

National Transportation Safety Board  
**Strategic Plan**  
Fiscal Years 2013 through 2017



October 1, 2012



**National  
Transportation  
Safety Board**

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## *A Message from the Chairman*



[Deborah A.P. Hersman](#)  
Chairman

It is my pleasure to present the [National Transportation Safety Board's](#) (NTSB) 2013-2017 Strategic Plan—a roadmap that will guide us over the next 4 years. The priority strategic goals, objectives, strategies and measures presented here are the tangible standards used to gauge our success in achieving our commitments to all who depend on our performance and stewardship.

The NTSB is recognized nationally and internationally for our accident investigation experience, and also for issuing, advancing and closing safety recommendations. For over 40 years, the NTSB has been at the forefront of transportation safety issues. To continue this record, our plan serves as an agenda outlining actions needed to preserve the NTSB's successes and, where appropriate, to bring about positive change.

This plan begins with our revised mission and the expansion of our core agency values, to include diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The aim of this plan is to stimulate and promote beneficial change within the transportation community—change that helps fulfill, and is consistent with, our mission and core values.

I look forward to working with all stakeholders—Congress, the public, business and industry members, and our federal, state, local, and international partners—to implement this strategic plan. I believe that the strategies outlined here will allow the NTSB to address current and future challenges in the transportation community.

/s/

Deborah A.P. Hersman  
Chairman

October 1, 2012

## ***About the NTSB***

The NTSB is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the U.S. and significant accidents in other modes of transportation—railroad, highway, marine and pipeline. The NTSB determines the probable cause of each accident investigated and issues safety recommendations aimed at preventing future accidents. In addition, the NTSB carries out special studies concerning transportation safety and coordinates the resources of the Federal Government and other organizations to provide assistance to victims and their family members impacted by major transportation disasters.

Since our inception, we have investigated more than 137,000 aviation accidents and thousands of surface transportation accidents. On call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, NTSB investigators travel throughout the country and internationally to investigate significant accidents and develop factual records and safety recommendations with one aim—to ensure that such accidents never happen again. Our [Most Wanted List](#) highlights safety-critical actions that U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) modal administrations, the U.S. Coast Guard, and others need to take to help prevent accidents and save lives.

To date, we have issued over 13,700 safety recommendations to more than 2,300 recipients. Because we have no formal authority to regulate the transportation industry, our effectiveness depends on our reputation for conducting thorough, accurate, and independent investigations and for producing timely, well-considered recommendations to enhance transportation safety.

The NTSB has five Board Members, each nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate to serve 5-year terms. A Member is designated by the President as Chairman and another as Vice Chairman for 2-year terms. The chairmanship requires separate Senate confirmation. When there is no designated Chairman, the Vice Chairman serves as Acting Chairman.

The Office of the Managing Director assists the Chairman in the discharge of the Chairman's functions as executive and administrative head of the NTSB. The office provides overall leadership for the management of the agency, including production, strategy, and support functions. The office ensures that NTSB resources are allocated appropriately to ensure that we perform our mission in the most cost-effective manner.

The NTSB's organization chart can be found at the following link: [http://www.nts.gov/about/images/NTSB\\_Org\\_Chart.jpg](http://www.nts.gov/about/images/NTSB_Org_Chart.jpg).

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## *Legislative Mandate*

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*Maintain* our congressionally mandated independence and objectivity.

*Conduct* objective, precise accident investigations and safety studies.

*Perform* fair and objective airman and mariner certification appeals.

*Advocate* and promote safety recommendations.

*Assist* victims of transportation accidents and their families.

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## *Mission*

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*Independently Advancing Transportation Safety*

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## *Core Values*

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The NTSB embraces the values of **transparency**, **accountability**, **integrity**, **diversity** and **inclusion** in our work. We are committed to these values every day, in all ways.

## ***Strategic Goal No. 1 – Conduct effective accident investigations***

Our status as an independent federal agency sets us apart from other stakeholders in the transportation industry. Our most important stakeholder is the traveling public, and we are concerned with one principal objective: promoting transportation safety. Conducting independent accident investigations is a critical component of our mission, and it is done with transparency, accountability, and integrity, the core values of the agency. Strategic Goal No. 1 focuses on the NTSB's key challenge of identifying those accidents in each transportation mode that represent the most important targets of investigative opportunity, determine the scope and scale of such investigations, and conduct safety studies to help to prevent similar accidents in the future.

The NTSB is obligated to participate in aviation investigations in foreign countries when they involve U.S. carriers or U.S.-manufactured or -designed equipment. This helps ensure that U.S.-built or -designed aircraft do not have safety issues. Our participation in foreign aviation investigations have led to improvements in aviation safety here and abroad. NTSB-led domestic investigations have also benefitted from the participation of other international accident investigation agencies. Our role in international activities for all modes of transportation includes unique challenges, but with our continued advocacy and outreach, we can showcase lessons learned and improve awareness of these investigations nationally and internationally.

Accomplishing this strategic goal will ensure effective and efficient investigation of

accidents and incidents and foster a transportation industry that is better prepared to address safety issues.

To achieve this goal, the following objectives and strategies will be applied:

### **Objectives**

- Select and scale an appropriate response to accident investigations and incidents.
- Increase the recognition of the NTSB's role for investigating international aviation accidents.
- Continue to effectively coordinate and deliver Transportation Disaster Assistance (TDA) to the families of accident victims.
- Engage in outreach with the transportation community to improve awareness of lessons learned from accident investigations nationally and internationally.

### **Strategies**

- ❖ Revise and periodically review selection criteria and other tools necessary to improve and to expedite investigations.
- ❖ Continue to advance our role in international aviation accidents and to participate in aviation investigations in foreign countries.
- ❖ Improve capacity to conduct safety studies.
- ❖ Develop outreach plans and products such as videos and digests based on investigations and studies.
- ❖ Assist investigators in all modes of transportation by interacting with accident victims and family members.

### **Performance Measures**

- ❖ Number of products adopted by the Board
- ❖ Average time (in months) to complete Board adopted products
- ❖ Number of aviation international cooperative activities completed
- ❖ Percent of Transportation Disaster Assistance support provided to major aviation and rail accident investigations, as legislated
- ❖ Number of outcome-oriented safety results (legislation, federal rule, industry symposium, or lessons learned) involving industry or government stakeholders following outreach efforts

### ***Strategic Goal No. 2 – Recommend and advocate actions to improve global transportation safety***

Because our mission is to independently advance transportation safety, Strategic Goal No. 2, which affects the safety of the entire transportation system, cascades into strategic objectives that emphasize advocacy and outreach. Issuing, advancing, and closing recommendations remain an important core function of the agency. This goal emphasizes our need to promote items on the [Most Wanted List](#). The Most Wanted List is designed as a transparent tool to increase awareness of, and support for, the most critical changes needed to reduce transportation accidents and save lives. Leveraging our unique position in the safety industry, we believe it is necessary to lead the transportation community with integrity to ensure that emerging safety issues are being addressed

and that political leadership is aware of public policy implications.

To achieve this goal, the following objectives and strategies will be applied:

### **Objectives**

- Identify new and creative ways to advocate safety recommendations and other safety actions.
- Maintain and advocate items on the Most Wanted List.

### **Strategies**

- ❖ Implement appropriate safety recommendations from investigations and safety studies.
- ❖ Publicly recognize safety recommendations that are implemented and those that, unimplemented, show a persistent risk.
- ❖ Publicize the up-to-date status of all safety recommendations through the NTSB website and other public communication channels.
- ❖ Increase advocacy efforts with regard to emerging safety issues through ongoing dialogue with relevant government and other stakeholders, testimony, and other public communications.

### **Performance Measures**

- ❖ Number of safety recommendations adopted over the last 5 years
- ❖ Number of non-traditional methods used to address, and advocate for, safety recommendations
- ❖ Percent of Most Wanted List issue areas that are new to the list

***Strategic Goal No. 3 – Conduct fair and expeditious adjudication of airmen and mariner appeals from the Federal Aviation Administration and the U.S. Coast Guard enforcement actions and certificate denials***

Strategic Goal No. 3 recognizes our continuing commitment to a fair appeals process for airmen and mariners to ensure a thorough and independent adjudication while providing due process to those affected and safeguarding the integrity of the aviation and marine safety enforcement system.

To achieve this goal, the following objective and strategies will be applied:

**Objective**

- Effectively manage the appeals process and appropriately protect the rights of airmen and mariners seeking the NTSB’s review, balancing their interests with those of aviation and marine safety.

**Strategies**

- ❖ Continue to increase administrative law judges’ case closure rate.
- ❖ Continue to decrease non-emergency backlog cases on hand.

**Performance Measures**

- ❖ Percentage of total cases disposed of during the fiscal year
- ❖ Total number of non-emergency enforcement backlog cases on hand

***Strategic Goal No. 4 – Provide outstanding mission support***

Providing mission support in achieving our first three goals is imperative if we are to retain our leadership in influencing changes, increasing transparency and outreach, and advancing transportation safety. Strategic Goal No. 4 captures the overall nature of the organization—excellence—and ensures that the agency is able to fulfill our broad mission.

The strategic objectives for this goal promote the outcomes of maintaining agency resources; improving employee safety and health knowledge, human capital, diversity, and inclusion; and maintaining effective communications. This goal emphasizes the agency’s challenge to enhance our management of information and data to ensure reliable and consistent information for management and staff. We remain focused on hiring the right people and on effectively capturing and transferring knowledge, furthering our primary commitment to independently advancing transportation safety. We foster a culture of leadership, diversity, and accountability that enables decision-making while establishing a commitment to teamwork and collaboration. In addition, we strive to meet challenges with innovation and urgency. Collectively, these efforts lay the groundwork for achieving this strategic goal as well as our entire mission.

To achieve this goal, the following objectives and strategies will be applied:

**Objectives**

- Efficiently utilize and manage agency resources.

- Align and improve human capital planning and diversity.

### **Strategies**

- ❖ Provide accurate, timely, and useful financial information to agency managers and staff for effective decision-making.
- ❖ Manage agency information and employ information technology to improve the productivity, effectiveness, and efficiency of agency programs and to enhance the availability and usefulness of information to all users, both within and outside the agency.
- ❖ Continue to improve safety and health training and education to assist the agency in employing sound risk management practices.
- ❖ Use innovative strategies to recruit, develop and retain a high-quality, diverse workforce.
- ❖ Create an agency-wide performance culture focused on individual and organizational accountability toward achievement of the NTSB's programmatic goals and priorities.
- ❖ Sustain a learning environment that provides a continuing improvement in performance through knowledge management, performance feedback, training, coaching, and mentoring.
- ❖ Continue to foster a work environment that is free of discrimination and provides maximum opportunities for all employees to use their diverse talents in support of the NTSB's mission and goals.

- ❖ Continue to identify new methods for the agency to communicate internally and externally.

### **Performance Measures**

- ❖ Obtain an audit opinion on financial statements to ensure records are maintained to the highest level of integrity.
- ❖ Increase integration of Information Technology (IT) solutions into NTSB mission and administrative processes.
- ❖ Obtain positive responses to the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA), the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and other oversight body reports.
- ❖ Implement the NTSB Safety and Occupational Health Program.
- ❖ Develop and implement a Strategic Hiring Plan.
- ❖ Increase the percentage of employee participation in formal and informal development programs.
- ❖ Implement diversity and inclusion organizational development activities.

## ***Appendix I: NTSB Strategic Goals and Strategic Objectives***

### **Measuring our Success**

The success of the strategic plan will be measured by the establishment of performance measures and targets that will be reviewed on an annual basis.

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| <b>Goal 1: Conduct effective accident investigations</b>  |
| Number of products adopted by the Board   |
| Average time (in months) to complete Board-adopted products   |
| Number of aviation international cooperative activities completed   |
| Percent of transportation disaster assistance support provided to major aviation and rail accident investigations, as legislated  |
| Number of outcome-oriented safety results (legislation, federal rule, industry symposium, or lessons learned) involving industry or government stakeholders following outreach efforts                |
| <b>Goal 2: Recommend and advocate actions to improve transportation safety</b>  |
| Number of safety recommendations adopted over the last 5 years  |
| Number of non-traditional methods used to address, and advocate for, safety recommendations   |
| Percent of Most Wanted List issue areas that are new to the list  |
| <b>Goal 3: Conduct fair and expeditious adjudication of airman and mariners appeals from the Federal Aviation Administration and the U.S. Coast Guard enforcement actions and certificate denials</b> |
| Percentage of total cases disposed of during the fiscal year  |
| Total number of non-emergency enforcement backlog cases   |
| <b>Goal 4: Provide outstanding mission support</b>  |
| Obtain an audit opinion on financial statements to ensure records are maintained to the highest level of integrity  |
| Increase integration of IT solutions into the NTSB's mission and administrative processes   |
| Obtain positive responses to FISMA, FOIA, and other oversight body reports  |
| Implement the NTSB Safety and Occupational Health Program   |
| Develop and implement a Strategic Hiring Plan   |
| Increase the percentage of employee participation in formal and informal development programs   |
| Implement diversity and inclusion organizational development activities   |

## ***Appendix II: Environmental Analysis***

### **Key Factors Affecting the Achievement of the Strategic Goals**

The NTSB's ability to achieve our strategic goals may be influenced by the changing balance of industry operations, other federal, state, and local government activities, national priorities, market forces, and resource availability. The following factors may affect the achievement of strategic goals for fiscal years 2013 to 2016:

- ❖ Challenges in achieving closure of significant recommendations.
- ❖ Retaining and recruiting staff with critical technical experience.
- ❖ Retirement or attrition of key personnel.
- ❖ Budgetary constraints, including fluctuations in appropriations.
- ❖ Emerging technologies that affect the NTSB's investigative process as well as its advocacy and outreach.

### **Evaluation and Planning Process**

The agency's approach to performance measure evaluation has helped drive the agency's overall planning process. Over the last 2 years, the planning process has been improved by the establishment of streamlined collection and reporting techniques. Overall, the agency has improved the selection and evaluation of our performance measures, resulting in measures that have been designated priorities for the agency and can be accomplished in 2 years or less. Our measures are more aligned with our strategic objectives in this strategic plan as well as our annual operating plan. This approach will continue into the future and will result in additional improvements to the evaluation of our planning process.

### **Consultation**

In developing this plan, the Board and staff have devoted significant time to coordinating and consulting with internal and external stakeholders. We gathered input during several stages of the process and developed a multi-staff level workgroup to revise and streamline the document. We also published a draft document in the *Federal Register* and posted it on our agency website for public and staff comment.