



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Research and
Special Programs
Administration**

The Administrator

JUN 10 2002

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

The Honorable Marion C. Blakey
Chairman
National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, DC 20594

Dear Madam Chairman:

I am writing to inform you of our recent activities to address the National Transportation Safety Board's (NTSB's) Safety Recommendations A-99-80 through 84, issued to the Research and Special Programs Administration, concerning the transportation of lithium batteries by aircraft. The recommendations were issued as the result of the Safety Board's investigation of a hazardous materials incident on April 28, 1999, at the Northwest Airlines cargo facility at Los Angeles International Airport. In that incident, damaged lithium batteries caused a fire.

We recently published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) entitled "Hazardous Materials: Transportation of Lithium Batteries." A copy of the NPRM is enclosed. In the NPRM, we propose changes to test methods for lithium batteries; revisions to exceptions for small batteries, including new marking requirements; elimination of certain exceptions for larger batteries; and other modifications. These proposed changes are intended to enhance the safe transportation of lithium batteries and harmonize our domestic requirements with changes recently made to international transportation standards in the United Nations Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods.

We are continuing to reevaluate the hazards posed by lithium batteries in transportation. We are collecting information from lithium battery manufacturers, shippers, and Federal agencies with extensive experience in testing and use of lithium batteries. When we complete our evaluation, we will initiate any additional actions necessary to assure that lithium batteries are transported safely.

We will keep you informed of our progress. If you have any questions, please contact me or Suzanne TeBeau, Associate Administrator for Policy and Congressional Affairs, at (202) 366-4831.

Sincerely yours,

Ellen G. Engleman

Enclosure

