

THE CHAIRMAN'S CORNER



Friday, November 12, 2004

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

This week, the NTSB reviewed our federal Most Wanted list of Transportation Safety Improvements. The Most Wanted list is one of the best tools we have at the NTSB for highlighting areas that will increase safety. The 50 recommendations on this list are derived from the hard lessons we have learned over the years investigating many tragic accidents, and we believe that implementing these measures will have a great impact on saving lives.

Our report on medical oversight was also a revealing look into some of the issues facing drivers, medical and law enforcement personnel and licensing agencies. Increased-risk medical conditions directly affect 49 million people in the United States, and we hope our 12 new recommendations will have a great impact on reducing the 43,000 deaths each year on our nation's highways.

Ellen Engleman Conners

NTSB Updates Federal Most Wanted List

The National Transportation Safety Board met in its Washington DC headquarters on November 9th to update its federal Most Wanted list of Transportation Safety Improvements. Established in 1990, the Most Wanted list is a way for the NTSB to focus attention on needed safety improvements in all modes of transportation. The list highlights recommendations that the Board believes would significantly reduce deaths and injuries. The Board discussed some of the 50 safety recommendations in the 13 issue areas on the list, noting instances where federal agencies had given unacceptable responses to NTSB recommendations or were moving too slowly in implementing recommended safety measures. The status of Most Wanted list recommendations in aviation, railroad, highway, marine and one intermodal issue areas was discussed during the meeting.



A frame from an animation showing a near miss of an Asiana B-747 and a Southwest B-737 at Los Angeles in August.

The Board changed the classification of the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) response to three recommendations from "Open-Acceptable Response" to "Open-Unacceptable Response." In addition, two of the issue areas had timeliness classifications changed from yellow (acceptable response, progressing slowly) to red (unacceptable response). An animation of a near miss at the Los Angeles International Airport in August, 2004 was used to illustrate the Board's concerns about runway incursions. One recommendation to the Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration (FMCSA) was changed to "Closed—Reconsidered", and one issue area in highway safety was changed from a timeliness classification of green (acceptable response, progressing in a timely manner) to yellow. The issue area of requiring voyage data recorders on large ocean-going vessels was removed from the list as adoption of the requirement is expected by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in December 2004.

Further details, including the texts of the safety recommendations in each issue area, summaries of federal agency actions, and the status of each recommendation can be found on the Board's website at www.nts.gov.

NTSB ALL HANDS MESSAGES

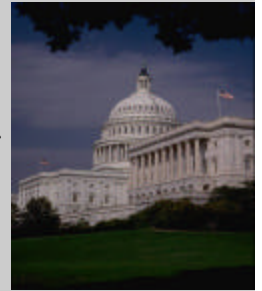


CFC Drive in Gear

The Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) is continuing its fund-raising efforts throughout the National Capital Area (NCA). The CFCNCA has more than 157,000 federal donors who are improving the quality of life for all by supporting and promoting philanthropy through this program. CFC is the largest and most successful workplace fundraising model in the world. You have the power to help by making a contribution this year. Please complete your pledge card and return it to your CFC Keyworker, by December 31, 2004.

On the Hill...

This week, the Office of Government and Industry Affairs (GIA) sent copies of the NTSB's updated federal Most Wanted list of Transportation Safety Improvements to Members of Congress and their Staff.



In addition, the office sent abstracts of the Board's report on Medical Oversight of Non-commercial Drivers to the Hill.

NTSB Reports on Medical Oversight of Drivers

The NTSB met on November 9th to discuss a report on oversight of non-commercial drivers with high-risk medical conditions. The report focused on six accidents that involved drivers who suffered from seizures or blackouts while driving. The accidents killed eight and injured 24 others.

The purpose of this study was to enable individuals to be licensed in accordance with their abilities. The Board concluded that certain medical conditions can increase a driver's accident risk and are incompatible with unrestricted operation of motor vehicles. It was also noted that aside from alcohol addiction, the extent to which medical impairment contributes to the number of traffic accidents is not well defined. In order to better evaluate the impact of certain medical conditions on a person's ability to drive, the Board asked for a national system to collect accident data including information regarding medical conditions of the drivers involved.

It was also determined that many physicians are not knowledgeable about their State's reporting policies or the evaluation of a patient's fitness to drive. The Board recommended that medical schools include training on the driving risks associated with certain medical conditions and medications as well as proper driving fitness assessment techniques, and asked the Federation of State Medical Boards to ensure that continuing medical education requirements include a course addressing these issues.

The Board noted that law enforcement personnel are generally unaware that medical impairments can contribute to the occurrence of an accident, and therefore important for officers to receive awareness training to help them identify and refer medically high-risk drivers to the licensing authority for further assessment. It also recommended that legislation be developed that allows information gathered by emergency medical technicians concerning medically impaired drivers to be conveyed to State licensing agencies.



The results of an accident in Frederick, MD, which killed four when another driver suffered a seizure.