



Friday, May 14, 2004

THE CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

We had another VERY busy week at the NTSB -- the accident investigation course at the NTSB, launching on three new accidents, testifying before Congress and continuing our day-to-day work kept everyone at the Board well involved.

A key aspect of the week included the testimony before the House Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health concerning the recent NTSB report on three air tanker crashes used in firefighting. Much misinterpretation of the NTSB's role and responsibilities created a lively discussion when I testified along with the Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment at the Department of Agriculture, Mark Rey, Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget for the Department of Interior, Lynn Scarlett and James Hull, Co-Chair of

the Blue Ribbon Panel on Federal Aerial Firefighting

The NTSB's reputation for excellence in our accident investigations, along with the significance and historical record of acceptance for our corresponding safety recommendations can sometimes cause confusion as to where our role ends and that of other agencies, including the FAA or other recipients of the recommendations, begins. As I have often stated, while we are not a regulatory agency, we will, in our role as an independent agency, use our "bully pulpit" to aggressively pursue safety in all modes. Safety will continue to be our primary mission.

Ellen Engleman Conners

NTSB Investigates Three Accidents



An Executive Airlines ATR-72 which was seriously damaged in Puerto Rico

The NTSB launched seven staff members to investigate three separate accidents this week. The Office of Aviation Safety sent investigators to the sites of two aircraft accidents and also assisted the Office of Marine Safety in an Alaskan ferry grounding.

The first accident occurred on May 9th, when an Executive Airlines ATR-72 was seriously damaged while landing in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Six people were hospitalized in the accident. Investigator-in-Charge **Lorenda Ward** and four other investigators are at the scene.

On May 10, 2004, at 9:52am Alaska daylight time, the passenger ferry LeConte grounded on submerged rocks 30 miles north of Sitka, Alaska. Several passengers were injured during the rescue by Coast Guard personnel. **Georgia Snyder (AS)**, from the Anchorage Regional Office, is helping investigate the accident along with investigators from the U.S. Coast Guard.

On Friday, May 14th, **Paul Cox** from the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office and intern **Dennis Diaz** responded to the crash of an Epps Aviation Mitsubishi MU-2 near the Baltimore-Washington International Airport. The aircraft came down in a residential area just outside the airport, killing the only crewmember on board.

NTSB ALL HANDS MESSAGES

On the Hill...

On March 13th, Chairman Engleman Conners testified before the House Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health to discuss the NTSB's final reports on three heavy air tanker accidents. During the course of our investigation, the NTSB found that there is no effective mechanism that currently exists to ensure continuing airworthiness of these firefighting aircraft. The Chairman discussed the role and responsibility of the NTSB as the agency charged by Congress to investigate aviation accidents, as well as the NTSB recommendations. In order to ensure that there is a robust oversight and inspection infrastructure that will ensure the safe operation of aircraft used in firefighting operations, the NTSB recommended that the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service and the U.S. Department of Interior develop maintenance and inspection programs that take into account and are based on specific guidelines.



Vice-Chairman Addresses Grads



NTSB Vice-Chairman **Mark Rosenker** delivers the commencement address to 250 graduates on the athletic field of the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona on May 1, 2004.

Exercise Tests Readiness

The NTSB successfully participated in The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Operation Forward Challenge '04 exercise this week. The exercise was designed to see how well 45 federal agencies fared with their continuity of operations (COOP) plans, which involved accessing electronic data and testing communications at alternate sites.

The exercise involved scenarios in which terrorist attacks prevented employees from being able to use the NTSB's Washington, DC headquarters. Essential personnel deployed to the designated COOP site where simulated accidents tested the ability of the NTSB staff to conduct normal operations. Thanks to **Jim Arena** and **Paul Schuda** for their great work in preparing the Board for this exercise.

Students Attend Accident Investigation Course



Students study aircraft wreckage at the NTSB Academy, as part of the Basic Accident Investigation course

The NTSB Academy conducted the first part of the Basic Accident Investigation course in its Ashburn, Virginia location this week. The training consists of the various elements in the accident investigation process from operating rules and legal authority, to survival factors and material fracture recognition.

The 80 students attending the class include representatives from airlines, aircraft manufacturers, educational institutions and government. Attendees have come from as far away as South Korea, Chile and Thailand.

This marks the second time that the course has been given at the Academy's state-of-the-art facility, and is normally conducted twice per year.