National Transportation Safety Board

How to support the NTSB

Responding to a transportation accident

A guide for police & public safety personnel

SPC-20-01

Wreckage documentation

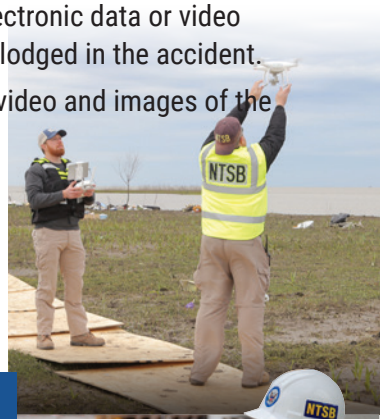
☐ Obtain the aircraft registration number (N number); name of the vessel, truck, bus or pipeline operator, or railroad company; and any other uniquely identifying information.

☐ Photograph or video overall accident scene starting at the initial point of impact (if possible).

- Include equipment such as locomotives, cockpit, or operator's controls.
- Include scar marks made by the aircraft, vehicle, train, pipeline, or vessel.

☐ Secure any unsecured electronic data or video recorders that may have dislodged in the accident.

☐ If available, provide UAS video and images of the accident site.



Injured/fatalities

☐ Gather patient transport information from EMS to account for all injured victims.

☐ Coordinate with the NTSB before documenting and recovering fatally injured victims.

☐ If the NTSB is not available, document the following before recovering victims:

- the original position of the remains,
- use/condition of restraint systems,
- use/condition of lifesaving equipment,
- any intentional or accidental manipulation of the wreckage, vessel control panels, or machinery during the recovery process.

☐ Collect names and contact information for all people involved in the accident.

Witness documentation

☐ Obtain each witnesses' name, address, email address, and phone number.

☐ Determine the location of the witness relative to the accident site.

☐ Record description of what they observed or heard.

☐ Identify the name of the person reporting the accident (from 911 recordings).

☐ Identify and secure any video from security cameras.

☐ Secure any cell phones or other recording devices belonging to victims found at the accident scene.

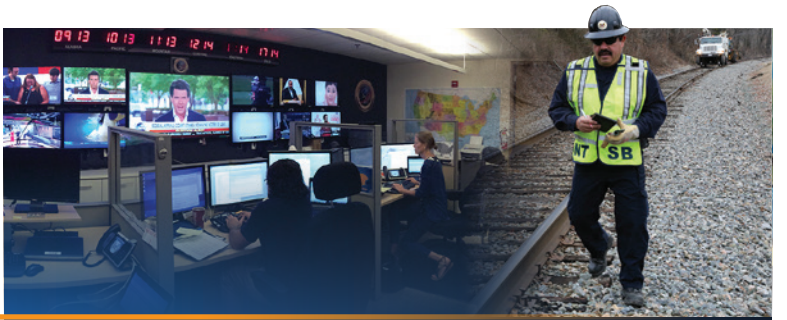
Media relations

☐ Only the NTSB can release investigative information and updates about its safety investigations.

☐ PIOs for public safety agencies can speak to their agency's role in the emergency response to the accident.

☐ Media inquiries about the NTSB's investigation of the accident should be referred to NTSB Media Relations at 202-314-6100.

☐ The NTSB will not release names of crew members, passengers, or other victims associated with an accident.



Contact us

To report an incident/accident or if you are a public safety agency with any questions, please call **844-373-9922** to speak to a Watch Officer at the NTSB Response Operations Center (ROC) in Washington, DC.

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TRANSPORTATION DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Accident survivors and their family members are encouraged to contact the NTSB Transportation Disaster Assistance (TDA) Division for information about the NTSB investigation by calling 800-683-9369 or sending an email to assistance@ntsb.gov.

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Responding to a transportation accident

A guide for police and public safety personnel

What is the NTSB?

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an **independent federal agency that investigates accidents** to determine their probable cause, examine safety issues, and devise recommendations to prevent the occurrence of similar accidents in the future.

NTSB investigators employ procedures similar to those used by law enforcement. NTSB safety investigations are independent of police investigations. When criminal and safety investigations occur at the same time, the NTSB strives not to interfere with police activities.

The NTSB will defer to law enforcement agencies upon the discovery of evidence of criminal intent.

Air carrier operators must notify commercial and chartered airlines aviation accidents to the NTSB. See 49 *CFR* 830.5. The carrier will coordinate directly with NTSB investigators.

To report an incident/accident, call 844-373-9922 to speak to a Watch Officer at the NTSB Response Operations Center (ROC) in Washington, DC.

Upon completion of first responder and life safety activities:

- **Secure scene and preserve evidence**
- **Contact the NTSB at 844-373-9922**

Protect life, property, and evidence

- ☐ **Establish** a security perimeter around the accident scene.
- ☐ **Allow** public safety personnel access to preserve life, recover the fatally injured, and stabilize hazardous materials.
- ☐ **Prevent** disturbance of the accident scene and the wreckage.
- ☐ **Protect** and preserve ground scars and marks made by the aircraft, vehicle, train, vessel, or pipeline, as well as other physical evidence related to the accident.
- ☐ **Document** and photograph evidence before allowing entry into or adjacent to the accident location. Mark possible evidence for analysis by the NTSB investigators upon arrival.
- ☐ **Remove** highway vehicles to a secure location, and **ensure** that recovery operations do not alter critical precrash adjustments, such as airbrake settings.

Maintain a record of personnel who enter the accident scene.

If possible, document emergency services and response activities in the incident, including the time at which an activity occurred.

Potential hazards at an accident scene

Potentially dangerous materials that may be present at an accident scene, include but are not limited to, biohazards, toxic chemicals, pressurized objects (oxygen systems, hydraulic systems, accumulators, tires, airbag systems, evacuation chutes), chemicals/fluids (fuel, oil, hydraulic fluids, battery acid, and other oxidizers), fire bottles/extinguishers, flares, ballistic recovery systems (such as, airframe parachutes), radioactive materials, explosives, railroad high voltage third rails, and overhead railroad wires.

Who's allowed on scene

Before NTSB arrival, restrict scene access to authorized personnel:

- ☐ Police/Fire/EMS
- ☐ Medical examiner/ Coroner
- ☐ State/federal OSHA
- ☐ Other emergency services agencies

Aviation accidents

- ☐ Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
- ☐ Air carriers/operators will notify/coordinate with the NTSB concerning airplane
- ☐ Airports may call NTSB at **844-373-9922** for questions about airplane movement

Rail/transit accidents

- ☐ Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
- ☐ Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- ☐ State safety oversight agency

Marine accidents

- ☐ US Coast Guard
- ☐ State or local waterway or harbor police

Pipeline and hazardous materials accidents

- ☐ Pipeline and Hazards Materials Safety Agency (PHMSA)
- ☐ State pipeline regulator

Upon the arrival of the NTSB, scene access should be coordinated with the NTSB and local law enforcement.