

200-1155

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: June 3, 1980

Forwarded to:

Honorable Langhorne M. Bond
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Washington, D.C. 20591

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-80-46

On February 16, 1980, a Redcoat Air Cargo, Ltd., Bristol Britannia 253 crashed at Billerica, Massachusetts, about 7 minutes after takeoff from Boston's Logan International Airport. Although the flightcrew obtained a weather briefing from the National Weather Service (NWS) more than 2 hours before the aircraft departed Boston, they did not receive a current SIGMET. A SIGMET forecasting severe icing conditions near the surface in the Boston area was valid, but it was not transcribed on the Boston Logan ATIS.

On March 9, 1980, a Cessna 172 crashed shortly after takeoff from Arapahoe County Airport, near Denver, Colorado. The Safety Board's investigation of this accident indicates that the aircraft encountered severe up-and-downdrafts shortly after liftoff from the runway. Since the flight was intended to be a local VFR instruction and pleasure operation, the pilot did not obtain a weather briefing. However, at the time of the accident, a SIGMET forecasting moderate to severe turbulence and up-and-downdrafts for the local area was valid. The pilot monitored the Arapahoe County Airport ATIS channel for local conditions. However, as in the previously cited accident, there was no reference to the currently valid SIGMET on the ATIS report.

The Safety Board has made several safety recommendations in the past regarding the adequacy and timeliness of the transmission of severe weather information to pilots, most recently A-77-65 and A-77-68. The FAA's actions as a result of these recommendations have improved the SIGMET notification procedures for en route operations. However, we believe a significant communications gap still exists for aircraft operations in the terminal environment, when the crew may or may not be monitoring an en route frequency. As you know, in safety recommendation A-77-68, we recommended the formulation of "rules and procedures for the timely dissemination by Air Traffic Controllers of all available severe weather information to inbound and outbound flightcrews in the terminal area." The Safety Board is holding the status of that recommendation "open--acceptable action" pending the finalization of your planned program aimed specifically at disseminating weather data in terminal areas. The Safety Board reiterates its concern expressed in safety recommendation A-77-68 and urges continued efforts to achieve early implementation of your planned solution.

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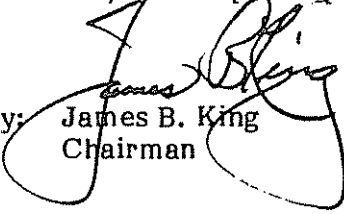
AAR-81-3

Notwithstanding the efforts and goals of your agency in response to A-77-68, the Safety Board believes that immediate action can and should be taken to solve part of this problem by transmitting severe terminal weather information to pilots by means of the ATIS broadcast. There is no mandatory provision for weather advisories such as SIGMET's and PIREP's on ATIS broadcasts. The present guidelines for use of the ATIS restricts the broadcast time to about 30 seconds. However, the Safety Board is aware that the existing ATIS equipment has the capability of a 3-minute broadcast. Therefore, it is possible to include a brief notification of current SIGMET's and selected PIREP's on the ATIS broadcast without imposing undue workload on personnel or without additional equipment.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

Insure that the ATIS advisories contain all essential forecasted meteorological conditions including SIGMETS which are likely to affect aircraft operating in terminal areas served by the ATIS. (Class II, Priority Action) (A-80-46)

DRIVER, Vice Chairman, McADAMS, GOLDMAN, and BURSLEY, Members, concurred in this recommendation. KING, Chairman, did not participate.

By: 
James B. King
Chairman