on runway 1-0 and could see the crash crews ahead. He put the ambulance in the position to provide light. When he pulled up, he did not expect to see “that plane.” He stated he thought he would see a Cessna. When he got closer, he saw passengers on the wings. He said, “this is our Hudson river call”. Assistant Chief Wade was giving commands and he was doing checklists in his head.

A firefighter jumped in the water and he saw rafts deployed. He approached ground crew and asked for a manifest. He saw people on rafts being taken to the pier. He was handed a child and then the father came up.

He started triage; placed what he considered wounded to the right and not wounded to another area. He said passengers were coming off in good spirits and not angry. He tried to get them into the right spots. Two buses were there to move them. The buses came from the terminal. He wanted a count of passengers and crew, He relocated passengers inside the terminal. The hanger had already started to do the care. He assumed duties as a liaison working with the Chief. They had little information at the time.

JFRD did not want to overload the hospital. The mechanic went to Navy hospital with an apparent hand injury. He did not know if everyone was treated and released. He stated he took upon himself to take notes because he knew the people would be asking.