



Friday, April 22, 2005

## **Safety Board Adopts Final Report at Public Meeting: Motorcoach Run-Off-The-Road Accident Near Tallulah, Louisiana**

On October 13, 2003, a 1992 Neoplan USA Corporation 49-passenger motorcoach, owned and operated by the First Baptist Church of Eldorado, Texas, was traveling on Interstate 20 near Tallulah, Louisiana. The motorcoach, carrying 14 passengers, was en route from Shreveport, Louisiana, to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, as part of a multicity sightseeing tour that had originated in Eldorado. The motorcoach drifted from the travel lanes and struck the rear of a 1988 Peterbilt tractor semitrailer operated by Alpha Trucking, Inc., which was stopped on the shoulder. Eight motorcoach passengers sustained fatal injuries, the motorcoach driver and six passengers received serious injuries, and the Peterbilt driver was not injured.

The National Transportation Safety Board determined that the probable cause of the accident was the motorcoach driver's operation of the motorcoach in a reduced state of alertness due to fatigue as a result of his chronic insomnia and poor quality sleep. Further contributing to the accident was the failure of Alpha Trucking, Inc., to perform vehicle maintenance and to provide safety management controls, which resulted in the accident tractor semitrailer being parked on the interstate shoulder. Contributing to the severity of the injuries was the failure of the motorcoach seat anchorages.

The safety issues identified in this accident were:

- Driver fatigue
- Adequacy of State and Federal oversight of motor carriers
- Identification and appropriate use of speed-restricted tires on motorcoaches
- Criteria for State and Federal annual inspections of motorcoach passenger seating anchorage points
- Performance standards for motorcoach passenger seating anchorages



Tallulah, Louisiana, motorcoach accident.

## **Public Hearing On 2004 Macdona, Texas, Train Accident**

A two-day public hearing on the 2004 Macdona, Texas, accident resulting in three fatalities from a collision between Union Pacific Railroad (UP) and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) trains will be held on April 26-27, 2005, at the NTSB's Conference Center.

The collision resulted in the derailment of the 4 locomotives and 19 cars in the UP train and 16 cars in the BNSF train. A small fire resulted, and a loaded tank car (the 16th car in the UP consist) was breached, resulting in the release of chlorine, a toxic gas.

NTSB Member Richard Healing will chair the hearing. The meeting will focus on the following issues: crew and employee participation in fatigue management; crew management systems; assessing employees reporting for duty; supervising employee performance on duty; and drug and alcohol testing programs.



NTSB Acting Chairman Mark Rosenker lauds Wendy Hamilton (center) and Senator Elizabeth Dole (right) for their ongoing commitment to highway safety.

## **National Minimum Drinking Age Act Of 1984 Celebrates 21 Year Anniversary**

Hosted by Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the Chrysler Group, NTSB officials joined in a special 21st anniversary event to celebrate the National Minimum Drinking Age Act held on the Mall in front of the U.S. Capitol. The event was designed to create awareness of the Act and encourage teens to make smart, healthy choices about underage drinking. MADD will visit 21 cities using 21 minivans donated by the Chrysler Group. This event and the follow-up tour are scheduled to coincide with the prom season.

Speakers for the event included Wendy Hamilton, President of MADD, Senator Elizabeth Dole of North Carolina, who was Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation when the legislation was enacted, and Eric Ridenour, Executive Vice President of Product Development for the Chrysler Group, along with NTSB's Mark Rosenker. Other Safety Board participants were Elaine Weinstein, Tom Doyle, Kevin Quinlan, and Danielle Roeber.

## Another Busy Week of Launches for the NTSB

### Highway

The week began with a launch for Monday's (April 18) collision between an Arlington County, Virginia, school bus and a refuse truck. Tragically, two elementary school children were killed in the impact and one child and two drivers were seriously injured. Fortunately, children outside the intrusion area received only minor to no injuries.

Ken Suydam is the IIC for this major highway launch. Member Debbie Hersman accompanied the team and conducted two press conferences. Other members of the team were David Rayburn, Dan Walsh, Burt Simon, Jennifer Russert, Jim LeBerte, Hank Hughes, Paul Sledzik, Terry Williams, Jennifer Bishop, and Bob Barlett.



Arlington County, Virginia, school bus accident.

### Marine

On Tuesday, the Office of Marine Safety dispatched Captain Morgan Turrell to assist the Bahamian authorities in their investigation of an accident involving an estimated 70-foot wave that struck the cruise ship *Norwegian Dawn* on April 16. The wave broke some windows on the ship and flooded some cabins. There were no fatalities but several reported injuries.

### Aviation

On Thursday April 21, we commenced a major aviation field investigation into the crash of a Lockheed P-3B air tanker, which was in the midst of a training exercise when it went down on April 20 near Chico, California. The three crewmembers aboard died. The Safety Board has a particular interest in firefighting aircraft in light of a recommendation package we issued to the Departments of Agriculture and Interior and the FAA last year as a result of several other firefighting aircraft crashes. Georgia Struhsaker is IIC, accompanied by Van McKenney, Clint Crookshanks, Jim Hookey, and Pocholo Cruz. Member and Chairman-Designate Ellen Engleman Connors accompanied the team as principal spokesperson for the on-scene investigation, and Paul Schlamm joined the team as press officer.

Again, just a typical week at the NTSB (and this does not include the many regional launches that occur every week), but a good example of how many dedicated employees we have here who drop everything at a moment's notice to fly off to distant locations and do their job.



Ronald S. Battocchi

## NTSB General Counsel Receives Presidential Rank Award

Ronald S. Battocchi, NTSB General Counsel, was honored recently with the President's Rank Award for exceptional long-term accomplishments. Winners of this prestigious award are among the highest performing senior career employees and consistently demonstrate leadership, integrity, and a relentless commitment to excellence in public service.

Award winners are chosen through a rigorous selection process. They are nominated by their agency heads, evaluated by boards of private citizens, and approved by the President. Battocchi has been with the NTSB since 1974 and served as Deputy Managing Director for 5 years before his appointment as the agency's General Counsel.

## State Most Wanted Recommendation Progress

**In the last 4 weeks, several Governors have signed, and State legislatures have completed action on, legislation related to Safety Board recommendations.**

Idaho Governor Dirk Kempthorne signed a bill requiring the use of child restraint systems and booster seats for children (through age 6), as has Governor Bill Richardson of New Mexico. New Mexico also approved a mandatory boater education study bill. Wyoming Governor Dave Freudenthal signed a graduated licensing bill that adopts a three-stage system, nighttime driving restriction, and passenger restriction. Colorado Governor Bill Owens signed a bill on cell phone restrictions for young drivers. Washington is the first State to upgrade its booster seat law and to pass a "child in back" seat law consistent with Board recommendations; the bill awaits signature. North Dakota booster seat legislation, five Maryland teen driving bills, Montana graduated licensing, Washington mandatory boater education, and the Virginia underage alcohol consumption bill await signatures by their respective Governors. Many bills in boating and highway safety have passed at least one chamber in the legislature and are still under active consideration in the other chamber or are in conference to resolve differences.

Congratulations to SRC's advocacy staff for their hard work in these States including Kevin Quinlan, Steve Blackistone, Danielle Roeber, Stephanie Perkins, Bill Gossard, Terry Weaver, and Nicholas Worrell.