

## Additional Information

### Short-term Counseling & Referrals

Short-term professional mental health support is available to survivors, family members, and friends in their local area free of charge through our partners, the American Red Cross. When requested or deemed appropriate, Red Cross can provide referrals for longer-term mental health services or support groups. Please contact the TDA Division for additional information.

### Victim Identification Process

In the United States, medical examiners and coroners are responsible for identification, determination of cause and manner of death, and certification of death for individuals that either die within their jurisdiction or are transported to their jurisdiction if the death occurred over water. Contact information for the medical examiner or coroner is available by contacting the TDA Division.

### Personal Effects

The NTSB may take custody of personal effects like personal electronic devices or other items relevant to the investigation. Depending on condition, these items may be returned to the owner or a designated family member following the conclusion of the investigation. Personal effects not retained by the NTSB may be collected by the medical examiner or coroner, law enforcement, or another agency or organization involved in the response.

The TDA Division can assist with inquiries about personal effects retained by the NTSB or provide contact information for other agencies that may have custody of personal effects.

### Accident Vessel

The NTSB has the authority to retain control of and manage access to the vessel during the investigation. Inquiries regarding status of the vessel or any vessel components under NTSB control may be directed to the TDA Division.

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**NTSB Website:** [www.nts.gov](http://www.nts.gov)

**TDA Division:** [www.nts.gov/tda](http://www.nts.gov/tda)

**Email:** [assistance@nts.gov](mailto:assistance@nts.gov)

**NTSB** NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
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**NTSB** | National  
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Transportation  
Disaster  
Assistance  
(TDA) Division



**MARINE  
ACCIDENT  
INVESTIGATIONS**

**Information for  
survivors,  
families & friends**





# NTSB Marine Accident Investigations

## What is the NTSB?

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency responsible for investigating and determining the probable cause of selected marine accidents on or under the navigable waters, internal waters, or the territorial seas of the United States and accidents involving U.S. flagged vessels that occur beyond U.S. waters. From these safety investigations, the NTSB works to develop safety improvements aimed at preventing accidents from reoccurring. The NTSB headquarters is in Washington, DC. The NTSB is not part of the Department of Transportation (DOT) or affiliated with DOT agencies, and NTSB investigation reports are independent from those completed by the United States Coast Guard. The NTSB has no regulatory or enforcement authority and does not investigate criminal activity.

## Who is an IIC?

Assigned by the NTSB Office of Marine Safety, the Investigator-In-Charge (IIC) is responsible for leading the safety investigation and manages all aspects of the investigative process through to its conclusion. Depending on the circumstances of the accident, the IIC along with other NTSB investigators may travel to the accident site to collect information.

## What is the TDA Division?

At the request of the IIC, NTSB Transportation Disaster Assistance (TDA) Division Specialists serve as the primary point of contact for survivors, family members, and friends to provide information and address questions regarding the NTSB investigative process. They provide notification when investigative reports and other products are publicly released. TDA Division Specialists also coordinate access to family assistance resources that may be available from government agencies and non-governmental organizations.

## Overview

Marine accident investigations often require 12 to 24 months to complete. This is due to the complexity of the factual information that must be collected and the importance of conducting a comprehensive analysis to determine its relevance to the cause of the accident.

During the investigation, the following reports are published on the NTSB website:

- The NTSB may issue a **Preliminary Report** within a few weeks after the accident. This report provides a synopsis of initial factual information collected during the on-scene phase of the investigation.
- The **Accident Docket** includes relevant information collected during the investigation and considered in the development of the final report or accident brief and determination of the probable cause. Examples of docket items may include wreckage photographs, logs, maintenance records, and witness statements. The docket is made available to the public either at an appropriate time during the investigation, or at its conclusion.
- The **Final Report** provides a summary of relevant factual information, analysis, findings, probable cause, and safety recommendations issued or reiterated as a result of the investigation; or an **Accident Brief** that consists of a short accident narrative, probable cause, and, if included, safety recommendations. Briefs are normally limited to factual information but may contain analysis.

The report or brief is typically available 12 to 24 months following the accident.

The NTSB may issue **Safety Recommendations** at any time during the investigation to address a particular issue and specify how to correct the situation. Recommendations are issued to relevant stakeholders best able to address the issue.

The NTSB will work with relevant stakeholders to identify safety issues that can be promptly corrected through suggested solutions. These solutions can be implemented without having to issue formal safety recommendations.

The NTSB may also issue **Safety Alerts** designed to enhance the understanding of safety issues and offer suggested actions to mitigate them.

## Party System

The NTSB has the authority to designate organizations, corporations, or agencies as parties to the investigation. Only representatives who can provide technical or specialized expertise are permitted to serve as party members. They report directly to the NTSB's IIC.

Parties are permitted to assist the NTSB with the collection of factual information but cannot participate in its analysis. The NTSB is solely responsible for analyzing factual information to determine its relevance to the probable cause of the accident.

## Staying Informed

Survivors, families, and friends can contact the TDA Division directly regarding an NTSB investigation and to learn more about available resources. TDA Specialists work closely with the IIC to address questions regarding an investigation.

Survivors, families, and friends are encouraged to use the NTSB website to access additional information about material provided in this brochure.

### Accident Investigation Process

On-scene Data Collection

Preliminary Report Release



Post-scene Data Collection

Report Development

Analysis of Factual Information

Docket Release



Final Report or Brief Release



## Contact Us

The TDA Division can be contacted by calling **(800) 683-9369** or **(202) 314-6185**, or by email at **assistance@ntsb.gov**

NTSB website: **www.nts.gov**

TDA Division: **www.nts.gov/tda**