



THE CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Friday, April 9, 2004

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The board hearing on April 7th concerning the 15 passenger van used to transport children in child care was one of our most important accident reports to date. There are over 117,000 child care centers in the United States. Many of these organizations as well as church groups still inappropriately use 15 passenger vans to transport children. The board has clearly stated that children should be transported in school buses or vehicles that meet school bus design standards.

I have repeatedly stated that children are our most precious cargo. We sincerely hope that the tragedy in Memphis, Tennessee will not be repeated again. Since this accident, the state of Tennessee has enacted significant safety legislation that should be modeled by other states concerning the safe

transport of children. As summer camps, church retreats and child care events begin for summer vacation, it is important to ensure a SAFE summer for all.

Ellen Engleman Conners



Vice Chairman and Rail investigators launch to Amtrak Train Accident.

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Board Meets on 15 passenger Van Accident

The National Transportation Safety Board met on April 7th to determine the probable cause of a van crash in Memphis that killed five and injured two. The Board scheduled this meeting to coincide with World Road Safety Day, which marks the beginning of a year of activities and events around the world focusing on road traffic safety.

The accident occurred on April 4, 2002, when a 15-passenger Ford E-350 van transporting six children to school in Memphis drifted off the right side of the roadway, overrode the guardrail and struck a bridge abutment. The driver was ejected through the windshield and sustained fatal injuries. Four of the children also were killed, and two were seriously injured. "Our investigation uncovered a string of failures that led to this tragic accident," said NTSB Chairman Ellen Engleman Conners. The Board stated that because the owners of the child care center did not comply with state law, and the Tennessee Department of Human Services did not provide adequate oversight, the van driver was able to transport children even though he had not had a background check or medical examination. The driver was determined to have fallen asleep, probably due to a sleep disorder, and was also under the influence of marijuana on the morning of the crash.

As a result of the accident, the Board made recommendations to the agencies in the 50 states and the District of Columbia that oversee child care transportation calling for the use of vehicles built to school bus standards, regular vehicle maintenance and inspection programs, a requirement that occupants wear age-appropriate restraints at all times, and background checks, medical examinations and drug testing to determine driver fitness. Recommendations were also made regarding improvements in roadside guardrails.

"It demonstrates once again that everyone in the transportation safety chain must do their part to avoid placing our children in harms way," said NTSB Chairman Ellen Engleman Conners.

NTSB ALL HANDS MESSAGES

Two Accident Reports Finished Before One Year Anniversaries

Congratulations to **Bob Chipkevich** and the **Office of Rail, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Investigations** on completing two accident investigations in less than one year.

The first report involved a train derailment in Commerce City, California (June 20, 2003), where some of the derailed cars struck nearby residences, destroying three and damaging five others. Thirteen people suffered minor injuries and were transported to local hospitals.

The second report involved an explosion in Wilmington, Delaware (July 2, 2003) due to a break in an unmarked natural gas service line. The explosion destroyed two residences and damaged two others. Three employees sustained serious injuries and eleven others had minor injuries.

Government and Industry Affairs...

Chairman Engleman Conners and David Clark met with Senator Shelby, Chairman of the Senate Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee and staff members Alan Hanson and Paul Doerr to discuss the NTSB's FY 2005 budget request. The Chairman and David Clark also met with Senator Rockefeller, Ranking Member on the Senate Aviation Subcommittee, and staff members James Reid and Sam Whitehorn to discuss NTSB's successes and our FY 2005 priorities.

The Office of Government and Industry Affairs (GIA) partnered with the Academy for four industry focused Academy previews. GIA and the Academy also signed an agreement with the Aviation Safety Alliance to plan a "Congressional Day" at the NTSB Academy for April 30th. Invitations will be sent next week via email.



NTSB Investigates Derailment of Amtrak Passenger Train

The National Transportation Safety Board launched a team to investigate the derailment of an Amtrak passenger train near Yazoo, Mississippi this week. The locomotive and nine cars of Amtrak's "City of New Orleans" derailed on an elevated section of single track around 6:30 p.m. (CDT) on Tuesday, April 6. Initial reports indicate one person was killed and several passengers were injured in the derailment.

NTSB **Investigator-In-Charge Ted Turpin** is leading a 12-member team, which includes experts in the areas of track, equipment, and human performance. Other investigators are retrieving information from the train's event recorder. Also part of the team are family assistance specialists from the Safety Board's Office of Transportation Disaster Assistance. NTSB **Vice Chairman Mark Rosenker** served as the on-scene spokesman for the investigation, accompanied by Special Assistant **Tom Doyle** and **Lauren Peduzzi** from the Office of Public Affairs.

Interns Learn About Aviation Safety



Intern Latoya Brown watches as Cathy Gagne (AS) - a former SCEP student - investigates an accident in Charleston, SC

Students are furthering their education by assisting The Office of Aviation Safety (AS) in the investigation of aircraft accidents. Three programs are allowing student interns to work alongside investigators.

The Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) has placed 11 undergraduate student interns in the 10 Regional Offices.

The Student Career Employment Program (SCEP) is a co-operative education program for Masters degree candidates, which allows students to convert directly to Air Safety Investigators. Three SCEP students are scheduled to receive their degrees in the next three months.

In addition to the STEP and SCEP programs, there is also an unpaid Student Volunteer Program.