

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

Victim recovery, identification, determination of cause and manner of death and death certification are the responsibility of the medical examiner or coroner in the jurisdiction where the accident occurred. 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.

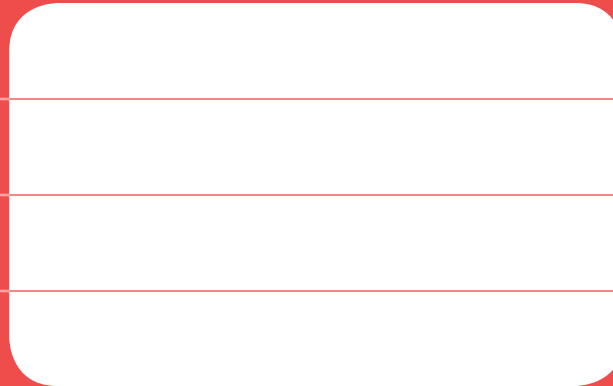
Accident Wreckage

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

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NTSB Website: www.nts.gov

TDA Division: www.nts.gov/tda

Email: assistance@nts.gov

NTSB NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
TRANSPORTATION DISASTER ASSISTANCE DIVISION

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NTSB | National
Transportation
Safety Board

Transportation
Disaster
Assistance
(TDA) Division



**RAILROAD
ACCIDENT
INVESTIGATIONS**

**Information for
survivors,
families & friends**





NTSB Railroad Accident Investigations

What is the NTSB?

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency charged with investigating and determining the probable cause of selected accidents involving passenger and freight railroads and commuter transit systems in the United States. From these safety investigations, the NTSB works to develop safety improvements aimed at preventing accidents from reoccurring. The NTSB is headquartered in Washington, D.C. with investigators located across the United States. The NTSB is not part of the Department of Transportation (DOT) or affiliated with DOT agencies. The NTSB has no regulatory or enforcement authority and does not investigate criminal activity.

Who is an IIC?

Assigned by the NTSB Railroad Division, 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

Railroad 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 **Preliminary Report** provides a synopsis of factual information collected during the on-scene phase of the investigation. This report is typically available within a few weeks after the accident.
- 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 accident site photographs, rail car, signal, and track 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 safety recommendations. Briefs are normally limited to factual information but may contain analysis.

The report or brief replaces the preliminary report and 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 and report directly to the NTSB.

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 discussed in this brochure.

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.ntsbt.gov

TDA Division: www.ntsbt.gov/tda

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

