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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: May 4, 1971

Adopted by the NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
at its office in Washington, D. C.
on the 14th day of April, 1971.

FORWARDED TO:

Honorable John A. Volpe
Secretary of Transportation
Washington, D. C. 20590

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION I-71-1

Since the inception of the Department of Transportation, the National Transportation Safety Board, the Bureau of Railroad Safety of the Federal Railroad Administration, the Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety of the Federal Highway Administration, and the former National Highway Safety Bureau have maintained duty watches at home telephones to receive reports of surface accidents. The Federal Aviation Administration and the Coast Guard have continued their separate 24-hour telephone watches at their respective office locations. More recently, the Office of Pipeline Safety and the Office of Hazardous Materials of DOT have established accident reporting systems. Gas pipeline accidents of certain categories are reported by phone to OPS during working hours, and to the FAA duty officer at other times. Accidents involving hazardous materials are required to be reported to the Coast Guard duty officer.

As you know, the Safety Board has recommended to FRA and OPS that regulations be issued or revised to require industry to make rapid reports of accidents. The present gas pipeline accidents reporting requirements are very good, and steps are being taken to revise the railroad and oil pipeline accident reporting requirements.

Under existing Memorandums of Agreement between NTSB and the Administrations, surface accidents, which are considered to be classified as "major" under specified criteria in the Agreements, are reported by telephone by Administration personnel to the NTSB staff, either in the office or at home, for decision by NTSB as to the action it will take. Possible actions by NTSB are to investigate, attend Departmental investigations, or to take no action.

The FAA and Coast Guard duty officers have extensive communications facilities, including press information. These duty officers have been of much assistance to the Safety Board and others by furnishing accident information when received, but are not possessed with the requisite expertise or sufficient time from their primary duties to perform the function adequately.

It is our opinion that a more efficient system operating on a 24-hour basis is needed for receipt of initial reports of surface accidents (except marine) for dispersal of information to interested agencies, and to facilitate more rapid response to accidents.

The Safety Board therefore recommends that:


1-171-1

The Department of Transportation consider establishing on a 24-hour basis a central location within the Department to receive surface (except marine) accident reports, disseminate the information to concerned agencies, and further, to act as the communications coordinator for dissemination of planned action so that all concerned will be informed.

The Safety Board would be pleased to make our staff available for whatever further information you may desire.

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.

Reed, Chairman; Laurel, McAdams, Thayer, and Burgess, Members, concurred in the above recommendation.

By: 
Chairman