

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On March 18 – 19, 2003, the National Transportation Safety Board held a public hearing on medical oversight of noncommercial drivers. The purpose was to determine the current state of medical oversight of such drivers and to identify Federal, State, and organizational initiatives under way to improve the oversight and licensing system.

The impetus for the hearing was an accident that occurred in Hagerstown, Maryland, involving a driver with a history of seizures not fully controlled by medication. On November 3, 2002, the driver drove her 1983 Chevrolet Caprice through two signaled intersections, causing it to collide with two vehicles and fatally injuring one driver. The Safety Board subsequently identified several other accidents in which a driver's medical condition was a factor in the crash. In one such accident, which resulted in the death of a father and three children, the driver at fault had a history of medically related automobile accidents, yet had been able to maintain his driving privileges.

The circumstances of these accidents suggested to the Safety Board that improvements to the current medical oversight system were necessary. The hearing allowed the Safety Board to assemble international experts from the medical, academic, and advocacy communities, as well as from the Federal and State governments, to discuss issues deriving from the accidents and to formulate possible solutions. The discussions focused on six areas:

- Research into the interaction between potentially impairing or debilitating medical conditions and their effect on an individual's ability to drive.
- The role of various parties in collecting and routing information on medically high-risk drivers to licensing authorities and medical review boards.
- The effectiveness of State oversight of licensed drivers who suffer from potentially impairing or debilitating medical conditions.
- Programs that help doctors, law enforcement personnel, licensing authorities, and other parties report, manage, or counsel medically high-risk drivers.
- Programs that attempt to reduce the incidence of medically related accidents through education and other measures.
- Public policy considerations in the design and implementation of driver medical oversight programs.

These proceedings comprise a transcript of all statements made by participants at the hearing. The statements do not necessarily represent the official views of the National Transportation Safety Board. Some remarks have been edited, with the authors' permission, to clarify content. The Safety Board will use the proceedings as a resource in developing recommendations to minimize the risk that accidents such as the one that occurred in Hagerstown, Maryland, will continue to occur.

A public docket (HWY-03-MH005) has been established for the hearing and the Hagerstown accident investigation. In addition to these proceedings, the docket contains submissions from hearing participants, administrative information regarding the hearing,

and factual information gathered from the Hagerstown accident investigation. Additional information about the public docket may be obtained from the Public Inquires Section, RE-51, National Transportation Safety Board, Washington, DC, 20594 (202-314-6132).