



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Pipeline and Hazardous
Materials Safety
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Ave., S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

MAR 28 2008

The Honorable Mark V. Rosenker
Chairman
National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20594

Dear Chairman Rosenker:

Thank you for your January 7, 2008 letter concerning safety recommendations A-08-1 and A-08-2. The recommendations were issued following the National Transportation Safety Board's investigation of a hazardous materials incident on February 7, 2006, at the Philadelphia International Airport. In that incident, United Parcel Service Company flight 1307 landed at the airport after a cargo smoke indication in the cockpit. The captain, first officer, and a flight engineer evacuated the airplane after landing, sustaining minor injuries. The airplane and most of the cargo were destroyed by a fire. NTSB determined that the probable cause of this accident was an in-flight cargo fire from an unknown source. As a result of this accident, NTSB issued two safety recommendations to the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The recommendations state:

A-08-01

In collaboration with air carriers, manufacturers of lithium batteries and electronic devices, air travel associations, and other appropriate government and private organizations, establish a process to ensure wider, highly visible, and continuous dissemination of guidance and information to the air-traveling public, including flight crews, about the safe carriage of secondary (rechargeable) lithium batteries or electronic devices containing these batteries on board passenger aircraft.

A-08-02

In collaboration with air carriers, manufacturers of lithium batteries and electronic devices, air travel associations, and other appropriate government and private organizations, establish a process to periodically measure the effectiveness of your efforts to educate the air-traveling public, including flight crews, about the safe carriage of secondary (rechargeable) lithium batteries or electronic devices containing these batteries on board passenger aircraft.

We are committed to heightening public awareness related to the hazards associated with the air transportation of lithium batteries, including batteries contained in electronic devices. This is a key component of our comprehensive strategy to enhance safety and reduce incidents. Since February 22, 2007, we have been working with air carriers, battery manufacturers, air travel associations, airline pilot and flight crew associations and other government agencies, including the Transportation Security Administration, to educate the public about potential safety problems and measures that will reduce or eliminate those problems. We agree that our initiative must be highly visible and continuous to be effective and are initiating several approaches to achieve this objective.

One of our most visible programs to promote battery safety is the SafeTravel Web site, which includes guidance and information on how to travel safely with batteries and battery-powered devices. Traffic on the SafeTravel site increased from a hit count of 57,000 in April 2007, to a count of 1,316,000 hits in December 2007. In January, the site recorded 4,608,000 hits, over 3.5 times the December count. In terms of external web mentions of the SafeTravel site by URL name, a mid-November count found about 500 mentions. That number has since grown to over 5,000.

In conjunction with development of the SafeTravel website, we have been working with major airlines to place SafeTravel on their web sites and to include battery safety tips in their in-flight magazines and in their electronic communications with passengers. We are also contacting personal computer and gaming magazines to provide information to their customers; contacting local print and electronic news media sources and major print media contacts in major metropolitan markets in advance of holiday travel; developing magazine drop-in advertisements; and distributed 1,000 media kits and over 30,000 digital information packets with links to the media kit. We have also been working with the Air Transport Association (ATA) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to provide SafeTravel information for ticketed passengers and frequent flyers, and to place printed battery safety materials in seat pockets on passenger planes. As a result of our partnership with ATA, many airlines now include battery safety tips on their websites and in travel magazines and are working with us to promote passenger awareness and safety.

We continue to enhance our battery safety outreach efforts and are making progress in additional venues. For example, to increase visibility in the coming months, we initiated a partnership with the Interactive Travel Services Association (ITSA) to encourage large online travel vendors such as Orbitz, Travelocity, Hotwire, and others, to include access to the SafeTravel site in their electronic communications and on their web sites. ITSA has agreed to assist us with enhancing the branding of our safety message and to expand our reach to the traveling public. We have also met with the Association of American Airport Executives (AAAE) and the Airports Council International to discuss placement of awareness materials in airports. We are considering how we can simplify our safety message and effectively communicate it to the common airline passenger so that the message is easily understandable and effective for broadcast through displays in airports. We are working with FAA and TSA to develop a strategy for introducing our hazardous materials and battery safety public safety announcements in airports.

In addition to promoting SafeTravel articles and links to gaming and PC industry magazines, we have directly promoted the web site to "gadget" and travel blogs and online vendors of batteries and electronics. We are also contacting major retailers and distributors with the goal of establishing in-store, electronic, and print media promotion of the battery safety agenda. We recently acquired commitments from Wal-Mart and Radio Shack to support our efforts.

An important component our public awareness campaign is our partnership with the Portable Rechargeable Battery Association (PRBA) and the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA). Both PRBA and NEMA have published articles in support of battery safety awareness for air travelers. PRMA and NEMA are working with member manufacturers to include a reference to the SafeTravel website on lithium battery retail packaging. They are also working with their members to include SafeTravel information in printed material accompanying rechargeable batteries, such as those used in laptop computers.

We are continuing to leverage our existing industry partnerships in an effort to create a more visible public campaign, in addition to specific news events and press releases. We are participating in major conventions and exhibitions to conduct outreach and increase both industry and consumer awareness of battery safety issues. PHMSA staff recently participated in the 25th International Battery Safety Conference, where more than 350 representatives from the battery and battery powered device manufacturing industry attended, and explained the incidents that have occurred, the steps being taken and invited them to partner with us in expanding the outreach and public awareness campaign. On April 11, 2008, we will meet with stakeholders to discuss partner actions to provide continuous, repeated mass media presence and to roll out a renewed battery safety plan focused on a multi-faceted approach to reducing the risk of the transport of lithium batteries.

We are mindful that NTSB stressed actions to promote lithium battery safety awareness among flight crew specifically, and that Recommendation A-08-2 focuses on more robust assessment of passenger and flight crew awareness and behavior. We are working with ATA, their member airlines, the Airline Pilots Association and the Association of Flight Attendants (AFA) to raise flight crew awareness of measures they can take to avoid incidents as well as how to respond effectively should an incident occur in the cabin.

We have requested available metrics for partner actions, and are coordinating with FAA to continually assess incident data focusing on root causes, in order to gauge any changes in passenger behavior. In the coming year, we will work to capture information about passenger behaviors independent of incidents, and work with FAA and with partners representing airline flight crews to ensure that battery safety and response information is made available. We also will develop a method for evaluating the effectiveness of our efforts to educate the public and flight crews.

We will keep you informed of our progress. Attached is a status report of our actions. We are now compiling monthly status reports to track and measure our effectiveness. If you have any questions, please contact me at (202) 366-4831.

We request that you classify recommendations A-08-1 and A-08-2 as "Open – Acceptable Action." We thank you for consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stacey L. Gerard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Stacey L. Gerard
Assistant Administrator/Chief Safety Officer