

THE CHAIRMAN'S CORNER



Friday, May 21, 2004

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The impact of the NTSB's investigations into the Walker and Pearblossom, California and Estes Park, Colorado accidents was the subject of much discussion this week in Congress. With 2500 hours of investigation involved in these accidents the NTSB recommendations were very specific. You can read the recommendation letter in it's entirety on our website at: www.nts.gov/Recs/letters/2004/A04_29_33.pdf

After receiving these recommendations, the Department of Agriculture and Forest Service made an independent decision to cancel their contracts with the air tankers rather than continue in their efforts to develop a comprehensive safety and maintenance program. The decision of the Forest Service initiated great debate which will continue with Congressional hearings anticipated in the Senate Commerce Committee and Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests in the near future.

Nine people died in the three accidents which

formed the basis of our recommendations. The three heavy firefighting tankers that crashed represented almost 10% of the large air tanker fleet. Firefighting flights conducted on behalf of the U.S. Government are public operations and are not required to comply with many of the federal aviation regulations (FARs). The extraordinarily harsh conditions of firefighting combined with the age and history of this fleet, constitute a significant safety challenge.

The NTSB will continue to aggressively pursue safety in all modes. As an independent agency our goal is safety first, safety second and safety third. We believe that the current discussions among the FAA, Department of Agriculture, the Department of Interior, the private sector owners-operators of the air tanker fleet and their Congressional representatives will ultimately assist in our common goal of safe skies.

Ellen Engleman Conners

Chairman Attends Click It or Ticket Kick Off



Chairman Engleman Conners participates in Click it or Ticket along with Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta and Chuck Hurley of the National Safety Council.

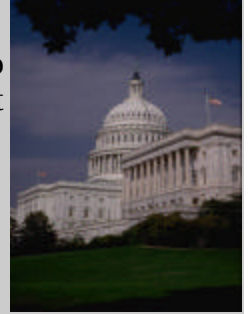
On May 17th, Chairman Engleman Conners and Department Of Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta participated in the kick off for the May 2004 Click It or Ticket Mobilization Campaign. The event was held at American University. The US DOT released data showing that among young men and women ages 16-24, belt use increased to record levels following the focused enforcement/advertising push in May 2003.

The kick off launched the beginning of \$30 million program in national and state advertising to increase seat belt use as law enforcement officers begin stepping up enforcement of seat belt laws. Chairman Engleman Conners and Secretary Mineta expressed their support of the campaign and the work of the law enforcement community for their efforts to save lives by enforcing seat belt laws.

NTSB ALL HANDS MESSAGES

On the Hill...

Chairman Engleman Connors and **David Clark** met with Senator Baucus of Montana and the staff of Senator Burns of Montana to discuss the NTSB's safety recommendations to the USDA and DOI on heavy air tankers used in firefighting. In addition, the Chairman met with Chairman Mica and Ranking Member DeFazio of the House Aviation Subcommittee, Chairman Walden and ranking Member Inslee of the House Forests and Forest Health Subcommittee, Members Hayworth, Rheberg and Enzi, senior FAA officials and senior USDA officials to discuss the recent NTSB reports on the Walker and Pearblossom, California and Estes Park, Colorado 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.



The Chairman, **David Clark**, **Tom Haueter** and **Cheryl McCullough** briefed the Senate Commerce Committee staff in preparation for an anticipated June 2nd Senate hearing on firefighting aircraft. The Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests invited the Chairman to testify June 16th on the NTSB's air tanker report and investigations. The Office of Government and Industry Affairs delivered 67 pages of answers to the House Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee this week. Special thanks to all of the Office Directors and their staff for their assistance in preparing those answers.

Aviation Safety Promotes Two Students



COOP students Zoe Keliher and Jennifer Kaiser

The Office of Aviation Safety has promoted two students in the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) this week. **Jennifer S. Kaiser** from the NTSB's Central Mountain Regional Office in Denver, CO and **Zoe X. Keliher** from the South West Regional Office in Gardena, CA have been promoted to Co-operative education (COOP) students. They have been awarded the title of Investigator-in-training as a result of their entry into the COOP program.

Both students are pursuing graduate degrees through the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University Distance Learning Program.

Data Recorders Approved for Cargo Ships



The Maritime Safety Committee of the International Maritime Organization approved the carriage of Simplified Voyage Data Recorders (SVDRs) on existing cargo ships this week. **Tom Roth-Roffy (MS)** attended the meeting in London, UK as a member of the U.S. Delegation, which was led by U.S. Coast Guard Rear Admiral Thomas Gilmore. Approval of these recorders is the penultimate step in the successful completion of this Most Wanted item for the Office of Marine Safety. The final adoption of the requirement is scheduled to take place in London at the next meeting of the MSC in December, 2004.

In preparation for this meeting, Tom attended the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) meeting to help develop standards for SVDRs. **Dennis Grossey (RE)** has supported Tom and the IEC in this effort.