

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

ISSUED: July 6, 1972

Adopted by the NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
at its office in Washington, D. C.
on the 1st day of June 1972

FORWARDED TO:)
Honorable John H. Shaffer)
Administrator)
Federal Aviation Administration)
Washington, D. C. 20591)

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION A-72-84

In response to Notice of Proposed Rule Making 69-33, the National Transportation Safety Board supported the proposal which resulted in the amendment of Paragraph 25.811 (e)(1) of the Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR) to require self-illuminating handles for Type III exits. In addition, the Safety Board recommended that the above section be amended to require self-illumination for all exit handles. This recommendation was accepted in part in the recently published amendments to the FAR in that you indicated you would consider future NPRM action to apply such a requirement to Type II and Type IV exits. The Board's recommendation as it would apply to floor-level exits (Types A and I) was rejected because you considered that the present requirements for general emergency illumination provided adequate lighting of the floor-level exit handles.

The present regulation covering general emergency illumination specifies that the emergency light system must produce certain light levels at arm rest level on the aisle centerline and at a 6-inch level above the floor for exit passageways. Meeting these requirements does not necessarily ensure that adequate lighting is provided for door exit handles at floor-level exits. The ability of this lighting to provide adequate exit handle illumination would depend on the design and position of the general emergency lights and on the location of the exit handles.

Passengers have had to open exits, under emergency conditions in the past and they undoubtedly will be required to do so in the future. A passenger may become confused even in a well-lighted exit area under emergency conditions. For example, in the DC-10 configuration the exit handle is located not on the door itself, but to one side. Moreover, the handle is located on the opposite side of the door from the exit sign. Adjacent to the exit sign is a handgrip which could easily be mistaken for the door handle. A self-illuminated door handle would stand out as the appropriate device to open the door.

We also believe that exit crowding could block adequate lighting of the exit handle for Type I and Type A exits--a problem solved by self-lighted handles. Smoke could compromise the illumination of the handle by the overhead lights, or the failure of the general emergency lights could render an exit handle invisible, unless it were self-illuminated.

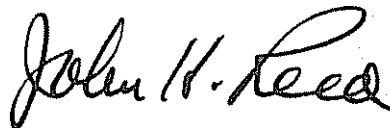
Accordingly, the Safety Board endorses early rulemaking regarding self-illumination handles for Type II and IV exits, and recommends further that the Federal Aviation Administration:

Require self-illuminating handles for all
Type I and Type A exits.

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, Thayer, and Burgess, Members of the Board, concurred in the above recommendations. McAdams, Member, did not participate.

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By: John H. Reed
Chairman

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