

Log 1776

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

ISSUED: FEB 28 1985

Forwarded to:

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SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-85-18 and -19

On February 4, 1985, about 1955 Alaska standard time, North Pacific Airlines Flight 1802, a Beechcraft Queenair, crashed while making an instrument approach to the Soldotna Airport, killing all nine persons onboard. There was a low ceiling and restricted visibility in fog at the time.

A Supplementary Aviation Weather Reporting Station (SAWRS) served the Soldotna Airport on the day of the accident. The SAWRS had been certified by the National Weather Service (NWS) Regional Headquarters Office in Anchorage, Alaska, in March 1983. The establishment of a SAWRS at Soldotna was necessary to permit North Pacific Airlines to conduct flight operations under instrument flight rules (IFR) into the Soldotna Airport. Weather observations for an instrument approach to Soldotna Airport were provided to the crew of Flight 1802 before the accident by North Pacific Airlines employees certified by the NWS to make weather observations.

Although it has not been determined at this time whether the operation of the Soldotna SAWRS or the performance of the observers were factors in this accident, several significant discrepancies were noted during the on-scene investigation. Among them: surface weather observations were not logged, the ceiling light was inoperative and had been inoperative for several months, and the altimeters had not been calibrated since February 2, 1982. Calibration of the altimeters is required every 24 months. Moreover, the weather information, including the ceiling and visibility, was reported incorrectly to the pilot by the NWS-certified observers. As a result of these findings, the NWS revoked the certification of the Soldotna SAWRS on February 10, 1985.

Although the NWS Operations Manual, Chapter 14, Part B, requires the NWS Regional Headquarters Office in Anchorage to inspect the Soldotna Airport SAWRS at least twice a year and to monitor its observations regularly, there is no evidence that the NWS had inspected the equipment or monitored any observations since March 1983.

As of February 12, 1985, there were 32 SAWRS's under the supervision of the NWS Regional Headquarters Office in Anchorage. Upon review of NWS records at Anchorage, Safety Board investigators determined that, of these stations, 18 stations certified prior to 1984 had not been inspected in 1984 or 1985. Based on this information and its findings during the investigation, the Safety Board believes that the NWS should take steps immediately to verify whether the SAWRS's in Alaska are being operated in accordance with applicable directives and guidelines.

The Safety Board has not determined whether the problem identified in the Alaska Region is typical in all NWS Regions with SAWRS's however, because of the importance of SAWRSs to the safety of IFR operations into airports and heliports, the Safety Board believes that the NWS should also take steps to verify that SAWRS's outside the Alaska Region are being inspected and monitored in accordance with applicable directives and guidelines.

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

Require an immediate inspection of Supplementary Aviation Weather Reporting Stations in the Alaska Region, which have not been inspected and monitored in accordance with National Weather Service Operations Manual Chapter 14, Part B, and require corrective action as necessary to bring the stations to an acceptable level of performance. (Class I, Urgent Action) (A-85-18)

Determine whether Supplementary Aviation Weather Reporting Stations outside the Alaska Region have been inspected and monitored in accordance with National Weather Service Manual, Chapter 14, Part B, and require an immediate inspection where one is overdue and corrective action as indicated. (Class II, Priority Action) (A-85-19)

BURNETT, Chairman, GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, and BURSLEY, Member, concurred in these recommendations.

By: 
Jim Burnett
Chairman