

# Transportation Disaster Assistance and the NTSB

Office of Transportation Disaster Assistance  
(TDA)

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Alabama Department of Public Health – Emergency Preparedness  
2011 Volunteer Symposium

Responders and Disaster Affected Individuals:  
Bridging Gaps of Understanding and Misunderstanding  
Thursday, June 16, 2011



National Transportation Safety Board

# Who We Are

A brief overview of the NTSB,  
family assistance legislation, and  
our mission



# NTSB Mission

- Determine probable cause(s) of transportation accidents
- Make recommendations to prevent reoccurrence
- Conduct special studies and investigations
- Coordinate resources to assist victims and their families after an accident



# NTSB Investigative Responsibilities

- All U.S. aviation accidents
  - Except military/intelligence agencies
  - US accredited representative for foreign accidents
- Selected rail accidents
- Selected highway accidents
- Selected marine accidents
- Selected pipeline accidents
- Selected hazmat accidents



# NTSB Governance

- Reports directly to Congress
- Independent federal agency
- **No regulatory authority**
- Composed of five Board Members
  - Presidential nomination
  - Senate confirmation
  - Two/Five-year terms



Chairman  
Deborah A.P. Hersman



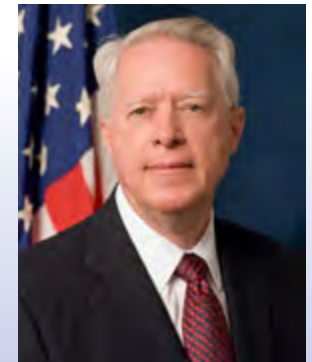
Vice Chairman  
Christopher Hart



Member  
Robert Sumwalt



Member  
Mark Rosekind



Member  
Earl Weener



# NTSB Investigative Process



## On-scene Investigation

- Organizational Meeting
- Groups and Parties
- Progress meetings
- Media Briefings
- Press Releases



## Preliminary report

- Factual information



## Public Hearing

- Fact finding
- Depositions
- Witnesses
- Docket



## Board Meeting

- Docket
- Findings
- Conclusions
- Probable Cause
- Safety Recommendations



## Final Report

**Government in the Sunshine Act**



# NTSB Public Hearing

- Major catastrophic, high public interest accidents involving complex national safety issues
- Gather testimony to expand on issues identified in the investigation
- Publicly present the findings to date
- Demonstrate complete, open, and objective investigation
- Step in the investigative process



# Board Meeting

- Board reviews/discusses draft final report with staff
- Major issues explored at length
- Final report, conclusions, probable cause and recommendations are adopted





# **Why was family assistance legislation needed for commercial aviation?**

Video story focusing on the families of  
American Eagle 4184 / Roselawn, Indiana



# Aviation family assistance legislation was needed because...

- Mid-1990s accidents
  - US Air 427, ValuJet 592, TWA 800, American Eagle 4184
- Family members were not provided coordinated, consistent information and effective services to address their needs
- NTSB seen as neutral agency to coordinate information and service delivery
- NTSB works in concert with air carrier and federal partners to ensure effective family assistance response

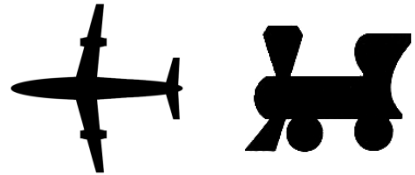


# TDA: Legislative Background Aviation

- *Public Law 104-264: Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996*
- *Public Law 105-148: Foreign Air Carrier Family Support Act of 1997*
- *Public Law 106-181: Wendell H. Ford Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century (AIR 21), April 2000*
- *Public Law 108-176: Vision 100-Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act, December 2003*



# Primary Partner Agencies – Aviation/Rail Accident



**American Red Cross**

Critical Response Team  
Disaster Child Care  
Disaster Mental Health/Crisis support  
Spiritual Care

## Local/State

Medical Examiner/Coroner  
Mass fatality team  
1<sup>st</sup> responders/Law Enforcement  
Support agencies



**DOS**



Evidence Response Team  
Disaster Squad  
Office for Victim Assistance



**OAFME/AFDIL**



**HHS/ASPR/NDMS  
DMAT/DMORT**



**National Transportation Safety Board**

# **NTSB's Office of Transportation Disaster Assistance (TDA)**

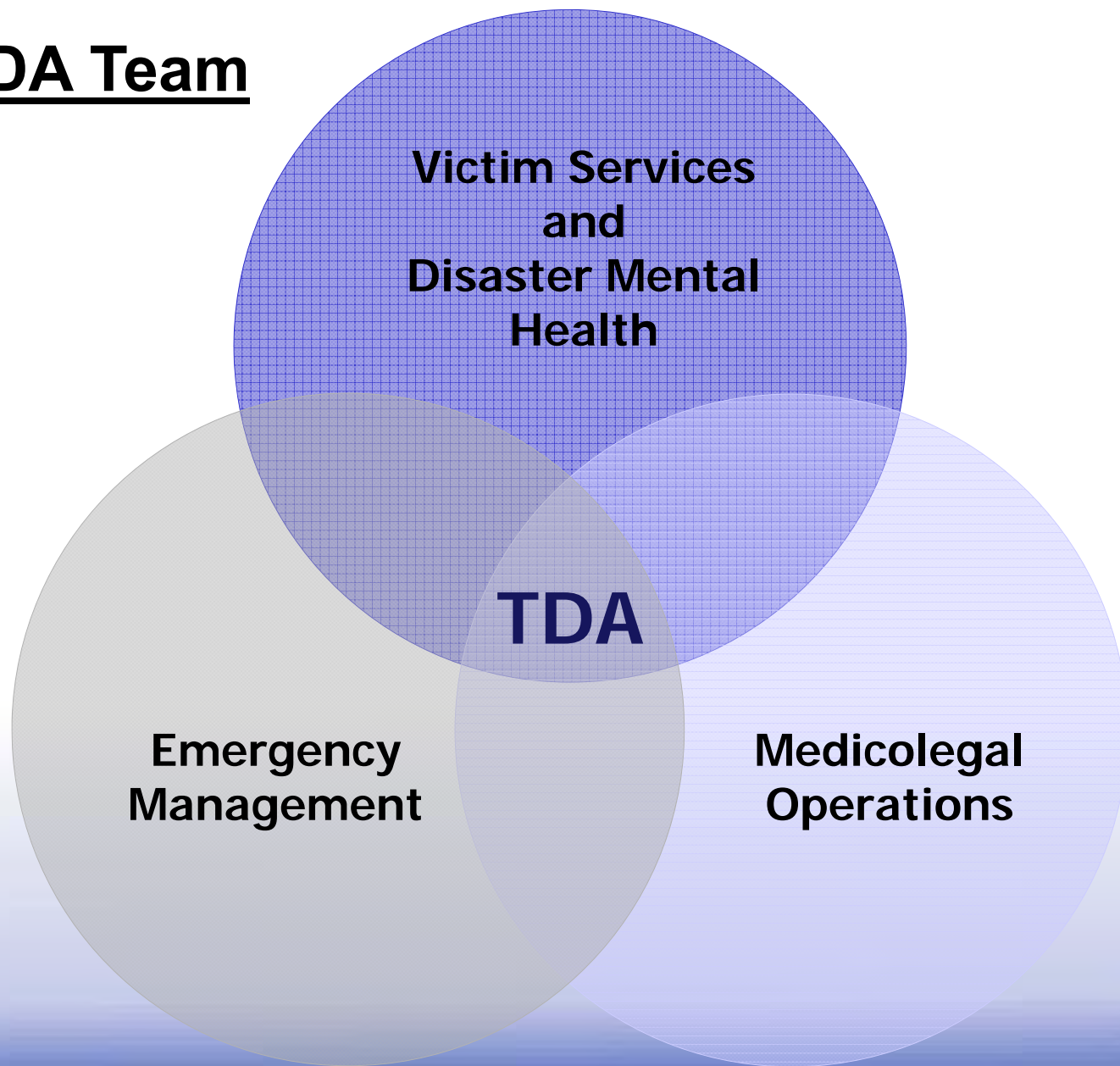


# TDA: Legislative Background

- NTSB coordinates and provides additional resources to the airline/rail carrier and local government to help victims and their families while preserving local responsibility and jurisdiction
- “The Board shall have primary Federal responsibility for facilitating the recovery and identification of fatally-injured passengers involved in an accident described in subsection (a).”



# The TDA Team



# **Family Assistance During Transportation Disasters**





# Primary Concerns of Family Members

## ***What happened?***

- Initial notification
- Immediate information

## ***Where is my loved one?***

- Search/Rescue/Recovery
- Hospitalization
- Identification of remains

## ***How will I get information?***

- Information sharing and access to resources
- Short-term and long-term
- Prelim, factual, probable cause

## ***Where are their personal belongings?***

- Processing and return of personal belongings
- Associated and unassociated



# Additional Family Member Concerns

- *Who is in charge?*
- *Can I visit the crash site?*
- *What happens next?*
- *Memorial and anniversaries*
- *Provision of services*
  - *Where do I get...?*



# NTSB/Air Carrier Family Assistance Model

## At accident scene/location

- Family Assistance Center (FAC)
- Joint Family Support Operations Center (JFSOC)
- Family briefings
  - Immediate factual information
- Coordination with medicolegal authority
  - Victim recovery, AM data collection, disaster victim ID, death certification
- Site visit
- Personal effects process
- Access to support services

## Long term

- NTSB products and meetings
  - Toll-free #, email, website
  - Attendance at meetings
- Guidance on group human remains disposition and medicolegal issues
- Advocacy-NTSB Safety Recs
- Provision of services
  - Where do I get...?

**NOTE:** *Family assistance does **not** always require a Family Assistance Center*



# On-Scene Family Assistance Concerns



# Long-term Concerns



# What does family assistance provide?

## For Families

- Information
- Consistency
- Guides realistic expectations
- Place/people to get answers
- Safety (from public and media)
- Supports the grief process
- Reduces anxiety/stress

## For Industry/Government

- “The right thing to do”
- Humanitarian/ethical
- Provides consistent message
- Guides expectations of the public
- Public image



# Family assistance does not provide...

- “Closure”
  - FA is a step in the grief/recovery process
  - Resiliency is a goal of FA
- All the answers
  - FA provides information on process and factual information when available
- Support for all needs
- Exemption from legal action



# What makes family assistance effective?

- Builds rapport and credibility
- Conveys realistic expectations
- Flexibility based on event





# Family Assistance- Beyond NTSB

- Aviation family assistance legislation
  - Brazil, South Korea, Australia, China, EU
- ICAO 285 update
- Corporate aviation (Parts 135/91)
- Other transportation modes
  - Motor coach, cruise lines, commuter rail
- Federal/Government
  - Department of Defense
  - Mine Safety Health Administration
  - US Senate/US House of Representatives
- Cities/States
  - New York City area, Las Vegas, DC Metro



# Questions?

Office of Transportation Disaster  
Assistance

202-314-6185

[www.NTSB.gov](http://www.NTSB.gov)

[www.NTSB.gov/family](http://www.NTSB.gov/family)



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