



March 23, 2005

Vice Admiral Joseph W. Dyer, USN (Ret)
Chair, Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Washington, DC 20546

Dear Admiral Dyer:

We thank the members of the Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel for the thoughtful recommendations made in the 2004 Third Quarterly Report. Listed below is NASA's response to the first four recommendations. NASA will provide the Panel with a response to the final recommendation on Independent Technical Authority (ITA) as soon as the ITA is fully implemented.

1. Exploration – Continue to emphasize safety as a centerpiece of the Exploration Program not only to protect people and valuable equipment but also to accelerate a renewed focus on safety across the spectrum from research and design through operations.

Response: The Exploration Systems Mission Directorate (ESMD) has continued to emphasize safety as a major consideration for all of its activities. The draft Statement of Work for the Crew Exploration Vehicle includes strong requirements for Safety and Mission Assurance (S&MA)--both as a specific area of functional expertise and as an embedded philosophy in all program activities. Exploration Systems has also emphasized safety in its technology development activities--for example, in fire suppression and detection and in environmental monitoring and control. Finally, the ESMD internal technical assessment organization continues to improve its capability as it builds staff and processes to support S&MA.

2. Aircraft Operations – Establish standardized procedures used by all NASA Centers to perform airworthiness certification.

Response: The Aircraft Management Office is currently updating NASA Procedural Requirement 7900 to include a more robust airworthiness process for the Agency. This new standard will include thresholds for conducting airworthiness reviews, data required for airworthiness certification, and technical competencies required to review airworthiness certifications for approval.

3. Aircraft Operations – Establish a standard aircraft incident and irregularity reporting system used across the Agency and share the lessons learned with aircraft operations at all the Centers.

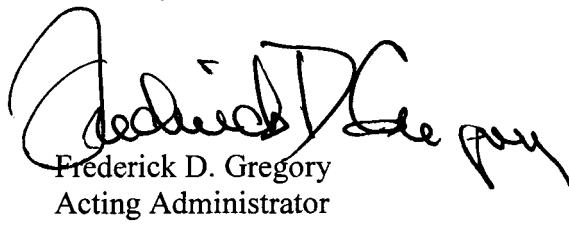
Response: The Aircraft Management Office and the Office of Safety and Mission Assurance are working on a plan to implement the Johnson Aircraft Anomaly Reporting System as the Agency’s aircraft reporting system. This system has been used by the Johnson Space Center’s Ellington Aircraft Operations Division for the past several years, with great success, by providing a system for capturing aircraft-related safety anomalies and for providing a forum for disseminating lessons learned to aircrew personnel.

4. Aircraft Operations – Identify “best practices” within NASA and other similar Government and industry aircraft operations and implement in the NASA aviation program. One best practice to consider is the commercial airline industry “Aerospace Safety Action Program.”

Response: Our biennial Intercenter Aircraft Operations Panel (IAOP) reviews of Center flight operations continue to highlight and share best practices within NASA. We have pursued, and will continue to pursue, other benchmarking opportunities as well. For example, the last NASA Aviation Safety Officer's Conference was held January 11-13, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia, to take advantage of an opportunity to benchmark Delta Airline's aviation safety program including their “Aerospace Safety Action Program.” The IAOP’s Aviation Safety Subpanel is currently reviewing ways to implement several best practices of the “Aerospace Safety Action Program” into the Agency’s Aviation Safety Program.

We look forward to working with the Panel in the future and appreciate your recommendations on how NASA can improve safety.

Cordially,



Frederick D. Gregory
Acting Administrator

cc:

Chief Safety and Mission Assurance Officer/Mr. O’Connor
Exploration Systems Mission Directorate/Adm. Steidle
Institutions and Management/Mr. Jennings
Chief Engineer/Mr. Geveden