



Friday, November 2, 2007

NTSB Testifies on Capitol Hill

National Transportation Safety Board Chairman Mark V. Rosenker testified on October 25 before the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, Subcommittee on Transportation Safety, Infrastructure Security, and Water Quality that more needs to be done to get drunk drivers off our nation's streets and highways. He said that, "while alcohol-related fatalities have decreased since 1982, there has been little improvement in last 10 years."

In 2006, 17,602 persons were killed in alcohol-related crashes. During his testimony on the Effectiveness of Federal Drunk Driving Programs, he highlighted the Safety Board's concerns about the accidents and fatalities involving hard-core drinking drivers.

In 2000, the NTSB issued recommendations to all states aimed at hard core drinking drivers as a means to further reduce the toll on impaired drivers. The Safety Board defines hard core drinking drivers, who are involved in about 54 percent of alcohol related fatalities, as individuals who drive with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.15 percent or greater, or who are arrested for driving while impaired (DWI) within 10 years of a prior DWI arrest. The Board's 11-element model program asks that all states take action to reduce these preventable crashes and deaths.

Currently, only California, Maine, New Hampshire, Utah, and Virginia have implemented a sufficient number of elements to close this recommendation. Action is needed in the remaining states.

"The NTSB has worked for years with the states to reduce drinking and driving, and we've had success, but more needs to be done," Rosenker said. "Impaired driving actions have been on our list of Most Wanted Safety Recommendations since its inception in 1990 and we have made recommendations for closing the loopholes in age 21 laws and enforcing those laws. We also recommended zero alcohol tolerance laws for underage drivers."

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that, since 1975, nearly 25,000 teen deaths have been prevented by age 21 laws. However, motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of death for teenagers and alcohol remains the leading drug of choice for youth.

Go-Team Launches to Pipeline Accident in Mississippi

The NTSB launched a go-team to Theadville, Mississippi on November 1, in response to a pipeline explosion. At 10:54AM a leak in a propane pipeline, operated by Enterprise Products, resulted in a fire and explosion, killing two persons and injuring four. Vice Chairman Sumwalt is serving as principal spokesperson for the Board while on-scene, and Rod Dyck (RPH-20) is the Investigator-in-Charge. The Vice Chairman and Mr. Dyck were accompanied by ten staff members, including: Nathan Hoyt, Katherine Lemos, Ravindra Chhatre, Chuck Koval, Cliff Zimmerman, Steve Jenner, Rick Downs, Terry Williams, Bridget Serchak, and Erik Grosf.



Photo of the Pipeline Explosion from the local news

Chairman Rosenker and NTSB Staff Address Aviation Safety Seminar

Addressing the 11th Annual Bombardier Learjet Safety Standdown Seminar on October 23 in Wichita, Kansas, Chairman Rosenker told a huge crowd of about 600 pilots and mechanics of corporate aviation departments that, while they are maintaining an enviable safety record, accidents in recent years have highlighted shortcomings in several important elements of their industry. In his speech, Rosenker touched on flight crew and mechanic training, preflight preparation, human fatigue, and maintenance issues. He also stressed that "regulation is not the only way to improve safety... Voluntary action by industry, in partnership with government, is one of the most effective ways to decrease accidents." This year marked the first time that the NTSB added its name as a partner to this "War on Error" effort. The Federal Aviation Administration and the National Business Aviation Association are also partners. Carl Dinwiddie, who is the Regional Director of our Chicago Office, also gave a presentation that highlighted lessons learned from three recent business jet accidents. Alex Lemishko (AS-2R), Jose Obregon (Miami), Mike Huhn (Ashburn), Tealeye Cornejo (Los Angeles), and Tom Doyle also attended.



Board Members Tour Auto Manufacturers and Visit Seat Belt Manufacturer

October 29 through November 1, Vice Chairman Sumwalt and Member Chealander, accompanied by Katherine Lemos (VC-RLS), Mary Jane Smith (M-SRC), Ron Kaminski (HS-20), and Julie Perrot (SR-10), visited Chrysler, Ford, and GM in Detroit, Michigan, and Indiana Mills & Manufacturing (IMMI) in Westfield, Indiana. During the auto manufacturer visits, the group witnessed an air bag deployment; toured a wind tunnel, a production plant, and a crashworthiness lab; experienced demonstrations of OnStar, SYNC, Pre-SAFE, rollover stability control (RSC) on a 12-passenger van, and vehicle-to-infrastructure and vehicle-to-vehicle communications; test drove new vehicles, including hybrid and fuel cell engines; operated the VIRTTEX simulator to experience driving distraction; and rode with professional drivers on test tracks to better understand vehicle dynamics and handling under extreme conditions. At IMMI, the group learned about the occupant safety products offered by the company, including child safety seats, specialized seats and belts for commercial and EMS vehicles, and school bus seats with integrated seat belts and booster seats; toured the production plant and testing facilities, including the large vehicle crash-test facility and 90-degree rollover impact machine; and participated in a discussion of seat belts on school buses. Throughout the informative trip, the group was impressed with the complexity and quality of the products and the dedication of the employees of each company to improving vehicle and public safety.



Vice Chairman Sumwalt, Member Chealander, and staff seated on and around IMMI's Safe Guard school bus seat



Vice Chairman Sumwalt, Member Chealander, and staff in front of two cars they test-drove at Chrysler HQ

Chairman Rosenker Addresses Kings Point Regiment of Midshipmen



Chairman Mark Rosenker was invited by Vice Admiral Joseph Stewart, the Superintendent of the United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) at Kings Point, New York, to address the Regiment of Midshipmen at the annual Alumni Homecoming weekend on September 28. In addition to speaking, the Chairman participated in a formal review and a tour of the academy classroom and training facilities. The USMMA enrolls about 1000 midshipmen and is the only U.S. service academy whose graduates receive a federal commercial license in addition to a military commission.

Chairman Rosenker, Vice Admiral Stewart, Midshipman Walley

