

## National Transportation Safety Board

## § 831.11

(b)(2) of this section), and correspondence regardless of the date of their creation or modification, for the purpose of investigating an accident;

(6) Take possession of wreckage, records or other information if it determines such possession is necessary for an investigation; and

(7) Question any person having knowledge relevant to a transportation accident.

(b) *Subpoenas.* The NTSB may issue a subpoena, enforceable in Federal District Court, to obtain testimony or evidence related to an accident, including but not limited to personal electronic devices.

(1) The NTSB's authority to issue subpoenas includes access to medical records and specimens.

(2) For purposes of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), Public Law 104-191, and the regulations promulgated by the DHHS, 45 CFR 164.501 *et seq.*, the NTSB is a "public health authority" to which protected health information may be disclosed by a HIPAA "covered entity" without the prior written authorization of the subject of the records. In addition, the NTSB may issue a subpoena to gain access to such information.

(c) *Examination of evidence.* In accordance with 49 U.S.C. 1134(d), the NTSB has exclusive authority to decide timing, manner and method of testing and examination of evidence, and extraction of data.

### § 831.10 Autopsies and postmortem testing.

When a person dies as a result of having been involved in a transportation accident within the jurisdiction of the NTSB—

(a) The NTSB is authorized to obtain, with or without reimbursement, a copy of a report of autopsy performed by a State or local authority on such person.

(b) The NTSB may order an autopsy or other postmortem tests of any person as may be related to its investigation of a transportation accident. The IIC may direct that an autopsy or other test be performed if necessary for an investigation. Provisions of local law protecting religious beliefs with re-

spect to autopsies shall be observed to the extent they are consistent with the needs of the investigation.

### § 831.11 Parties to the investigation.

(a) *Participants.* (1) The IIC may designate one or more entities to serve as parties in an investigation. Party status is limited to those persons, Federal, state, or local government agencies and organizations whose employees, functions, activities, or products were involved in the accident and that can provide suitable qualified technical personnel to actively assist in an investigation. To the extent practicable, a representative proposed by party organizations to participate in the investigation may not be a person who had direct involvement in the accident under investigation.

(2) Except for the FAA, no entity has a right to participate in an NTSB investigation as a party.

(3) The participation of the Administrator of the FAA and other Federal entities in aviation accident investigations is addressed in § 831.21 of this part.

(4) Participants in an investigation (e.g., party representatives, party coordinators, and/or the larger party organization) must follow all directions and instructions from NTSB representatives. Party status may be revoked or suspended if a party fails to comply with assigned duties and instructions, withholds information, or otherwise acts in a manner prejudicial or disruptive to an investigation.

(b) *Prohibitions on serving as party representatives.* (1) In accordance with § 845.6 of this chapter, no party representative may occupy a legal position or be a person who also represents claimants or insurers.

(2) Failure to comply with these provisions may result in sanctions, including loss of party status.

(c) *Disclosures.* (1) The name of a party and its representative may be disclosed in documents the NTSB places in the public docket for the investigation.

(2) The NTSB may share information considered proprietary or confidential by one party with other parties during the course of an investigation, but will

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preserve the confidentiality of the information to the greatest extent possible.

(3) Section 831.6(d) of this part describes how the NTSB will handle voluntarily submitted safety information, and the NTSB's determination whether to share any such information. The NTSB will de-identify the source of such information when deciding to share it.

(d) *Party agreement.* Except for representatives of other Federal agencies, all party representatives must sign the "Statement of Party Representatives to NTSB Investigation" (Statement) upon acceptance of party status. Failure to timely sign the statement may result in sanctions, including loss of party status. Representatives of other Federal agencies, while not required to sign the Statement, will be provided notice of and must comply with the responsibilities and limitations set forth in the agreement.

(e) *Internal review by a party.* (1) To assure coordination of concurrent efforts, a party to an investigation that conducts or authorizes a review of its own processes and procedures as a result of an accident the NTSB is investigating, by signing the party agreement, agrees to, in a timely manner—

(i) Inform the IIC of the nature of the review; and

(ii) Provide the IIC with the findings from the review.

(2) If the findings from a review contain privileged information—

(i) The submitting party must inform the IIC that the review contains privileged information;

(ii) The submitting party must identify the privileged content at the time of submission to the IIC; and

(iii) The NTSB must, if informed that such information is being submitted, review the information for relevancy to the investigation, and determine whether public disclosure of the information is necessary for the investigation.

(3) The NTSB may use the protections described in § 831.6 of this part, as applicable, to protect certain findings from public disclosure.

(4) Investigations performed by other Federal agencies during an NTSB in-

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vestigation are addressed in § 831.5 of this part.

### § 831.12 Access to and release of wreckage, records, mail, and cargo.

(a) Only persons authorized by the NTSB IIC may be permitted access to wreckage, records, mail, or cargo.

(b) Wreckage, records, mail, and cargo in the NTSB's custody will be released when the NTSB determines it has no further need for such items. Recipients of released wreckage must sign an acknowledgement of release provided by the NTSB.

### § 831.13 Provision and dissemination of investigative information.

(a) *Applicability.* This section applies to:

(1) Information related to the accident or incident;

(2) Any information collected or compiled by the NTSB as part of its investigation, such as photographs, visual representations of factual data, physical evidence from the scene of the accident, interview statements, wreckage documentation, flight data and cockpit voice recorder information, and surveillance video; and

(3) Any information regarding the status of an investigation, or activities conducted as part of the investigation.

(b) *Provision of information.* All information described in paragraph (a) of this section and obtained by any person or organization participating in the investigation must be promptly provided to the NTSB, except where the NTSB authorizes the party to retain the information.

(c) *Release of information.* Parties are prohibited from releasing information obtained during an investigation at any time prior to the NTSB's public release of information unless the release is consistent with the following criteria:

(1) Information released at the scene of an accident—

(i) Is limited to factual information concerning the accident and the investigation released in coordination with the IIC; and

(ii) Will be made by the Board Member present at the scene as the official spokesperson for the NTSB. Additionally, the IIC or representatives from