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Log 1434

**NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD**  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: May 14, 1982

Forwarded to:

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Director  
National Weather Service  
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8060 13th Street  
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SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-82-45

On December 31, 1981, at 2000 m.s.t., a Sun West Airlines Piper Navajo Aircraft (PA 31-350), N41070, Flight 104 crashed east of the Durango-La Plata County Airport, Colorado (DRO), in snow, reduced visibilities, and reported icing conditions. Of the six people on board, four were killed and two were seriously injured. Flight 104 was on an Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) flight plan from Albuquerque, New Mexico (ABQ) to DRO.

At 1822 m.s.t., prior to landing at ABQ, the pilot of N41070 called a specialist at the ABQ Flight Service Station (Flight Watch) by radio to request weather information for DRO. The pilot was given the actual weather for DRO and the actual and forecast weather for Farmington, New Mexico. However, the specialist did not give the pilot the latest forecast for DRO which indicated surface visibilities occasionally below landing minimums in snow between 1600 and 2200 m.s.t. because the forecast was not available to the specialist on the Service A circuit.


During the investigation, the Safety Board learned that a nonscheduled terminal forecast for DRO is prepared several times a day by meteorologists at the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Denver, Colorado, and distributed locally via an electrowriter. However, the forecast is not transmitted to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Weather Message Switching Center (WMSC) in Kansas City, Missouri, for distribution on the Service A circuits. Although the impact that receipt of the forecast might have had on the flight operation could not be established, the DRO forecast would have been useful to the pilot of N41070 and to many, if not most, other aviation interests who use DRO. Forecast information is important to both the preflight and in-flight stages of aircraft operations, and wide distribution of the DRO forecast by transmission on the Service A circuits is warranted.

It is the Safety Board's understanding that a nonscheduled airport terminal forecast for Gunnison County Airport, Gunnison, Colorado, also is prepared by the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Denver but not distributed on Service A. The Safety Board believes that this forecast must also be made available on the Service A circuits.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the National Weather Service:

Establish a policy of transmitting all nonscheduled airport terminal forecasts and amendments to the Federal Aviation Administration Weather Message Switching Center in Kansas City, Missouri, for distribution on Service A circuits. (Class II, Priority Action) (A-82-45)

BURNETT, Chairman, GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, and McADAMS and BURSLEY, Members, concurred in this recommendation.

  
By: Jim Burnett  
Chairman

cc: Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration