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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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ISSUED: October 16, 1978

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-78-75

The National Transportation Safety Board is concerned about the removal of evidence on airport runways or taxiways after an aircraft accident. For example, following the Continental Airlines DC-10 accident at Los Angeles International Airport on March 1, 1978, and the Northwest Orient Airlines B-747F accident at John F. Kennedy International Airport, Jamaica, N.Y., on November 17, 1977, the runways were swept clean of debris. Both of these accidents resulted from tire failures, and the removal of evidence in cases such as these can adversely affect the Board's ability to determine failure sequences -- vital parts of these investigations.

Safety Board Regulation, 49 CFR 830.10, "Preservation of Aircraft Wreckage, Mail, Cargo, and Records," places on the aircraft operator the responsibility for preserving any aircraft wreckage, cargo and mail aboard the aircraft, and all records following a reportable mishap until the Board takes custody of these items. Before the Board's representatives take custody of these items they may not be disturbed or moved except "...(1) to remove persons injured or trapped; (2) to protect the wreckage from further damage; or (3) to protect the public from injury." The regulation further provides that, "Where it is necessary to disturb or move aircraft wreckage, mail or cargo, sketches, descriptive notes, and photographs shall be made, if possible, of the accident locale including original position and condition of the wreckage and any significant impact marks."

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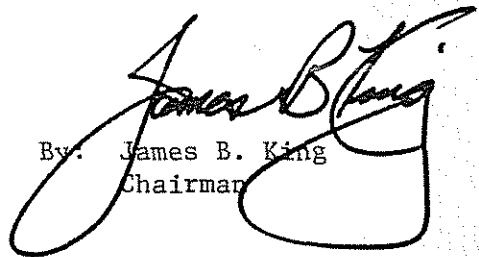
The Safety Board recognizes the necessity for expeditious removal of debris that may jeopardize safe operations, and we commend your organizations for their ongoing efforts to enhance safety in airport operations and services. However, we believe they can further promote aviation safety if they cooperate with the Safety Board by insuring preservation of accident evidence on airport property until it can be documented.

Although many of the Nation's airport owners and operators undoubtedly are aware of the importance of preservation and documentation of aircraft wreckage and do cooperate and assist aircraft operators in complying with these regulations, our experience indicates that some need to be reminded. Your organizations are in excellent positions to help us achieve that end by endorsing this letter and disseminating its message to your memberships.

Accordingly, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the American Association of Airport Executives and the Airport Operators Council International, Inc.:

Advise member airport operators of the importance of preserving and documenting the location of accident debris in accordance with the provisions of 49 CFR 830.10 before debris is removed and before runways and taxiways are swept clean. (Class III, Longer-Term Action) (A-78-75)

KING, Chairman, DRIVER, Vice Chairman, McADAMS and HOGUE, Members, concurred in the above recommendation.

By: 
Chairman