



L992539C

National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594
Safety Recommendation

Date: JAN - 5 1995

In reply refer to: A-94-216 and A-94-217

Honorable Mark Barnhart
Stratford Town Manager
Town Hall
2725 Main Street
Stratford, Connecticut 06497

On April 27, 1994, about 2256 eastern daylight time (EDT), Action Air Charters flight 990, a Piper PA-31-350 Navajo Chieftain, N990RA, crashed into a blast fence at the departure end of runway 6 after landing at Sikorsky Memorial Airport (BDR), Stratford, Connecticut. The airplane was operating under Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 135 as a single pilot, on-demand passenger air carrier flight. The airplane was destroyed by impact forces and a postcrash fire. Eight of the nine occupants sustained fatal injuries. One passenger was seriously injured.¹

The National Transportation Safety Board has determined that the probable causes of this accident were the failure of the captain to use the available ILS glideslope, his failure to execute a go-around when the conditions were not suitable for landing, and his failure to land the airplane on the runway at a point sufficient to allow for a safe stopping distance; the fatalities were caused by the presence of the nonfrangible blast fence and the absence of a safety area at the end of the runway.

¹For more detailed information, read Aircraft Accident Report--"Impact With Blast Fence Upon Landing Rollout, Action Air Charters Flight 990, Piper PA-31-350, N990RA, Stratford, Connecticut, April 27, 1994" (NTSB/AAR-94/08)

The Safety Board has concluded that the destruction of this airplane, and the resulting deaths and injury, were a direct result of the airplane's collision with a nonfrangible blast fence located at the end of runway 6. The impact with the fence was survivable, but the location and design of the fence precipitated the release of a large quantity of fuel that quickly ignited into a fatal fire.

The Safety Board acknowledges the necessity of protecting vehicles on state highway 113 from the jet blast of airplanes that are taking off on runway 24. However, the Safety Board also believes that the absence of a safety area beyond runway 6 and the current location of the nonfrangible blast fence are clearly hazardous to crewmembers and passengers at BDR.

Runway 6-24 is currently not required to meet the minimum advisory criteria found in Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Advisory Circular (AC) 150/5300-13, which establishes a runway safety area (RSA) of 800 feet. Due to FAA "grandfathering" policies during rulemaking, runway 6-24 is in compliance with 14 CFR 139 since there are no requirements to establish a safety area because no major reconstruction or expansion of the runway has taken place since January 1, 1988. However, such "grandfathering" of the RSA requirement does not alter the fact that the absence of safety areas creates conditions that are demonstrably unsafe. The Safety Board continues to believe that RSAs should meet AC 150/5300-13 standards and that RSAs should be kept clear of obstructions, such as the blast fence that destroyed this airplane.

Therefore, as a result of its investigation of this accident, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Town of Stratford, Connecticut:

In coordination with the State of Connecticut and the City of Bridgeport, following the relocation of state highway 113, Sikorsky Memorial Airport should immediately establish a runway safety area at the approach end of runway 24 in accordance with Federal Aviation Administration Advisory Circular 150/5300-13 and remove the nonfrangible blast fence. (Class II, Priority Action) (A-94-216)

Within 90 days, and in coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration and the City of Bridgeport, implement a plan to resolve environmental considerations, and proceed with the

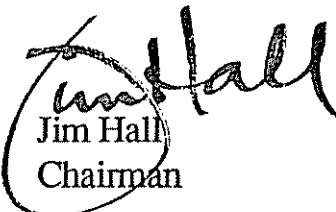
installation of an approach lighting system on runway 6 as soon as possible. (Class II, Priority Action) (A-94-217)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations A-94-211 and A-94-212 to the Federal Aviation Administration, A-94-213 to the Connecticut Department of Transportation, and A-94-214 and A-94-215 to the City of Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent federal agency with the statutory responsibility "...to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations" (Public Law 93-633). The Safety Board is vitally interested in any actions taken as a result of its safety recommendations and would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendations in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendations A-94-216 and A-94-217 in your reply.

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

By:


Jim Hall
Chairman