

“Fatigue Management Initiatives within the FAA Air Traffic Organization”

KENNETH MYERS

Federal Aviation Administration

June 18, 2008: Shiftwork Operations Parallel Session

Abstract

COMAIR Flight 5191 (COM5191) crashed shortly after departure from Lexington Blue Grass Regional Airport on August 27, 2006. COM5191 had been cleared for take-off on Runway 22, however, the aircraft attempted to depart Runway 26, which was considerably shorter. Forty-nine passengers and crew died in this accident. The first officer, with serious injuries, was the sole survivor.

The Lexington Blue Grass Regional Airport is served by an FAA Airport Traffic Control Tower (ATCT). After clearing COM5191 for take-off the lone controller on duties was performing administrative duties and did not see that the aircraft had commenced take-off on the wrong runway.

As part of its accident investigation, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigated the possible role of air traffic control in this incident. The NTSB determined that although the air traffic control specialist on duty was operating within FAA directives concerning the basic watch schedule (FAA Order 7210.3, paragraph 2-6-7), the employee had not attained sufficient restorative sleep to combat the effects of fatigue in rotating from the daylight shift to the midnight shift. FAA directives call for a minimum period of at least 8 hours between work shifts, a period of 9 hours had been provided.

The NTSB determined that a fatigue of the air traffic controller was a possible factor in this accident. The NTSB issued four recommendations concerning fatigue. The FAA has accepted all four recommendations and is in the process of implementing these recommendations.

Main Points

- NTSB recommendations cover the following areas
 - Work Scheduling Policies and Practices
 - Qualification and Proficiency Training Programs for fatigue awareness and mitigation strategies
 - Crew Resource Management to allow work teams to recognize fatigue factors and develop work strategies to mitigate
- NTSB recommendations compelled FAA Management and NATCA to work together on work scheduling policies and practices
- The FAA accepted all four recommendations and expanded their scope to include all ATO Safety Professionals
- What we have learned so far
 - There is no one (1) silver bullet that corrects fatigue issues

*AVIATION FATIGUE MANAGEMENT SYMPOSIUM:
PARTNERSHIPS FOR SOLUTIONS*

- Employee life-style management is a key to any fatigue risk mitigation strategy
- There are many possible causes for fatigue; some are not obvious
- There is a great wealth of science
- Tools are being developed to help measure the impact of fatigue on performance
- Initial Steps
 - Qualification and Proficiency Training Programs are being developed
 - Crew Resource Management Training has been developed and is being implemented
 - Scheduling alternatives are being looked at

A copy of Mr. Kenneth Myers' biographical information and presentation slides are provided in Appendix B.