

Family assistance operations

Family Assistance Center

When a Family Assistance Center (FAC) is established, it serves as a secure, centralized meeting location designed to offer survivors, families and friends information about the accident response, access to available support services, and information about the NTSB investigation. The FAC is staffed by TDA Specialists, the rail passenger carrier, the American Red Cross, and selected government agencies providing assistance. Access to information and services will be available remotely if a physical center is not established.

Briefings for survivors, families & friends

NTSB coordinates briefings to provide information related to the accident response, available support services, and initial information about the NTSB investigation. Briefings will be offered at the FAC or by remote web or telephone conferencing.

Short-term counseling and referrals

Short-term professional mental health support and referrals are available through the American Red Cross. All services provided by the American Red Cross are free of charge. Further information about support services is available at the FAC or by contacting the TDA Division directly.

Victim identification process

Victim recovery, identification, and determination of cause and manner of death are the responsibility of the medical examiner or coroner in the jurisdiction where the death occurred. Contact information for the medical examiner or coroner is available at the FAC or by contacting the TDA Division directly.

Personal effects

Collecting and returning personal effects from the accident site is a shared responsibility between the rail passenger carrier, the local medical examiner or coroner, and the NTSB. The complexity and scale of the accident scene influences the time needed to recover, process, and return personal effects. Information about the personal effects management process is provided during briefings or by contacting the TDA Division directly.

NTSB/SPC-XXXXXX



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NTSB Website: www.nts.gov

TDA Division: www.nts.gov/tda

E-mail: assistance@nts.gov

NTSB NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
TRANSPORTATION DISASTER ASSISTANCE DIVISION

490 L'Enfant Plaza East, SW
Washington, DC 20594
Office: (800) 683-9369
Local: (202) 314-6185
Fax: (202) 459-9402

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Transportation
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Transportation
Disaster
Assistance (TDA)
Division

Railroad
Accident
Investigations
Information for
survivors, families
and friends



Investigation overview

National Transportation Safety Board

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency responsible for investigating and determining the probable cause of select rail passenger accidents, as well as all civil aviation and selected highway, marine, and pipeline accidents in the United States. From these safety investigations, the NTSB develops safety recommendations aimed at preventing similar accidents from occurring. The NTSB has no regulatory or enforcement authority over the rail industry and does not investigate criminal activity. While local, state, and federal agencies may support an investigation, the NTSB is the lead federal agency responsible for conducting the safety investigation. The NTSB is not part of the Department of Transportation (DOT) or affiliated with DOT agencies.

Federal Family Assistance

The Rail Passenger Disaster Family Assistance Act of 2008 was enacted to ensure the provision of information, services and support to survivors and families involved in rail passenger accidents that meet the criteria established by the law. The NTSB has the primary responsibility of coordinating with the rail passenger carrier, the American Red Cross, and federal agencies to integrate with the broader family assistance response effort.

NTSB Transportation Disaster Assistance Division

The NTSB's Transportation Disaster Assistance (TDA) Division typically deploys TDA Specialists to the accident location during the on-scene phase of the investigation to support the family assistance response effort. For the duration of the investigation, a TDA Specialist will serve as the primary point of contact to provide notification when investigative reports and other NTSB products are publicly released, address on-going questions regarding the NTSB investigation, and coordinate access to family assistance resources that may be available from government agencies and non-governmental organizations.

NTSB on-scene

When notified of an accident, the NTSB launches a go-team led by an Investigator-In-Charge (IIC) and supported by several technical specialists. The IIC is responsible for leading the safety investigation and manages all aspects of the investigative process through to its conclusion. An NTSB Board Member may accompany the team and serves as the agency spokesperson with support from NTSB media relations specialists. The NTSB does not coordinate or attend media interviews with survivors or family members.

The party system

The NTSB has the authority to designate representatives from organizations, corporations, or agencies to serve as parties to the investigation. Only individuals with 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.

Investigation reports and products

During the investigation, the following products are released 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 a few weeks after the accident.
- The **Accident Docket** includes relevant information collected during the investigation and considered in the development of reports and determination of the probable cause. Examples of docket items may include accident photographs, records, or interview summaries.
- The **Final Report** provides a summary of relevant factual information, analysis, findings, the probable cause, and

safety recommendations issued or reiterated as a result of the investigation. This report 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 or deficiency. Recommendations are issued to organizations best able to address the safety concern. The NTSB will also 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 concerns and offer suggested actions to mitigate them.

Staying informed

The TDA Division works with survivors, families and friends to ensure access to information and support services during the on-scene phase and throughout the NTSB investigation.

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

Contacting the TDA Division

- Phone: **(800) 683-9369**
(202) 314-6185
- E-mail: **assistance@ntsb.gov**

On the Web

- TDA: **www.nts.gov/tda**
- NTSB: **www.nts.gov**

