

Our first witness this morning will be Chairman Joseph J. O'Connell, Jr., National Transportation Safety Board, Department of Transportation.

Before there are any questions, we will have all of our panel give their testimony and then question the entire panel.

**STATEMENT OF JOSEPH J. O'CONNELL, JR., CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL
TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

Mr. O'CONNELL. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, we are delighted to appear before your committee this morning, and to provide you with whatever information we can that will be helpful to you in the consideration of problems called forcibly to your minds by recent aircraft accidents.

With your permission, Mr. Chairman, I would like first to indicate very generally how we have planned to make our original presentation this morning. If the way we propose to approach the problem does not meet with your approval, we will, of course, accommodate ourselves to your wishes.

It did appear to me, however, that an orderly initial presentation by us would facilitate your work. What I have in mind is to provide you initially with a fairly brief description of the process used by the National Transportation Safety Board in the investigation of aircraft accidents.

In this presentation I will indicate as well as I can the purposes which the process is intended to achieve and, generally, the extent to which we believe such purposes are being achieved. Following that, I will present you with a brief status report on the five commercial airline accidents which are actively under investigation by our board.

In this area, Mr. Chairman, you will recall that I gave you a progress report on three of them on the 7th of July, and what I have to say this morning will bring that report up to date and supplement it by a status report on the BAC-111 Mohawk Airlines accident and the most recent tragic accident near Asheville, N.C., last Wednesday.

Following that, Mr. B. R. Allen, Director of our Bureau of Aviation Safety, is prepared to give you a factual description of a Board field investigation of an aircraft accident as it actually unfolds. He intends to use the Asheville accident as an illustration and I am sure that you will be benefited by what he has to say in this regard.

Then, Mr. Allen will give you a very precise statement of what we now know about the Asheville accident. As you know, we are very actively engaged in investigating that accident as of this moment and I would have only one word of caution in connection with what Mr. Allen is prepared to say. That is, that while we will give you every bit of factual information known to us to be both uncontrovertible and relevant, we will not indulge in any type of speculation, or otherwise go beyond reporting the precise facts as we now understand them. I am sure that you gentlemen will understand the reason for this caveat.

The investigation of civil aircraft accidents is now the responsibility of the National Transportation Safety Board. This responsi-