



Friday, September 3, 2004

THE CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

This week the NTSB was, once again, reminded of the fact that our mission is multi-modal. The I-40 bridge collapse in Oklahoma demonstrated that an accident in one mode can dramatically affect safety in another. It is tragically ironic that no one on the barge and tow that struck the I-40 bridge was injured, while 14 people died and five were injured in vehicles that, by chance, were driving over that same bridge.

Our nation has 585,000 bridges as part of the highway system, with 2,800 of those over navigable waters. An additional 2,200 railroad bridges cross these waters. These are the bridges that carry our children to school, our employees to work and our goods to market. Bridges link our communities and help keep our economy moving and strong.

Our transportation system is made up of many threads, but they are not independent fibers. They are woven into a fabric that, together, gives our infrastructure even greater strength. However, the weakness of one thread affects the whole cloth. That is why the mission of the NTSB is so important.

This is Labor Day weekend. Many of you will be traveling our nation's highways, and crossing these bridges. When you do, think of how your journey might be affected if that bridge weren't there, and the many other travelers and commercial goods that would be affected, too. Buckle up and be safe.

Ellen Engleman Conners

Safety Board Determines Probable Cause of I-40 Collapse



The I-40 bridge near Webbers Falls, OK that collapsed when it was hit by a barge towed by the *Robert Y. Love*, which is shown at the right.

result of his falling asleep. Such an incident is consistent with an episode of syncope, in which blood flow to the brain is interrupted for any of a variety of reasons. This interruption results in loss of consciousness and falling. The captain had no apparent symptoms of clinical significance prior to the accident.

The National Transportation Safety Board met on August 31st in its Washington, DC Headquarters to deliberate on the findings of a May 26, 2002 bridge collapse in Webbers Falls, Oklahoma that killed 14 and injured five. The Board determined that the probable cause of the Robert Y. Love's allision with the Interstate 40 bridge, and the bridge's subsequent collapse, was the captain's loss of consciousness, possibly as the result of an unforeseeable abnormal heart rhythm. Contributing to the loss of life was the inability of motorists to detect the collapsed bridge in time to stop their vehicles.

Safety Board investigators found that the captain of the towboat was not impaired due to alcohol or illegal drugs. Further, the captain's incapacitation was probably not a

As a result of this accident, the Safety Board made recommendations to the U.S. Coast Guard, the Federal Highway Administration and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

NTSB ALL HANDS MESSAGES

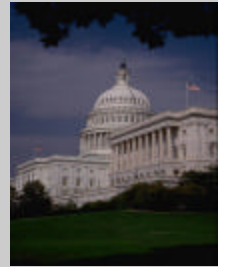


Academy Classes

The NTSB Academy is planning two classes for the month of September. The first is a one day course titled Advanced Accident Site Photography to be held on September 24th. The second is Investigating Human Fatigue Factors to be held on September 28th and 29th. For details about these, and other courses, visit the NTSB Academy's website at: http://www.nts.gov/Academy/sched_courses.htm.

On the Hill...

This week, the Office of Government and Industry Affairs has been finalizing the fiscal year 2006 Budget Request. The completed draft has been sent to the printer, and will be delivered simultaneously to the Office of Management and Budget and Congress on September 7th. Special thanks to the Board Members, Office Directors and staff, CFO's Office, **Deb Smith** and **Vince Harris** for their support in preparing the FY 2006 Request.



NTSB Participates in Disaster Drill

Staff from the Central Mountain Regional Office took part in a disaster drill at the Denver International Airport (DIA) on September 1st. Regional Director **David Bowling**, **Jennifer Kaiser** and **Marcia McBurnett** participated in the event, which simulated the crash of a Boeing 727 due to windshear. The exercise involved DIA airport personnel, fire and rescue units from surrounding communities, the Denver Coroner's Office, the Colorado Air National Guard, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Federal Aviation Administration and the Transportation Security Administration. The City of Denver and surrounding communities also participated, including several local hospitals. Over 200 volunteers acted as injured passengers and family members. The exercise gave the NTSB an opportunity to practice first response stake down of a major accident scene and the initial collection of information for the Go-Team.



The NTSB's Jennifer Kaiser and Marcia McBurnett (center) during DIA's recent disaster exercise.

The exercise was held to satisfy the airport's 3-year requirement to certify its crash response under 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 139.

FEGLI Open Season in Progress

The Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) 2004 Open Season has begun, and will continue through September 30th. The FEGLI Open Season allows eligible employees the opportunity to enroll in the program or change their FEGLI coverage without answering any medical questions, having a physical examination, or providing marriage or birth certificates. Some of the advantages of the FEGLI Program and this Open Season are:

- Group premiums and payroll deduction
- No age restrictions
- Free Extra Benefit automatically included in Basic for enrollees under age 45
- No medical questions to answer; no physical examinations
- You can elect coverage up to the maximum available - no restrictions

Visit www.fegli2004.opm.gov for additional information.

If you have any questions, please contact **Pam Goins** at x6236, or by email at goinsp@ntsb.gov.