



Friday, August 4, 2006

NTSB Determines Ethan Allen Accident Caused By Vessel's Instability



In a Board meeting July 25, 2006, the Safety Board determined that the probable cause of the capsizing of the *Ethan Allen* was the vessel's insufficient stability to resist the combined forces of a passing wave or waves, a sharp turn, and the resulting involuntary shift of passengers to the port side of the vessel. The vessel's stability was insufficient because it carried 48 persons, although post-accident stability calculations demonstrated that it should have been permitted to carry only 14 passengers. Contributing to the cause of the accident was the failure to reassess the vessel's stability after it had been modified because there was no clear requirement to do so.

On October 2, 2005, the *Ethan Allen*, a tour vessel carrying 47 passengers and one crewmember, capsized in Lake George, New York. The accident claimed the lives of 20 passengers. As a result of the Safety Board's investigation of the accident, the following recommendations were made:

To the United States Coast Guard:

Provide guidance to the States on U.S. Coast Guard standards for and assessment stability of small passenger vessels.

To New York State:

Address safety deficiencies identified in the investigation of the *Ethan Allen* accident and issue technical guidance to vessel owners on the inspection requirements for modified vessels, stability assessment and criteria, means for determining maximum safe load conditions, drug and alcohol testing, manning, and safety briefings.

Discontinue the use of capacity plate data associated with the U.S. Coast Guard's noncommercial boating standards for determining passenger loading on public vessels that carry more than six passengers and adopt the Coast Guard small passenger vessel inspection standards.

Acting Chairman Rosenker Visits EAA AirVenture Convention in Oshkosh, Wisconsin

Acting Chairman Mark Rosenker visited the Safety Board's exhibit at the Experimental Aviation Association's (EAA) AirVenture Convention last week in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. EAA AirVenture is the largest aviation exposition in the country, and provided an excellent forum to inform the public about the Safety Board. An exhibit informed the public about the Safety Board's mission and displayed lessons learned from previous general aviation aircraft accidents. During the convention, the Acting Chairman met with FAA Administrator Marion Blakey and EAA President Tom Poberezny to discuss the future of general aviation, including the new Very Light Jet industry and the new Special Light Sport Aircraft certification.



From left to right: Todd Gunther, Acting Chairman Rosenker, Beverly Drake, Aaron Sauer, and Tim Monville



Senate Confirms Nominees

On August 3, 2006 the Senate voted to confirm The Honorable Mark V. Rosenker as NTSB Chairman. The Senate also voted to confirm Captain Robert Sumwalt as a Board Member. The candidates can be sworn in after the President signs their appointments. Congratulations to both Chairman Rosenker and Member Sumwalt.



NTSB To Convene A Two-Day Hearing On Bus Fire In Wilmer, Texas

The Safety Board will hold a 2-day public hearing as part of its ongoing investigation into the cause of a bus fire accident that occurred during the evacuation for Hurricane Rita last year. The hearing will convene at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, August 8, 2006, at the NTSB's Board Room and Conference Center, 429 L'Enfant Plaza, SW., Washington, D.C. NTSB Acting Chairman Mark V. Rosenker has designated Member Kitty Higgins as Chairwoman of the hearing.

On September 23, 2005, a 1998 MCI 54-passenger motorcoach operated by Global Limousine, Inc., based in Pharr, Texas, was traveling northbound on Interstate 45 with 44 passengers and the driver as part of an emergency evacuation ordered by the Governor of Texas in anticipation of Hurricane Rita. The passengers were from the Sunrise Nursing Home in Bellaire, Texas, near Houston. It took 2 hours to board the passengers because many needed to be carried or assisted onto the motorcoach by firefighters and nursing staff. When close to Wilmer, Texas, the bus caught fire after 15 « hours en route. Twenty-three of the passengers were fatally injured.

As part of the continuing fact-finding phase of this investigation, the NTSB will examine several issues during the hearing. Topics will include the scope of the bus fire problem, the source of the Wilmer motorcoach fire, fire propagation and fire detection and suppression, planning for and transporting people with special needs, motorcoach evacuations, government oversight of motor carriers and bus brokers, vehicle inspections, and driver training.

Member Hersman Visits Cove Point LNG facility

Member Debbie Hersman and staff recently toured a liquid natural gas (LNG) ship as it unloaded its cargo at Dominion Power's facility in Cove Point, Maryland. The Cove Point LNG facility is only one of four such facilities in the country. The tour was arranged by Allan Garneau and others in the Office of Marine Safety. Mr. Garneau is a U.S. Coast Guard reservist on detail to the Safety Board. Mr. Garneau, Morgan Turrell (MS-10), and Nancy Lewis accompanied Member Hersman on the tour.

NTSB Welcomes Human Resources Specialist

Carol Belovitch, the new Human Resources (HR) Specialist, joined the Safety Board's Human Resources Division on July 24, 2006. She was formerly employed by the Smithsonian Institution, where she led the Human Resources unit of the National Museum of the American Indian. At the Safety Board, Ms. Belovitch will support programs for Senior Executive Service and Senior-Level personnel, non-career appointment employees, and performance management, among others.



NTSB Bids Farewell to Gina John

Gina John was recognized for her eight years of dedicated service to the Safety Board at a reception last week. Some of her contributions to the agency have included the Intranet, the Safety Board's Web site, PowerPoint templates, style guides, and many other graphic design projects for the Academy, the NTSB Journal, and others. Ms. John will be moving on to new employment and will be pursuing a Master's Degree at the Savannah College of Art and Design in Savannah, Georgia.