

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

FOR RELEASE: 6:30 A.M., E.D.S.T., JULY 3, 1975

ISSUED: July 3, 1975

Forwarded to:

Honorable James E. Dow
Acting Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Washington, D. C. 20591

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-75-54 and 55

During the National Transportation Safety Board's public hearing concerning the TWA 514 crash which occurred on December 1, 1974, near Berryville, Virginia, several pilots from a number of large U. S. air carriers testified that they had seldom, if ever, received SIGMET messages via navigational aid voice frequency. They indicated that there was neither a radio reception problem nor a difficulty in transmission of the data. The problem was that the SIGMETs were not being broadcast over the navigational aids in accordance with current procedures. As you know, current procedures are for the SIGMETs to be broadcast upon receipt and at 15-minute intervals at H+00, H+15, H+30 and H+45 for the first hour after issuance. Indications are that communicator workload may be the reason that SIGMETs are not always broadcast on schedule.

The Safety Board is concerned that warnings of weather severe enough to be potentially hazardous to aircraft in flight may not always be available or may not be available in a timely manner.

The Board recognizes that air carrier pilots do have another source of SIGMETs in flight and that is the company dispatcher. In accordance with 14 CFR 121.601(b), the dispatcher is required to furnish the pilot in flight with "...any additional available information of meteorological conditionsthat may affect the safety of the flight." In the case of TWA 514, the dispatcher testified that he used SIGMETs to make operational decisions and treats them as, "....just another piece of forecasting information we take into consideration." He also testified that it was not standard procedure to transmit or relay SIGMETs or AIRMETS to flightcrews. When asked what procedure is expected of TWA flightcrews in regard to securing SIGMETs in flight, the dispatcher replied that, "...they generally pick it up en route, I would suspect, from ARTC or tuning in one of the weather broadcasts on the way."

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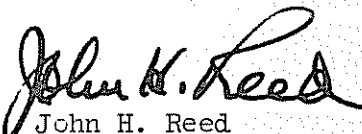
In view of the requirement to disseminate the large number of SIGMETS and AIRMETS issued by the National Weather Service, and to reduce substantially the manpower necessary to make the live broadcast of these In-flight Advisories, it would appear more practical to tape the advisories upon receipt for subsequent broadcast.

In view of the testimony at the TWA 514 public hearing, it would also seem necessary to conduct a survey of air carrier dispatch departments to assure that there are standard procedures in use to provide pilots in flight with SIGMET and other meteorological information.

On the basis of the foregoing, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

1. Require that In-flight Advisories (SIGMETS and AIRMETS) be taped on receipt, for subsequent broadcast via navigational aid voice frequency and assure that they are, and continue to be, broadcast in accordance with current procedures. (Class II)
2. Require that Principal Air Carrier Operations Inspectors survey all air carrier dispatch departments to assure that adequate standard procedures are in use to provide pilots in flight with SIGMET and other meteorological information in accordance with 14 CFR 121.601(b). (Class II)

REED, Chairman, McADAMS, THAYER, BURGESS, and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendations.


By: John H. Reed
Chairman

THESE RECOMMENDATION WILL BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC ON THE ISSUE DATE SHOWN ABOVE. NO PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE MADE PRIOR TO THAT DATE.