



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: February 14, 1994

In reply refer to: A-94-11 and -12

Honorable David R. Hinson
 Administrator
 Federal Aviation Administration
 Washington, D.C. 20591

On April 28, 1993, at 2350 central daylight time, a Beech Aircraft Corporation C-99, N115GP, operated by GP Express Airlines, crashed near Shelton, Nebraska. The airplane was destroyed, and the two pilots on board sustained fatal injuries. The purpose of the flight was for the pilot in the right seat (the check pilot) to administer a 6-month competency/proficiency check, required under the provisions of title 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 135, to the pilot in the left seat (the flying pilot). Both pilots were qualified check airmen with the airlines. The flight, which was conducted under 14 CFR Part 91, originated at the Central Nebraska Regional Airport, Grand Island, Nebraska (GRI), at 2343. No flight plan was filed, nor was one required, and visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time.¹

The National Transportation Safety Board has determined that the probable causes of this accident were the deliberate disregard for the Federal Aviation Regulations, GP Express procedures, and prudent concern for safety by the two pilots in their decision to execute an aerobatic maneuver during a scheduled check ride flight, and the failure of GP Express management to establish and maintain a commitment to instill professionalism in their pilots consistent with the highest levels of safety for an airline operating scheduled passenger service.

During the investigation of this accident, it was found that GP Express'

¹For more detailed information, read Aircraft Accident/Incident Summary Report-- "Controlled Flight Into Terrain, GP Express Airlines, Inc., N115GP, Shelton, Nebraska, April 28, 1993" (NTSB/AAR/-94/01/SUM)

policy was to close all corporate offices after the last scheduled flight had arrived at GRI until the first scheduled flight prepared for departure the next morning. As a result, its management was unaware that the accident airplane was missing when company personnel opened the station at 0400 on April 29. At 0630, the company contacted the FAA and reported that the airplane was missing. The wreckage of the airplane was found at 0715.

The Safety Board believes that while aircraft of airlines operating under 14 CFR Part 135 are engaged in airline-related flying activities, company personnel should be available and in a position to communicate with the aircraft if necessary, or airlines should require that an appropriate flight plan is filed for the type of flight activity performed.

The Safety Board believes that the level of FAA surveillance of GP Express was equal to or perhaps even higher than the average level of surveillance for similar airlines. However, the occurrence of this accident indicates that even this level of surveillance was not sufficient to accurately assess the safety philosophy of the company and its check pilots.

The FAA formerly had a list of air carrier compliance alert indicators which were contained in Action Notice 1800.6. These indicators were changes in certificate holder operating characteristics that may affect safety and regulatory compliance. However, that Action Notice was not given the permanency of the Air Transportation Operations Inspectors Handbook. Such a tool would have helped the Principal Operations Inspector of GP Express to spot the indicators that may accompany potential safety deficiencies.

In view of the recent history of air carrier management being cited as causal or contributory in aircraft accidents,² the Safety Board believes that the FAA

²Aircraft Accident Reports--"Controlled Collision with Terrain, GP Express Airlines, Inc., Flight 861, A Beechcraft C99, N118GP, Anniston, Alabama, June 8, 1992." (NTSB/AAR-93/03); "Tomy International, Inc., d/b/a Scenic Air Tours, Flight 22, Beech Model E18S, N342E, In-flight Collision with Terrain, Mount Haleakala, Maui, Hawaii, April 22, 1992." (NTSB/AAR-93/01); and "Britt Airways, Inc., d/b/a Continental Express Flight 2574, In-flight Structural Breakup, EMB-120RT, N33701, Eagle Lake, Texas, September 11, 1991." (NTSB/AAR-92/04); and Aircraft Accident/Incident Summary Report--"Loss of Control, Business Express, Inc., Beechcraft 1900C N811BE, Near Block Island, Rhode Island, December 28, 1991." (NTSB/AAR-93/01/SUM).

should complete Chapter 8 of Volume 3 of its "Air Transportation Operations Inspectors handbook," (FAA Order 8400.10), which deals with "Air Carriers Management Effectiveness."

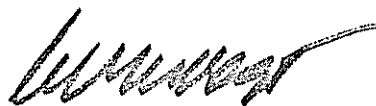
Therefore, as a result of the investigation of this accident, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

Require airlines operating under 14 CFR Part 135 to place personnel on duty with the ability to rapidly communicate with aircraft that are engaged in company-related flight activities when such activities are taking place, or require that an appropriate flight plan be filed for the operation. (Class II, Priority Action) (A-94-11)

Complete Chapter 8 of Volume 3 of its "Air Transportation Operations Inspectors Handbook," (FAA Order 8400.10), which deals with "Air Carrier Management Effectiveness." (Class II, Priority Action) (A-94-12)

Also as a result of its investigation, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendation A-94-13 to the Regional Airline Association.

Chairman VOGT, Vice Chairman COUGHLIN, and Members LAUBER, HAMMERSCHMIDT, and HALL concurred in these recommendations.



By: Carl W. Vogt
Chairman