NTSB Web Site

The NTSB web site <http://www.ntsb.gov> is an important resource for families. Information on the site is updated as the investigation proceeds. NTSB investigations are thorough and, as such, may take a period of time to complete. For major accidents, a special web site for families may be created. Detailed information is given during the family briefings regarding the special web site address and access to the site.

TDA staff may also be contacted using the information below.

Monday through Friday 8:30a.m. – 5:00p.m. (EST)

National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Transportation Disaster Assistance
490 L'Enfant Plaza, East, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20594-2000

(202) 314-6185
(800) 683-9369

e-mail: assistance@ntsb.gov

SPC0501 April 2005

Participating Organizations

As the coordinator for Federal assistance, the Chairman of the NTSB may request support from the following Federal agencies and other organizations in accordance with the Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996:

American Red Cross

Department of Defense

Department of Homeland Security,
Federal Emergency Management Agency

Department of Justice

Department of State

Federal Bureau of Investigation,
Office of Victim Assistance

The support of state, county and local government agencies is also required.

Assisting Families of Foreign Victims

If foreign victims are involved in the accident, the Department of State works with TDA staff, the airline, and other agencies to obtain medical records, secure translation services, provide official notification to foreign governments, extend or grant visas, and facilitate consulate and customs services for the return of identified remains.

Memorial Services

If family members desire a memorial service, the American Red Cross will arrange a suitable inter-faith service in the days following the accident. Family members are informed of the details at family briefings.

Personal Effects

Returning personal effects is the responsibility of the airline. Air carriers often designate a third party vendor to coordinate this process. Contact information for the vendor will be provided at the family briefing. The vendor will furnish family members with information on the process used to return personal effects.

Information for Friends and Family

MAJOR ACCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS

National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Transportation
Disaster Assistance

490 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20594-2000

202-314-6185
1-800-683-9369
http://www.ntsb.gov

As a family member or friend of a victim of a major transportation accident, you may have many questions about the National Transportation Safety Board and the role we will play in the coming days, weeks and months.

What is the NTSB?

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency charged by Congress to investigate all civil aviation accidents in the United States and significant accidents in other modes of transportation - railroad, highway, marine and pipeline. The NTSB determines the probable cause of accidents and issues safety recommendations aimed at preventing future accidents. The NTSB operates independently from the Department of Transportation (DOT) and agencies such as the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

What is involved in a major accident investigation?

Upon notification of a major accident, the NTSB launches a Go-Team. On 24-hour alert, this team of experienced NTSB personnel brings focused technical knowledge to the accident investigation. In an aviation accident, a Go-Team is led by the investigator-in-charge (IIC) and typically includes specialists trained in witness interviews, aircraft systems and structures, maintenance, operations, air traffic control and meteorology. An NTSB Board Member often accompanies the team and serves as the Board spokesperson. Transportation Disaster Assistance specialists coordinate the resources of the variety of agencies assisting families. Media interactions are organized by an NTSB Public Affairs Officer.

How does the NTSB support families?

The Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996 requires the NTSB to coordinate the disaster response resources of federal, state, local, and volunteer agencies. The Board's staff of experienced disaster responders works closely with these agencies and the airline to meet the needs of aviation disaster victims and their families. Family counseling, victim identification and forensic services, communicating with foreign governments, and translation services are a few of the services the Board coordinates.

The Office of Transportation Disaster Assistance (TDA) provides information to family members following the accident. While on scene, TDA personnel conduct briefings and provide updates on the investigation to family members. Once the on scene phase of the investigation is over, TDA is the primary resource for information for family members as the investigation proceeds.

Family Assistance Center

Soon after an accident, TDA personnel arrive on scene and establish a Family Assistance Center (FAC) at a hotel or other meeting facility agreed upon by the airline and the TDA Director. Consideration is given to security, quality of rooms and facilities, and privacy for family members when selecting the FAC location. In addition, a Joint Family Support Operations Center (JFSOC) is established and will serve as the focal point for coordination between representatives from Federal agencies and local government emergency services. Information for daily family briefings is obtained through the JFSOC.

On occasion, an NTSB Public Affairs Officer is assigned to the FAC. During the initial family briefing, families are advised of the media presence outside the FAC. The Board will always make every effort to protect their privacy. Family members are free to speak to the media. However, the NTSB will not coordinate or attend family interviews with the media.

Daily Family Briefings

TDA staff conducts a family briefing at least once a day at the FAC. This briefing updates families on the progress of the investigation and allows for questions to be asked of the IIC, other NTSB personnel, the medical examiner or coroner, and other parties to the investigation. For family members unable to travel to the FAC, a telephone conference-bridge allows for their full participation in the briefing. For security, a new password is given each day to access the conference bridge.

Upon arrival at the FAC, family members are issued a badge. Admittance to family briefings is by badge only.

Medical Information

Identifying the victims of transportation accidents is a thorough scientific process. All victim identification and death certification issues are the responsibility of the local medical examiner or coroner. To assist forensic specialists in this effort, family members will be asked for information regarding the victim's medical and dental history, also known as antemortem information. Each family is interviewed by an agent representing the local medical examiner or coroner and is asked to complete an antemortem questionnaire. The information collected in this questionnaire is the primary source for information used by forensic scientists to make a positive identification. Typically, DNA reference samples are also collected from family members at this time. Information provided in the questionnaires and the DNA information is confidential and used only for identification purposes. While providing this information is voluntary, it is strongly recommended.

Detach this business card along the perforated edge to keep with you.

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Office of Transportation
Disaster Assistance

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e-mail: assistance@ntsb.gov
Internet: <http://www.ntsb.gov>