

**Docket No. SA-530**

**Exhibit No. 2 - D**

**NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD**

**Washington, D.C.**

NTSB Letter of April 3, 2007 to FAA Regarding

Safety Recommendations A-06-12 through -15

(3 Pages)



Office of the Chairman

## National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

APR 03 2007

Honorable Marion C. Blakey  
Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
Washington, D.C. 20591

Dear Ms. Blakey:

Thank you for the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA's) May 30, 2006, response to the National Transportation Safety Board regarding Safety Recommendations A-06-12 through -15, stated below. These recommendations were issued to the FAA as a result of the Safety Board's special investigation of a number of aviation accidents between January 2002 and January 2005 involving aircraft performing emergency medical service (EMS) operations. Staff from the FAA and the Safety Board met on October 12, 2006, to further discuss these recommendations.

### A-06-12

Require all emergency medical services operators to comply with 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 135 operations specifications during the conduct of all flights with medical personnel onboard.

At the October 12, 2006, meeting the FAA discussed a potential problem with requiring that all EMS flights be conducted under Part 135 when medical personnel but no patients are aboard. The FAA indicated that a number of helipads located at hospitals have installed equipment and developed procedures that enable EMS flights to use instrument approach procedures when arriving at these helipads. However, the helipads do not have the weather-reporting equipment or personnel required for a Part 135 flight's approach, and it would impose a significant burden on the owners/operators of these helipads to acquire this capability. As a result, many of these helipads cannot be used in instrument conditions for Part 135 flights. The FAA believes this result would not be in the interest of overall flight safety for EMS flights. Therefore, the FAA plans to require that most of the Part 135 flight rules, including weather minimums and pilot flight and duty time limitations, be applicable to all EMS flights when only medical crew are on board, but plans to exempt the EMS flights from the requirements for weather reporting at their destination.

The intent of this recommendation is to ensure that weather minimums and pilot flight and duty time limitations in Part 135 be applied to all EMS flights, including those where there

are medical personnel, but no patients, on board. The Safety Board agrees with the FAA that exempting EMS flights from destination weather reporting requirements, but mandating other Part 135 requirements, is in the interest of flight safety for EMS flights. Therefore, the FAA's plan (to require that all EMS flights comply with most but not all Part 135 requirements except for destination weather reporting capability) is an acceptable alternative. Pending a requirement that all EMS flights with medical personnel on board, regardless of the presence of patients, be subject to the weather minimums and flight and duty time limitations delineated in Part 135, Safety Recommendation A-06-12 is classified "Open—Acceptable Alternate Response."

The FAA's May 30, 2006, letter also discusses a 1992 memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the FAA and the Safety Board that provides that EMS positioning flights are Part 91 operations until a passenger or patient is picked up. The MOU was developed in connection with aviation accident reporting procedures. The Board will work with the FAA to review the MOU and to make the necessary revisions.

#### A-06-13

Require all emergency medical services (EMS) operators to develop and implement flight risk evaluation programs that include training all employees involved in the operation, procedures that support the systematic evaluation of flight risks, and consultation with others trained in EMS flight operations if the risks reach a predefined level.

In its May 30, 2006, letter, the FAA indicates that it plans to add a specific requirement for a risk assessment program to Operations Specifications (OpSpecs) A021 and 024 "Emergency Medical Service" in the next revision of these OpSpecs, scheduled for later this year; however, as of December 11, 2006, it has not been "issued" or "added." Pending the addition of this requirement to the OpSpecs, Safety Recommendation A-06-13 is classified "Open—Acceptable Response."

#### A-06-14

Require emergency medical services operators to use formalized dispatch and flight-following procedures that include up-to-date weather information and assistance in flight risk assessment decisions.

During the October 12, 2006, meeting, the FAA described its activities in response to this recommendation. The FAA is examining the role that a "communications specialist" could play in performing dispatch and flight following activities for an EMS operator. Currently, the FAA is developing a set of best practices related to standardization of communications specialists' position descriptions and training requirements. The FAA is also examining the role of the communications specialist in operational control and flight following activities. Pending adoption of a requirement for formalized dispatch and flight following procedures for EMS operators, Safety Recommendation A-06-14 is classified "Open—Acceptable Response."

A-06-15

Require emergency medical services (EMS) operators to install terrain awareness and warning systems [TAWS] on their aircraft and to provide adequate training to ensure that flight crews are capable of using the systems to safely conduct EMS operations.

During the October 12, 2006, meeting, the FAA indicated that although there is a commercially available TAWS for helicopters, there does not yet exist a set of standards for these systems that would be needed if the FAA were to mandate their installation and use on helicopters. The FAA asked the Radio Technical Commission for Aeronautics (RTCA), a private, not-for-profit corporation that develops recommended standards for communications, navigation, surveillance, and air traffic management issues, to establish a committee to develop minimum operational performance standards for helicopter TAWS. On June 27, 2006, RTCA established SC-212, a committee tasked with developing these standards, currently scheduled to be completed by March 2008. The FAA plans to issue a Technical Standards Order (TSO) based on the standards SC-212 develops. When the TSO is issued, the FAA will be in a position to require the installation and use of TAWS in helicopters.

Pending release by SC-212 of a set of minimum operational performance standards for helicopter TAWS, issuance by the FAA of a TSO based on these standards, and a requirement mandating the installation and use of TAWS in all EMS flights, Safety Recommendation A-06-15 is classified "Open—Acceptable Response."

Sincerely



Mark V. Rosenker  
Chairman

cc: Ms. Linda Lawson, Director  
Office of Safety, Energy, and Environment  
Office of Transportation Policy