

Public Forum: Driver Education and Training

Opening Statement

Good morning and welcome. I am Ellen Engleman, Chairman of the Safety Board.

The Safety Board is an independent government agency mandated by Congress to investigate transportation accidents in all modes, to make recommendations to prevent similar accidents from occurring, and to provide independent oversight of government and private entities involved in our nation's transportation systems.

Today's forum, sponsored by the NTSB Academy, is the first time the Safety Board has addressed the issue of novice driver education and training since 1971. The discussion to do so was prompted by an accident that occurred in Belgrade, Montana, earlier this year. While the Safety Board has supported and promoted graduated driver's licensing to try to curb the number of fatalities experienced by younger drivers, we believe that the effort needs to start before drivers get their license, with their education and training.

During the next two days we will focus our attention on the history and current state of novice driver education and training programs, the extent to which they are used, and their quality and effectiveness. We will also explore the strengths and weaknesses of such programs and what can be done to improve them.

This morning we will learn about the history of driver education and training, how it has developed over the years, and major studies that have been conducted. Next we will consider the national efforts in the U.S., Canada, and Europe. This afternoon we will hear from five State representatives and the Governors' Highway Safety Association about what is occurring at the state level to educate young drivers.

Tomorrow teachers and students will talk about their experience in driver training, and representatives from 10 groups will discuss the initiatives they have underway to educate young drivers on safe driving. Finally, we will wrap up with several validation studies of driver education techniques and future research needs.

Leading each group of panelists are staff from the Safety Board's Offices of Highway Safety, Safety Recommendations and Accomplishments, and Research and Engineering. Panel moderators are Mr. Kevin Quinlan, Mrs. Jennifer Bishop, Mr. Gary Van Etten, Mr. Peter Kotowski, Dr. Rafael Marshall, Dr. Paula Sind-Prunier, and Dr. Robert Molloy. Mr. Ronald Kaminski, Ms. Michele McMurtry, and Mr. Larry Yohe will also be assisting with the forum.

From the Office of Public Affairs is Ms. Lauren Peduzzi. Mr. Peter Knudson from the NTSB Academy is in charge of registration. Mrs. Mary Jones and Mrs. Carolyn Dargan will be assisting with administrative matters and Mr. Will Skolochenko will be assisting with audio visual needs.

This forum is a fact-gathering exercise. We will spend our time examining current safety problems and studying possible solutions. The Safety Board will use information gathered at this forum to develop possible

recommendations and other materials on novice driver education and training.

The procedure for the forum is as follows: the panelists will be introduced and will each make a presentation in his or her area of expertise. After each group of panelists, we will have time for questions. We will pass out cards that you can write your questions on and pass them to one of the Safety Board staff who will be walking up and down the aisles. We will try to respond to as many questions as time allows.

We also have a table outside the auditorium that contains information on various driver education and training programs that are offered throughout the country. Feel free to help yourself to any literature available there. Additionally, there are two driver training simulators in the room to your left as you exit the auditorium that you will be able to try. Please note that the Safety Board does not endorse or promote the simulator or any of the materials, but they are there for your information.

A transcript of the forum and all exhibits entered into the record will become part of the public record in the Safety Board's Washington, D.C., office. Anyone desiring to purchase the transcript should contact the court reporter; the Safety Board does not provide copies of the transcript. An archive of the Webcast can be found on our Website: www.nts.gov. In addition, the Safety Board's accident investigation reports, publications, and other Academy classes are available on our Website.

Mr. Van Etten will now give you an overview of the accident that occurred in Belgrade, Montana, before we hear from our first panel.