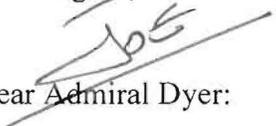


National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Office of the Administrator
Washington, DC 20546-0001



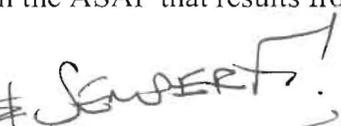
November 21, 2012

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


Dear Admiral Dyer:

Enclosed is NASA's response to a recommendation from the 2012 Third Quarterly Meeting of the Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel (ASAP). Please do not hesitate to contact me if the ASAP would like further background on the information provided in the enclosure.

I look forward to receiving continued advice from the ASAP that results from your important fact-finding and quarterly meetings.

Sincerely, 


Charles F. Bolden, Jr.
Administrator

Enclosure
2012-03-05 – Five-Year Roadmap for Continuous Improvement for the Agency's Mishap Investigation Process

Tracking Number 2012-03-05
Five-Year Roadmap for Continuous Improvement for the Agency's Mishap Investigation Process

Finding:

The Five-Year Roadmap is on track to deliver a product that will improve mishap investigation efficiency and quality with the exceptions of 1) addressing the details of the training and training process of Mishap Investigation Team (MIT) members and investigation board chairs, and 2) being tied to the lagging drug and alcohol testing policy development. The plan does a good job of addressing the time limits of the public release of the investigation report and the investigation endorsements and accounts for entities that will eventually be involved in commercial space missions.

Recommendation:

Link status reports of the five-year mishap investigations process plan with progress reports on the NASA drug and alcohol policy development. Also, continue to report on the training of the MIT and the investigation Board Chairs in greater detail to include the method, consistency, and quality of training for MIT members and Board Chairs.

Rationale:

It is necessary to have formal, high-quality, and consistent training. It can make the difference between a program that investigates mishaps and a program that makes a difference to the institution and carries lessons learned forward.

NASA Response:

NASA continues to work with the NASA Safety Center to develop a five-year strategic plan for improving mishap investigations. Realizing the importance of continual improvement processes, the document is very fluid and, although many changes are occurring rapidly, the strategic goals of increasing efficiency and improving quality in the current processes for investigating and reporting mishaps and close calls have not wavered. NASA will continue to report on the training of the mishap investigation teams and chairs as this develops.

NASA is determining the feasibility of developing a training module for the NASA Safety and Mission Assurance Technical Education Program (STEP) for training of mishap investigation teams and chairs, to be included in the STEP training program for standing Mishap Investigation Board (MIB) members. Most of the work is an ongoing effort. Determining the feasibility of developing a training module for STEP is an effort that will be budget driven. The Office of Safety and Mission Assurance (OSMA) will be working to have an understanding of this effort by the end of December 2012 with follow-on of the curriculum development.

NASA has also communicated with the U.S. Air Force Safety Training Center on the potential of sending junior and/or potential SES managers to their Board President's Course (AFSC 810) or the Naval Safety Center's Accident Board Chairman training course to have MIB Chairs trained. Starting at the beginning of FY 2013, OSMA will develop a dialogue with the Air Force Safety Training Center and the Naval Safety Center on sending potential MIB Chairs for training and

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will work with NASA's OHCM for the addition of such training for junior and potential SES managers.

With regard to the development of an Agency-wide alcohol testing policy, many NASA organizations are involved and are working diligently to understand the laws and limitations that must be taken into consideration in order to develop a legitimate, legal, and stable alcohol testing policy.

NASA determined that there were two different scenarios that needed to be evaluated with regard to alcohol testing: 1) alcohol testing for only civil service employees considered to be in Testing Designated Positions (TDPs) to determine cause in a post-mishap posture and 2) alcohol testing for contractor staff to determine cause in a post-mishap posture. All agree that the latter would be difficult because the legislative and procurement authorities do not exist and the action to revise or create policy in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) is a lengthy process.

Previously, NASA's Office of Human Capital Management had agreed to draft a NASA Policy Directive covering the Agency's policy on alcohol testing. After this decision was reached, legal representatives met and benchmarked other Federal agencies, specifically the Department of Transportation, to evaluate rulings and internal policies which drove alcohol testing. Through this activity, NASA determined that in order to test civil service personnel for alcohol, NASA would need to draft regulations and go through the CFR regulation process.

We will provide a comprehensive briefing of policies across NASA that address alcohol consumption, tools currently available to supervisors to address observations of impairment that may be caused by alcohol use, objective data that suggests that alcohol has not been a factor in a NASA mishap over a five-year period, and the policy issues and limitations associated with implementing this policy. After this briefing, NASA will provide a written update to ASAP.