

bility, with a staff of experienced air safety investigators, was recently transferred to us from the Civil Aeronautics Board under the provisions of the Department of Transportation Act, but the function had been exercised by the CAB from 1940 until the recent transfer to us.

The practice has always been to organize a team of experts in the various technical areas that might be involved in any such major accident, under the leadership of trained investigators representing the National Transportation Safety Board. After an exhaustive field investigation as the situation requires and permits, the Board schedules and holds a public hearing usually at or near the site of the accident.

At this stage of the process, all interested parties, such as the airline or airlines concerned; the Federal Aviation Administration; airline employees associations; airframe manufacturers; engine manufacturers; and any other possible interested parties, are active participants in adding to and thus developing a complete record of all the known or ascertainable facts.

Subsequent to such public hearing, the Board analyzes the record and other information known to it and issues a formal report as to the probable cause of the accident. Of course, as you know, this process is conducted entirely in the open, and as rapidly as facts are identified as uncontrovertible and relevant, beginning at the accident site, they are immediately made known to the interested parties to the investigation and are at the same time released to the news media and the public.

In fact, a major part of the constructive results which flow from accident investigations is the immediate putting to use for corrective purposes of all the information developed during the preliminary stages of the investigation or in the public hearing.

In connection with the point I have been making about the desirability of having an even and consistent flow of factual information available to all interested parties as rapidly as such facts have been clearly ascertained, the Board has recently adopted a change in its procedures to supplement this aspect of our operation.

We now plan to issue a summary statement of the facts as they have been developed in the hearing in each accident investigation in which a formal hearing is held, within 10 days after the hearing has been concluded. We initiated this revised procedure in the Lexington, Ky., air-taxi accident, and we intend to follow it in all subsequent cases.

Just a word as to our purpose in this regard. Although, as has been pointed out and as Mr. Allen will elaborate, our field investigations are held entirely in the open and with a large number of interested people privy to and contributing to the investigation, and even though, as I have said, some attempt has been made to release to the news media and the public—even from the scene of the accident—relevant facts as they become clear, the first time the general public has an opportunity to get a reasonably coherent picture of the accident is through the vehicle of the public hearing, which is normally held a month or two after the accident itself.

We have come to believe that while the public hearing affords those in the public interested enough to follow it an opportunity to learn the detail of the facts developed, such familiarity is for the most part