

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

FOR RELEASE: 6:30 P.M., E.D.T., JULY 23, 1976

(202) 426-8787

ISSUED: July 23, 1976

Forwarded to:

Honorable John L. McLucas
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Washington, D. C. 20594

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-76-101 and 102

On November 30, 1975, Scenic Airlines, Inc., Flight 201 crashed into steep terrain at 10,000 feet m.s.l. The crash site was about 24 miles southwest of Elko Airport, Elko, Nevada, and 3 miles right of Victor 293 centerline. The flight was northwest bound on Victor 293 for the Elko Airport.

The National Transportation Safety Board's investigation of the crash indicated that the flight was under the control of the Salt Lake City Air Route Traffic Control Center (ARTCC). At an assigned altitude of 14,000 feet, the flight was cleared for an instrument approach to the Elko Airport. When the pilot reported leaving 14,000 feet the controller replied that the aircraft's "mode C" was indicating 13,100 feet. The pilot then replied that he "didn't think the transponder 'mode C' was working properly." After the pilot reported verbally that he was out of 12,000 feet, the controller terminated radar service and told the pilot to contact Elko radio. The minimum obstruction clearance altitude on Victor 293, between Ely and Elko, is 13,100 feet.

Air Traffic Control Handbook 7110.65, Chapter 2--General Control, Section 1, paragraph 22-1, contains the following guideline to controllers:

Low Altitude Alert

Immediately issue a low altitude alert to a radar-identified aircraft if you observe an automatic altitude report on radar showing the aircraft to be at an altitude which, in your judgment, places the aircraft in an unsafe proximity to terrain/obstructions.

In that same Handbook, Chapter 4--Radar Operations, Section 1, paragraph 609, contains the following:

Safety Advisory

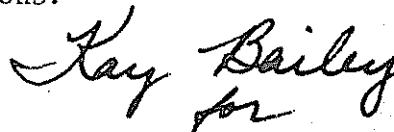
Issue an advisory to radar-identified aircraft whenever radar observation reveals a situation which, in your judgment, is likely to affect the safety of the aircraft.

The Safety Board believes that "low altitude alerts" and "safety advisories" should be issued on the basis of verbal reports from pilots as well as on the basis of radar observations. Accordingly, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

Amend Paragraph 22-1, Chapter 2--General Control, of Air Traffic Control Handbook 7110.65 to include all aircraft, whether radar-identified or not, and to state that the "low altitude alert" be issued on the basis of pilots' verbal altitude reports as well as on the basis of radar observations or automatic altitude reports. (Class II--Priority followup) (A-76-101)

Add a paragraph to Chapter 3--IFR Operations, of Air Traffic Control Handbook 7110.65 to instruct the controller to issue a "safety advisory" to a nonradar-identified aircraft if a verbal altitude report or verbal position report reveals a situation which, in the controller's judgment, is likely to affect the safety of the aircraft. (Class II--Priority followup) (A-76-102)

TODD, Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, BURGESS, and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendations.



By: Webster B. Todd, Jr.
Chairman

THIS RECOMMENDATION WILL BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC ON THE ISSUE DATE SHOWN ABOVE. NO PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE MADE PRIOR TO THAT DATE.