



National Transportation Safety Board

Memorandum

Record of Conversation

Who: Richard E. Leightner, Dispatch Supervisor, Classic Helicopters

Date: July 4, 2008

RE: DEN08MA116A/B

On July 4, 2008, Aaron Sauer, and I interviewed Mr. Richard Leightner, who said he is employed as the Dispatch Supervisor for Classic Helicopters at their EMS location at the airport in Page, Arizona. Also present during the interview, acting as a witness for Mr. Leightner, was Classic Helicopters Chief Pilot, Mr. Matt Stein.

Mr. Leightner told us the following:

- His full name is Richard Earl Leightner, but most people call him Rich.
- His address is P O Box - -----; Page AZ 86040, his home phone is ----- and his cel phone is -----
- He has lived in Page AZ since 1958. In his off duty time he serves as the volunteer chairperson for the Northern Arizona habitat projects for the Arizona Deer Association
- He spent three and a half years serving in the U S Air Force from 1968 to 1971, first as a Cargo Loadmaster on the C-141, and then as a Rescue Technician flight crewmember on the HC-130.
- After his hitch in the Air Force he worked in various construction jobs including road construction, working at the power plant, and as a truck driver
- He worked at Bechtel in the procurement department for 11 years and was the warehouse manager when he left
- From 1981 until 1993 he worked for the U S Bureau of Reclamation in Page AZ. He was a utility man, a high scaler, and a rigger. He also has 10,000 hours as a boat pilot for USBR on the Colorado River.
- In 1993 he was unable to work because of a back injury and he went into intensive therapy and rehabilitation for several years
- During that time he also went to school and took courses in business management, accounting, and computer science
- He went to work as a Dispatcher for Classic almost eleven years ago on September 10, 1997
- In 1999 he was promoted to Dispatch Supervisor at about the same time they moved into their present facility



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- The Dispatchers work seven days in a row beginning on Monday and ending on Sunday, followed by seven days in a row off duty.
- During their duty week the Dispatchers have a 12 hour duty day that begins at either 6 in the morning or at 6 in the evening. He said he usually works only the day shift

Mr. Leightner said two communications radio channels at Classic and only two telephone lines are automatically recorded. The system will record any time the microphone is activated or anytime there is any signal or any noise on the radio channel. There are about six telephone lines at the facility but the recording system only records conversations made on only these two telephone lines as follows:

- VHF portable hand held radio conversations
- UHF conversations on both Channel 1 to their repeater on Navajo mountain, and on their Channel 2. Both UHF channels share the same receive frequency
- Telephone calls on the "Bat Phone" or emergency line calls on -----42, which is the incoming line for the toll-free emergency line on 800 4-----23
- Telephone calls on -----50 (crews will normally make their incoming calls to dispatch on this non-emergency line)

The on-board cel phone which is permanently mounted on N407MJ is ----- 12. That cel phone is not recorded. It is serviced through AllTel.

Mr. Leightner then took the dispatch documents for the accident flight. Using those documents as a reference he began to describe his actions on the day of the accident.

- He said this has happened several times in the past, but on the afternoon of the accident flight Classic had both helicopters out on missions and the Classic fixed wing airplane was also out on a mission
- He said that it relatively a rare occurrence for Classic to have all three aircraft airborne at the same time
- Lifeguard 1 was on a flight going to FMC (Flagstaff Medical Center) from the South Rim
- Then the King Air went on a patient flight at about the same time Lifeguard 2 started on another patient flight from the South Rim to FMC
- He covered his actions as a Dispatcher taking all of the calls from these three aircraft and his required coordination calls to the involved agencies
- He got a call from Kayenta asking for another helicopter and he advised Lifeguard 1 to be prepared to go there after dropping their patient at FMC
- He got a call from Lifeguard 2 at 1519 giving their off time from the South Rim
- He then immediately made a telephone call to Bob at FMC
- Immediately after that he made a telephone call to Michelle at Guardian
- He remembers that Michelle told him that the Guardian helicopter was twenty minutes out and also inbound to FMC



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- He remembers that he told Michelle “be sure and let our guy know when he calls you”
- Both of those telephone calls from Classic to FMC and from Classic to Guardian were on a telephone line that was not recorded by Classic
- At 1532 he had his last 15 minute position report radio call from Lifeguard 2
- He recalls that he knows that on the 1532 contact he failed to notify Lifeguard 2 that the Guardian helicopter was inbound
- He said “we normally would notify our aircraft about another helicopter that was inbound at the same time”
- At that time, he said was unconcerned because Michelle at Guardian had told him that she would notify Lifeguard 2
- He also knew that Tom Caldwell was so anal about always calling in to Guardian

I then played the recorded audio from the 1523 telephone call recorded by Guardian dispatch. Mr. Leightner said he knew that telephone call had been recorded by Guardian, but he had never before heard it.

- After listening to the Guardian dispatch recording Mr. Leightner said he was amazed because he then knew that he had remembered incorrectly what was the Guardian helicopter’s projected arrival time at FMC
- He said he was amazed because he remembered incorrectly his conversation with Michelle about who was supposed to advise Lifeguard 2 about the Guardian helicopter being also inbound to FMC
- He said “I would have never guessed that Tom would have failed to call Guardian” on his arrival at Flagstaff because he was “so anal about making all of the calls correctly”.
- He said “now I will have to baby sit everybody

Mr. Leightner seemed to be disturbed about this new information and I strongly advised his to discuss his feelings with a counselor of some sort. He said he had brought a friend with him who was waiting outside. He said he intended to immediately have a detailed discussion with that friend who also had considerable experience as a dispatcher.

Thomas J. Latson, Jr.
Air Safety Investigator

Richard Leightner
Classic Lifeguard Aeromedical Services
P.O. Box 2222
Page, Arizona 86040

November 26, 2008

To whom it Concerns:

This statement is being prepared at the request of Mr. Tom Latson, Air Safety Investigator with the NTSB and is with reference to the accident of June 29, 2008 involving Guardian & Classic medically configured Bell 407 helicopters. The facts have been gathered previously by representatives of the NTSB through recordings, flights logs, and video showing partial approach of both air ships to the Flagstaff Medical Center.

My name is Richard E. Leightner and I've worked for Classic Lifeguard Aeromedical Services since September of 1997. I am an Aeromedical Communications Specialist with well over 1500 dispatched calls. The Classic Pilot involved in the accident, Mr. Tom Caldwell, and I had logged near 300 flights together. I dispatched Classic's helicopters to FMC (Flagstaff Medical Center) a minimum of 77 times in 2007 and had (at the time of the accident) been on 45 total dispatched flights to FMC this year. Tom and I had partnered on 31 flights this year, with 10 of those having an FMC helipad destination. The accident flight was our first to FMC from the South Rim of the Grand Canyon this year. Tom was a learned veteran & cautious pilot....and a past Safety Officer for our Page/Lake Powell operation. I had never worried (or even thought) about him being involved in this type accident.

With reference to this flight; when I notified Guardian Air Dispatch at 1523 hours of our inbound helicopter and ETA I was informed they were also inbound and was given an ETA for their ship from which I questimated a 10 to 12 minute separation time between the arrivals. Guardian's voice recorder has me saying that I would let my ship know if they would do the same....or something to that effect. I don't recall what I said in answer....I'm sure it was a standard reply and it may have merely been a response, common or otherwise. I had never worried as a Dispatcher about ships inbound to FMC (unless they were due in at the same time) because I knew the Classic Pilots' called Guardian also when 10 to 15 out. Our **Dispatch Procedures didn't (at that time) have Protocol or Policy requiring a notification to the ship (helicopter) of traffic inbound or outbound their destination.** Note that we now require notification of above mentioned traffic and any other traffic possibly in their flight path or near it that we become aware of.

I had for several days after the accident guilted myself for not making even a mention of the other inbound helicopter. I suppose that I could have excused my lack of action due to being busy with another helicopter flight and to the developing launch of our fixed wing transport unit, but I didn't. I'm a professional and as Dispatch Supervisor I fault myself for not having foreseen this possibility. I did however finally realize that even if I had advised Tom of Guardian's inbound ship....he would have only known the same thing I did, that they were supposed to be approximately 10 minutes ahead of us. The fact that the Guardian Pilot revised his arrival time would not have been known to either one of us. I only wish that Tom would have done the normal (just one more time) and made contact with Guardian Dispatch, as required. I miss him as both a co-worker and as a personal friend.

I do hope that a workable solution can be developed (for the benefit of all medical transport agencies) and put in place at every medical facility where a helipad is in use. I feel that the facilities having a helicopter landing capability should ultimately have flight control and that all arrival/departure arrangements be regulated by their designated person/personnel.

Whatever comes of this I can honestly say that we here at Classic Dispatch are a lot more critical (and verbal) with flight involved information and are very active in reminding our pilots to make contact where appropriate with other agency dispatch/control centers.

Thank you for the opportunity to make comment.

releightner



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Record of Conversation

Who: Captain Scott Olson, Classic Helicopters

Date: July 1, 2008

RE: DEN08MA116A/B

On July 2, 2008, Scott Tyrrell, and I interviewed Captain Scott Olson, who said he is employed as a Captain in the Bell 407 for Classic Helicopters at their EMS location at Page, Arizona.

Captain Olson told us the following:

- Before the accident Classic had two 407 helicopters and one King Air E90 based at our facility at the Page Airport.
- On September of this year the company will celebrate twenty years of operations with EMS helicopters based in Page.
- About half of our helicopter flights are “scene calls” and the other half of the flights are hospital to hospital patient transfer flights. Most of our patients go to the Flagstaff Medical Center, but the other big hospitals that we fly to are in Farmington, Grand Junction, Las Vegas, Provo, and St. George.
- The maximum distance we normally fly is about 100 nautical miles from our base here at Page.
- Our typical standard fuel load changes with the season. In wintertime we usually have an 800 pound fuel load. That changes as we get into the summer months starting with either 750 pounds or 700 pounds, sometimes even as low as 600 pounds. Occasionally at our base in Page, when we are too heavy for a flight the Classic FBO line guys could use a suction hose arrangement to suck out fuel from the helicopter.
- For day time operations our minimum fuel for landing is 20 minutes. At a typical fuel burn of about 300 pounds per hour, that translates to a minimum fuel of about 100 pounds.
- The fuel low warning light comes on at about 90 pounds, and I have seen that light several times, usually as we are touching down.
- There are four communications radios on the helicopter and one on-board cel phone. We have the standard VHF 1 and VHF, then the TFM-500 radio gives us the capability to talk on UHF or VHF. We use the TFM-500 radio to contact our dispatcher through the repeater on Navajo mountain. When in the Flagstaff area we would also use the TFM-500 to talk to Guardian dispatch through the Elden repeater.



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- The TFM-500 radio is also used to contact the police, fire, ground EMS, NPS rangers on their VHF radios.
- The TFM-500 is used to contact the FMC emergency room on UHF
- The duty schedule for the helicopter EMS pilots is that we are scheduled for is seven days then seven days off duty.
- We have a 12 hour duty day that begins at either 7 in the morning or at 7 in the evening. Two pilots do their weekly duty beginning on Monday until Sunday, and the other two pilots start their weekly duty on Wednesday and work until the next Tuesday.
- The medical crews have a different 72 hour duty period that changes at noon
- Most of the medical crew do not live in Page and they have jobs in other medical facilities in other towns. One of our Flight Nurses even commutes for only one shift monthly at our base in Page from her home in Indiana.
- Most helicopter pilots will generally alternate from one week of days to one week of nights.
- Most of the helicopter pilots live in Page, and the company allows us to do all of our standby duty time off of the airport as long as we can be airborne within ten minutes after notification.
- All of the medical crews are on a 72 hour duty, or a straight six day duty, and they are required to do all of their standby time at the base.
- Because I live only a few minutes from the airport I usually do that entire standby from my home.
 - I will usually arrive at Classic just before my 7 o'clock start time and I go to the computer to check the weather and notams. I will chat with the Dispatcher a little bit then I update the dispatch board in the hall with green, yellow, or red code.
 - Then I will go down and preflight the helicopter.
 - If any of the pilots or the medical crew are around I will "BS" with them then, but the pilot I am relieving is usually not at the airport so I usually don't have much interaction with them when I am just coming on duty.
 - Unless they have had a recent mission, the medical crewmembers are usually still asleep so I usually don't get to hang out with them when I am just coming on duty.
 - After all of these duties at the start of my shift I usually go back home
 - Whether I am on the night shift or the day shift, I usually spend most of my standby time at home
 - Sometimes in the middle of the day I will return to the base and just hang out with the medical crew or with any of the pilots that might be there



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- Whenever we have a helicopter pilot that doesn't live in Page, those guys can stay in the company apartment with the King Air pilot. That company apartment is just a two minute drive or a very short walk from the airport
- Regarding our required flight time and duty time records, each pilot keeps their own records in an excel spreadsheet on their own personal computer.
- I maintain my flight time and duty records on my computer at home.
- On the first of the month we are required to e-mail the spreadsheet to our chief pilot, Mario Nickl at the company's home base in Woods Cross UT. Mario keeps those spreadsheets on his own computer and nobody else has access to them.
- During all of our flights without a patient, the Flight Medic will fly in the left cockpit seat to assist the pilot with spotting wires and other hazards
- The medical crew will frequently crack open their doors when we are arriving or departing a tight landing zone with wires or other obstructions
- Then, while preparing to load the patient in the helicopter we will reconfigure the helicopter to put the stretcher patient on the left side with their feet sticking into the cockpit area aircraft. The Flight Paramedic then sits in the left rear forward facing seat at the patient's head, and the Flight Nurse sits in the right rear aft facing seat in order to provide medical care to the patient.
- Our dispatch makes a telephone call to the hospital emergency room about 30 to 35 minutes before we arrive any hospital with a patient onboard
- When in-flight, we are required to call our dispatch at least every 15 minutes with our position and status
- At about 20 minutes from arrival at the hospital I will use the EMSCOM radio or the cel phone to connect my medical crew with the hospital emergency room, they then give a medical status report to the hospital emergency room
- When close to landing I will ask the medical crew if they are all secure
- When approaching FMC, we usually make our landing to the West because of the prevailing winds
- When approaching from the Northwest we usually make a right turn to land to the West
- I usually monitor Flagstaff Tower on VHF 1, and I think most of the pilots do the same
- Tom Caldwell would also frequently flight follow with Albuquerque center
- All of us helicopter pilots get about 300 hours of flying time per year.
- Regarding salaries, my guess is that line pilots probably range from a starting salary in the low ----- range to a high salary of about ----- more.
- The company provides two weeks of paid vacation time, a medical plan, and a very small Christmas bonus.



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- They also have a 401K retirement plan, but contributions are not matched by the company so I suspect that most employees do not participate.
- When we have a long trip, such as to Phoenix, the company will reimburse us for our meal expenses on that flight.
- My guess is that each pilot will probably have one to three call outs per day during each 12 hour shift in our busiest time in the summer, but perhaps only two calls for each pilot during the entire week.
- Tom Caldwell had been at Classic for about ten years and he had been an army helicopter pilot in Vietnam. Tom for several years had previously been our base safety officer.
 - Tom's wife's name is Pushpa
 - Tom has two sons that live with them, one about 16 years old, and the other is about 13 or 14
 - Tom's first wife, the boys' mother, lives in Prescott
 - Tom's sister also lives in Prescott
- I have been with Classic for about four years and I am presently assigned as a line pilot in the 407 with additional duties as the base safety officer and the NVG (night vision goggle) flight instructor.
- Shawn Stansfield has been a pilot with the company for only about a year. He previously flew helicopter air tours operations out of Las Vegas.
- Dave Soloman has been a pilot at Page for more than four years.
- Bob Salter has been here for almost a year.
- Matt Stein is the Lead Pilot here at Page and has been with the company for more than 15 years. Matt is also the program director, a company flight instructor, and company check airman
- Rich is the Lead Dispatcher and usually works days only and Willie usually works opposite him on the night shift.
- Terry Allen and Teray Begay are Dispatchers that alternate day and night shifts.
- Crystal and Kat are part time Dispatchers
- Pete Malcolm is the lead mechanic for the base at Page. Greg and Chase are the other two mechanics. I am very happy with the maintenance here and think that all three of those mechanics are really excellent.
- The helicopter pilots at Classic don't seem to have the opportunity to hang out with the EMS pilots for any of the other EMS helicopter companies in the area
- Native Air is the only other company that I have had problems with.



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- One time I was on the pad at FMC (Flagstaff Medical Center) when Native Air came in behind me and I didn't know they were there.

Thomas J. Latson, Jr.
Air Safety Investigator



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Record of Conversation

Who: Marc Larsen RN, Flight Nurse and Allen Mitchell, Flight Paramedic , Classic Helicopters

Date: July 1, 2008

RE: DEN08MA116A/B

On July 2, 2008, Scott Tyrrell, and I interviewed Marc Larsen RN, who said he is employed as a Flight Nurse and Allen Mitchell, who said he is employed as a Flight Paramedic in the Bell 407 and the King Air for Classic at their EMS location at Page, Arizona.

They told us the following:

- Tom Caldwell had been here for a long time, he was very safety conscious and a great guy to fly with
- We are on a different duty schedule than the helicopter pilots or the King Air pilot. We have a three day, 72 hour, duty period that changes at noon. Some of the people even do a double shift six day schedule
- During this three day or six day schedule we have to stay in the facility here at the airport. If we are on the last out crew we can leave the airport for short visits, but we have to stay close by on the mesa
- The majority of the medical crews works at hospitals and do not live in Page, AZ, therefore they commute to work prior to their shift.
- Both of us have jobs here in Page and most of the medical crewmembers also have other jobs in other medical facilities
- During all of our flights without a patient, the Medic will fly in the left cockpit seat to assist the pilot with spotting wires and other hazards and the Nurse is in the right rear seat
- We usually crack open the doors when we are arriving or departing a tight landing zone so we can better see wires or other obstructions, and we communicate that to the pilot on the intercom
- Then, while preparing to load the patient in the helicopter we will reconfigure the helicopter to put the stretcher patient on the left side with their feet sticking into the cockpit area aircraft.
- During patient flights the Medic sits in the left rear forward facing seat at the patient's head, and the Nurse sits in the right rear aft facing seat in order to provide medical care to the patient.



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- At about 20 minutes from arrival at the hospital the pilot will patch us to the hospital emergency room, and we will give a medical status report to the hospital emergency room
- When approaching FMC, we usually make our landing to the West because of the prevailing winds
- The way a new hire medical crewmember will get that knowledge is from our initial orientation flights, but is mostly from flying with all of the different helicopter pilots
- We really like using NVGs (night vision goggles) during the night flights. They are great, I don't know how we survived before without them
- When approaching FMC from the Northwest most of the pilots will usually make a right turn to land to the West
- All of us have been talking about the accident flight. We think the Nurse and the Paramedic would have been taking care of the patient, but they would have been able to be looking out for obstructions and other aircraft during the landing
- When we are landing anywhere and we know about any other aircraft in the area we would definitely be disusing that among all three of us
- If we had been on that accident flight and we new another helicopter was inbound we would definitely be very actively searching for them

Thomas J. Latson, Jr.
Air Safety Investigator



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Record of Conversation

Who: Sandy Espinoza RN, Director – Emergency Department, Flagstaff Medical Center

Date: July 1, 2008

RE: DEN08MA116A/B

On July 1, 2008, Leah Yeager, David Keenan, Scott Tyrrell, and I were in the emergency room at the Flagstaff Medical Center when we interviewed Sandy Espinoza RN, who said she is employed as Director, Emergency Department, Flagstaff Medical Center.

Ms. Espinoza told us the following:

- “my understanding is that Guardian Dispatch is responsible for informing inbound helicopters if another aircraft is on the pad or if another aircraft is also inbound to the helipad”.
- “Native Air is the only one I have had problems with... they sometimes fail to call us when they are inbound to our hospital”.
- “I think we have a written procedure that requires them to inform us before they arrive on our helipad”.

Thomas J. Latson, Jr.
Air Safety Investigator



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Record of Conversation

Date: July 1, 2008

Who: Michelle Allen, Transport Coordinator, Air Methods, Inc. Dispatch Center

RE: DEN08MA116A/B

Aaron Sauer, Dennis McCall, Dave Keenan, and I interviewed Ms. Allen at her place of employment at Guardian Control, Flagstaff Pulliam Airport. Ms. Mardene Haines, the Program Director for Guardian Control, was present during this interview.

Ms. Allen has been employed at the Air Methods, Inc. dispatch center (aka Guardian Control) in Flagstaff, Arizona, for 1.5 years. She is a paramedic and had previous dispatch experience with the Navajo County Police Department. Ms. Allen had also completed the Air Methods dispatcher-training program, which certified her as an FAA Communications Specialist. She normally works a 12-hour, 2 on/3off or 3on/3off shift. She had been on duty for approximately 8 hours and 47 minutes at the time of the accident.

At the time of the event she was at her dispatcher station, and the other part-time transport coordinator was cleaning up the office area. Ms. Allen stated that it is normally slow on Sundays, so that is why only one transport coordinator was on duty.

Ms. Allen dispatched N407GA from Flagstaff to Winslow to pick-up an intubated patient for medical transport to Flagstaff Medical Center (FMC). When N407GA departed Winslow, he contacted Guardian Dispatch, the pilot mentioned that he was 20 minutes out, requested weather information, and stated that he would land at Flagstaff to drop off one of the medical crew. She then added and additional six minutes to the flight's ETA at FMC (5 minutes for the flight from Flagstaff to FMC, and 1 minute for the occupant drop at Flagstaff). Ms. Allen could see when the helicopter arrived at their hangar facility based at Flagstaff Pulliam Airport then depart a minute later. The pilot called shortly after he departed Flagstaff to report that he was two minutes from landing at FMC.

Ms. Allen also stated that she got a call from Classic Helicopter's dispatch wondering if she had heard from the Classic helicopter, N407MJ. She said "no." She noted that N407GA was 1 minute overdue on the outerlink tracking system and tried to contact the pilot. She was unable to reach him. Ms. Allen then started to hear the news over the scanner that there had been an accident at Buffalo Park, which was followed by a confirmation that N407MJ, and N407GA had collided and crashed. She then initiated the company's emergency procedures.

Ms. Allen mentioned that she had been part of a practice emergency drill the week before the accident involving the accident pilot and she felt prepared to handle this emergency.

Ms. Allen stated that the pilot from the Classic had not contacted Guardian Dispatch. This was the first time in 1.5 years that a Classic pilot had not called. She was not sure why he did not call.

Leah D. Yeager
Senior Air Safety Investigator



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Record of Conversation

Who: Robert Tullis, Director of Security Flagstaff Medical Center

Date: July 1, 2008

RE: DEN08MA116A/B

On July 1, 2008, I had a conversation with Bob Tullis regarding helipad procedures; how these procedures are disseminated to helicopter operators, helicopter operator safety meetings, and disciplinary actions for operators who do not comply with published Flagstaff Medical Center helipad procedures.

Mr. Tullis stated that there are currently six operators that have permission to operator from the FMC helipad. The operators are Classic Helicopter Service, Air Methods, Inc., Native Air, Air Evac, Arizona Department of Public Service (DPS), and the National Park Service.

FMC owns the heliport and established the written procedures for operating in and out of the helipad. These procedures are revised every three years per hospital policy or if there is a need for a revision. The policy was last revised in 2007. Mr. Tullis stated that he disseminates the revisions via regular mail.

Mr. Tullis stated that he used to coordinate Safety Committee meetings with all of the helicopter operators, but "hadn't one in awhile" because he had a "problem getting vendors together." As a result of this accident, he planned to reinstate the program.

There had been no trends in helicopters not calling the hospital prior to landing. However, on occasion, the FMC emergency department would be notified by the air medical crews before Guardian Dispatch. This occurred when the accident site was in close proximity to the Medical Center.

FMC did not have any established disciplinary procedures for helicopter operators who did not comply with the published helipad procedures. If they did have a problem they would talk to the helicopter operator.

Leah D. Yeager
Senior Air Safety Investigator



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Record of Conversation

Who: Jason Selman, Flight Nurse Air Methods, Inc.

Date: June 30, 2008

RE: DEN08MA116A/B

On June 30, 2008, Tom Latson and I interviewed Jason Selman, age 33, who was employed as a Flight Nurse by Northern Arizona Healthcare. He was a medical crewmember onboard an Air Methods, Incorporated Bell 407, N407GA, that crashed on June 29, 2008 in Flagstaff, Arizona. Mr. Selman had been employed with Northern Arizona Healthcare for four years, and was authorized for medical flights on fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters. In the summer months, he normally works onboard the helicopters due to the fact that he has a low body weight. Mr. Selman stated that he was trained as a neo-natal nurse in the Army and he was considered a neo natal specialist with his current employer.

Mr. Selman stated that he worked a 48-hour shift that started at 0800 and ended 48-hours later at 0800. He came on duty after 4 days rest at 0800 on the day of the accident. At the time of the accident he had been on duty approximately 7 hours and 47 minutes.

Mr. Selman stated that the pilot came on duty at 0900. Prior to any flights that day, he had a conversation with the pilot, and the other flight nurse about a recent EMS accident that had occurred two days prior. They discussed what may have happened on that flight and how important it was to be safe since "they all wanted to go home at the end of their shift."

Mr. Selman stated that he always flew with another flight nurse, who specialized in adult care. He had flown often with the pilot and other flight nurse, and described his relationship with them as "excellent." They communicated well and the pilot was always open to medical crew input.

The crew's first dispatched flight occurred around 1030 from Flagstaff to Cottonwood, AZ for an infant pick-up. Upon their return they stopped at Flagstaff and dropped off the flight nurse that specialized in adult care due to weight restrictions. The flight then continued to Flagstaff Medical Center, where the helicopter landed without incident. The flight nurse that was dropped off drove to FMC and met the crew. The pilot stayed at FMC, cleaned the helicopter, and then flew back to Flagstaff. The two flight nurses drove back to Flagstaff with the infant isolette.

Once the crew was back at Flagstaff, they had an approximately 1.5 hour break before the second call. The crew was dispatched to Winslow, AZ for an adult patient pick-up. Mr. Selman said the patient weighed approximately 260 pounds and there would most likely be a weight restriction (about 100 pounds) on the return flight and that they would have to drop him off at Flagstaff. Approximately 5 minutes after they departed Winslow, he heard the pilot contact Guardian Dispatch and reported they were about 20 minutes from Flagstaff. He also heard Dispatch report that Classic was inbound to FMC and had an ETA of 28 minutes.



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About 15 minutes later, Mr. Selman heard the pilot report that he was 15 minutes out and would be landing at Flagstaff to drop him off.

Mr. Selman stated that the medical crew is tuned into the pilot communications, and he did not hear any further communications from Classic. In addition, he did not hear the Air Methods pilot discuss the Classic flight after the initial notification. The entire crew is trained to have practice a "sterile cockpit" during takeoff and once the approach to land is established. Only the pilot talks to dispatch and ATC. The medical crews only communicate on the medical radios to respective emergency departments and relay patient information.

Mr. Selman reported that he has noticed several helicopters operating in and around the FMC heliport. If there are multiple aircraft in the area, they will have to hold, then approach and do a "hot drop." He described it as "musical chairs."

The medical crew is trained to be an extra set of eyes, and once/if the patient is stabilized. Mr. Selman said he would visually clear the left side of the helicopter for the pilot on each flight.

Mr. Selman felt that this accident was a result of a lack of communications between the two operators. He also stated that it is rare for two pilots to talk air-to-air.

Leah D. Yeager
Senior Air Safety Investigator



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Record of Conversation

Who: Marc Gosik, Flagstaff-Pulliam Air Traffic Manager

Date: July 1, 2008

RE: DEN08MA116A/B

Mr. Gosik has been manager of the Flagstaff-Pulliam Airport Air Traffic Control Tower since 1996. There are five controllers employed at the tower, which has been a contract facility since 1980-1981. All of the controllers have over 30 years of experience.

Mr. Gosik stated that his facility works approximately 20-30 helicopter operations a day; of which, a majority of those are EMS flights. The other operations are local law enforcement, military, and some training flights. He described the tower's relationship with EMS operators as "great to work with", "no issues or problems", "professional", and "pretty sharp." Mr. Gosik had never heard of Classic prior to the accident, which he felt was due to the fact that Classic normally approaches Flagstaff Medical Center from the north and does not normally cross through the airport's Class D airspace.

Mr. Gosik said the Class D airspace around Flagstaff has a 3-mile radius from the airport and a 6-mile diameter ring. The service ceiling is from the surface up to 9,000 feet msl (2,500 feet agl).

Controllers cannot see Flagstaff Medical Center from the tower cab, and have difficulty seeing an aircraft if it is more than 1 to 1.5 miles from the airport control tower due to the wooded and mountainous terrain surrounding the airport.

There were two controllers on duty at the time of the accident. The controller that cleared the Air Methods, Inc. flight could not recall if the helicopter had departed in front of the tower or behind the tower when it departed for Flagstaff Medical Center.

Leah D. Yeager
Senior Air Safety Investigator