



The Honorable
Christopher A. Hart
Chairman

NTSB Investigates Accidents

- Independent federal agency that investigates transportation accidents and incidents, all modes
 - Aviation
 - Highway
 - Rail
 - Marine (NTSB or Coast Guard)
 - Pipeline
- Determine probable cause(s) and make recommendations to prevent recurrences
 - Do not determine blame or liability



Other NTSB Activities

- Conduct special studies and investigations
 - Review troubling trends
 - Make recommendations to address trends
- Assist victims and their families
 - Extensive assistance, first few days
 - Longer term, further assistance upon request



Purpose

- Single focus is *SAFETY*
- Primary product:
Safety recommendations
- Not a regulator, can only recommend
- Recommendation recipients are not required to implement recommendations



Independent

- 5 Members
 - Nominated by President, confirmed by Senate
- Political independence
 - Political party balance
 - Member terms are fixed and staggered
 - Requirement for relevant background, expertise
 - Objective: Conclusions from facts, not politics
- Functional Independence
 - Not a regulator or operator
 - Objective: Impartial and unbiased investigations



Keeping the Public Informed

- Objective: *TRANSPARENCY* of the facts and the process
 - Factual information is placed in the public docket (except proprietary information, as appropriate)
 - Sunshine Act requires Board deliberations to occur in public
 - Final NTSB accident report is also in the public docket

BUT...

- Final NTSB accident report is *not admissible in court*



The Party System: Facts

- NTSB relies extensively on collaboration of the parties to help develop the facts
 - Carrier/Operator
 - Manufacturers
 - Unions
 - Regulator
 - Others, e.g., air traffic controllers
- Parties selected for technical expertise
 - Excludes plaintiffs, attorneys, insurers



Obligations of Parties

- Contribute technical expertise to the investigation
- Share information with other parties
- Avoid talking to media about the accident, NTSB as the only source to the media
 - Unbiased
 - In context of the big picture
- Important to avoid speculation



The Party System: Analysis

- Once facts are developed, NTSB conducts analysis without parties
- NTSB's neutrality is important for impartial, unbiased analysis
- Invite parties, as well as public, to submit their own analysis into the public docket



Culmination of Process

- Staff presents proposed report, including findings, probable cause, and recommendations, to the Board in Sunshine Meeting
- For additional transparency, Board deliberates in public to enable public to know basis of its decisions
- Board decides by majority vote, Members can file concurring or dissenting opinions



Primary Product: Recommendations

- Safety recommendations are issued to any organization that has authority to address the problem, including operators, manufacturers, regulators (U.S. and foreign), labor unions, trade associations, and state and local governments
- Response to recommendations:
 - > 80% favorable



Space Flight Accident Opportunities

- Window into commercial aviation accidents of the future
- Wealth of digital and video data – no need to find “black boxes”
- May not need recommendations in final report; parties may address issues as they discover them



Conclusion

The NTSB investigation process creates an impartial, unbiased result and has earned public confidence (a) that the conclusions and recommendations are based upon the evidence, rather than the politics, and (b) that NTSB recommendations are very good and should be seriously considered



Thank You

Questions?



National Transportation Safety Board