



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Research and
Special Programs
Administration**

The Administrator

400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

OCT 24 2000

The Honorable Jim Hall
Chairman
National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, DC 20594

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter addresses the National Transportation Safety Board's Safety Recommendations A-99-80 through 84 issued to the Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA). The recommendations were issued as the result of the Safety Board's investigation of a hazardous materials incident that occurred on April 28, 1999, at the Northwest Airlines cargo facility at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). A fire ensued and destroyed freight, including lithium batteries. The Safety Board stated that lithium batteries of the type involved in the fire can be transported on both passenger-carrying and cargo-only aircraft but are not classified as a hazardous material.

In our March 29, 2000 letter to you we stated that we were working with the FAA to develop and distribute information aimed at shippers and airline personnel on the potential hazards of lithium batteries. We stated that this initiative will highlight the hazards that lithium batteries present when they have been damaged. On September 7, 2000 RSPA published an Advisory Notice, a copy of which is enclosed for your information, that:

- (1) Informed persons of the incident and the potential hazards that shipments of lithium batteries may present while in transportation,
- (2) Recommended actions to offerors and transporters to ensure the safety of such shipments,
- (3) Provided information concerning the current requirements for the transportation of lithium batteries,
- (4) Informed persons of recommendations that we received from the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) on the transportation of lithium batteries and our response to those recommendations,
- (5) Informed persons of the actions we have taken to date and plan to take in the future to address the hazards of these batteries, and



(6) Provided information concerning initiatives being taken by members of the battery manufacturing and distribution industry to address concerns relating to transportation of these batteries.

We will keep you informed of our progress. If you have any questions, please contact me or Jack Murray, Associate Administrator for the Office of Policy and Program Support, at (202) 366-4831.

Sincerely,


Kelley S. Coyner

Enclosure