

## RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Howard Plagens  
Senior Air Safety Investigator

Person Contacted: Bruce Haffner Chief Pilot KTVK TV, Channel 3 (Ch 3)

Date: 2-12-2008

Time: 1000

Phone: [REDACTED]

Subject: LAX07MA231A/B; Eurocopter AS350B2, N613TV, and Eurocopter AS350B2, N215TV, Phoenix, AZ, July 27, 2007

Attendees: Ch 3 Aviation Attorney Kevin Good 214.446.1002 email kgood@cwlaw.com

The following is a summary of statements made by Mr. Haffner, Chief Pilot for KTVK TV Channel 3 (Ch 3):

Mr. Haffner stated that Ch 3 has one helicopter, and they own it. Belo Corporation is the parent company; it has helicopters at other locations, but each is separately owned and managed by the local station. There is no (parent) corporate management of the fleet day-to-day operations, and no corporate safety office, but annually Corporate does assure flight training currency, medical compliance and insurance of all pilots.

Mr. Haffner was the only full time pilot. Mr. Bowerbank worked part time for Ch 3 as the primary back-up pilot. Mr. Bowerbank and two other pilots were on a roster as backup pilots. Two of them, including Mr. Bowerbank, worked for Westcor Aviation, and the other worked elsewhere.

Westcor Aviation is not a part of Belo Corporation. Westcor performs contract maintenance on the helicopter. They have other helicopters of their own, and have their own charter operations. Channel 5, Channel 10, Channel 12, and Ch 3 all park their helicopters in Westcor's hangar. Ch 15 is in a separate hangar. The Westcor Eurocopter service center is highly respected in the industry.

Ch 3's pilots follow the manufacturer's training plan, and complete yearly training and flight checks at the manufacturer's training facility in Grand Prairie, Texas. The syllabus is specific for their make and model.

Mr. Haffner stated that he and other employees are very happy to work for this company; it has a family atmosphere. It provides good pay, is adequately staffed, and the turnover is very low. He has been with the company 24 years. The previous news director and assistant news director were with the company 17 years, which he said is an unusually long term for that position. The photographers are not unionized, and the company is growing. He likes the flight and duty time schedules. The company provides sick leave, and an employee assistance program. He is salaried. Overtime is voluntary, especially for pilots; they can decline a flight for any reason. Management understands, and does not pressure them; they find an alternative means to cover a story.

Mr. Haffner briefs management directly on safety issues, results from meetings of local ENG pilots, and what they are going to do. He receives all publications that he can

get from such organizations as the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), Helicopter Association International (HAI) and is a member of both organizations as well as The National Broadcast Pilots Association (NBPA). He attends quarterly ENG pilot meetings in addition to other meetings.

The station conducts indoctrination for new photographers. It teaches them the see and avoid concept when the photographers first start to fly, and talk about their responsibilities to keep an eye out for traffic while flying. All of the photographers are enthusiastic about aviation, and attend the ENG meetings. He has flown with Larry Welk, who works in the Los Angeles, California, area. They discuss safety issues, and he indicated that they are similar in their operations.

Mr. Haffner felt that he had a great relationship with the FAA. They usually call about once a year and the contact is usually in reference to a noise complaint. He usually gets the complainant's phone number, and contacts the caller himself. He usually resolves all conflict by the end of the conversation. He feels that the FAA is not intimidating; his impression is that the FAA is working with him. He doesn't feel that they come with the attitude that they are out to get someone. He also didn't feel that the NTSB was trying to put anyone on the spot at the post accident briefing. He felt that the interest was in seeking safety enhancements.

Ch 3 has changed their operation since the accident. They have two full time pilots plus one backup, and are adding other backups. The company knows the new pilots that they are hiring. They are from the local area, and he has worked with them for years. Both new hires were pilots for the Phoenix Police Department and have 20 years experience. Two pilots now fly at the same time; one does the flying while the other is reporting, plus they have the news photographer aboard.

In the NTSB/FAA post accident meeting with the Phoenix area pilots, they noted that they had been having yearly meetings with the United States Forest Service Aviation group and another yearly seminar with all Arizona law enforcement air crews and medivac crews at the Mesa Police department. During the meetings with the NTSB the media pilots suggested having quarterly safety meetings. The first quarterly meeting was just media pilots. They invited local law enforcement to the next meeting, and had a very large turnout. They have now expanded the group to include EMS pilots; it has gotten so large that they are going to have to change their meeting venue.

The group decided at the first meeting to establish guidelines for dispute resolution. If two pilots have an issue with the other pilot's flying, the two pilots talk to each other about the incident first. Then, through email, they brief the other pilots on the issues and the resolution. If one pilot feels that the conflict is not resolved, then a call should be made to the other station's news director. Beyond that, a call will be made to the FAA.

Since the midair, pilots are doing a lot more talking air-to-air. They are making positive callouts of their position more often. In a static situation, no one moves until all other helicopters in the group respond. Pilots are also providing a lot more distance between each other, and checking clearance with the photographer more often. The common frequency of 123.025 has gotten busier so when necessary pilots now switch to 123.4 if they want to talk to each other about a situation.



Date: 3/31/08

Bruce Haffner