

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries**EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2000 AMENDMENT**

Amendment by Pub. L. 106-181 applicable only to fiscal years beginning after Sept. 30, 1999, see section 3 of Pub. L. 106-181, set out as a note under section 106 of this title.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Except as otherwise specifically provided, section applicable only to fiscal years beginning after Sept. 30, 1996, and not to be construed as affecting funds made available for a fiscal year ending before Oct. 1, 1996, see section 3 of Pub. L. 104-264, set out as an Effective Date of 1996 Amendment note under section 106 of this title.

§ 1137. Authority of the Inspector General

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Inspector General of the Department of Transportation, in accordance with the mission of the Inspector General to prevent and detect fraud and abuse, shall have authority to review only the financial management, property management, and business operations of the National Transportation Safety Board, including internal accounting and administrative control systems, to determine compliance with applicable Federal laws, rules, and regulations.

(b) **DUTIES.**—In carrying out this section, the Inspector General shall—

(1) keep the Chairman of the Board and Congress fully and currently informed about problems relating to administration of the internal accounting and administrative control systems of the Board;

(2) issue findings and recommendations for actions to address such problems; and

(3) report periodically to Congress on any progress made in implementing actions to address such problems.

(c) **ACCESS TO INFORMATION.**—In carrying out this section, the Inspector General may exercise authorities granted to the Inspector General under subsections (a) and (c) of section 406 of title 5.

(d) **AUTHORIZATIONS OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—

(1) **FUNDING.**—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Transportation for use by the Inspector General of the Department of Transportation such sums as may be necessary to cover expenses associated with activities pursuant to the authority exercised under this section.

(2) **REIMBURSABLE AGREEMENT.**—In the absence of an appropriation under this subsection for an expense referred to in paragraph (1), the Inspector General and the Board shall have a reimbursable agreement to cover such expense.

(Added Pub. L. 106-424, §12(a), Nov. 1, 2000, 114 Stat. 1887; amended Pub. L. 109-443, §4, Dec. 21, 2006, 120 Stat. 3299; Pub. L. 117-286, §4(b)(96), Dec. 27, 2022, 136 Stat. 4353.)

Editorial Notes**AMENDMENTS**

2022—Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 117-286 substituted “subsections (a) and (c) of section 406 of title 5.” for “subsections (a) and (b) of section 6 of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.).”

2006—Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 109-443 amended heading and text of subsec. (d) generally. Prior to amendment, text read as follows: “The Inspector General shall be reimbursed by the Board for the costs associated with carrying out activities under this section.”

§ 1138. Evaluation and audit of National Transportation Safety Board

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—To promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in the administration of the programs, operations, and activities of the National Transportation Safety Board, the Comptroller General of the United States shall evaluate and audit the programs and expenditures of the Board. Such evaluation and audit shall be conducted as determined necessary by the Comptroller General or the appropriate congressional committees.

(b) **RESPONSIBILITY OF COMPTROLLER GENERAL.**—The Comptroller General shall evaluate and audit Board programs, operations, and activities, including—

(1) information management and security, including privacy protection of personally identifiable information;

(2) resource management;

(3) workforce development;

(4) procurement and contracting planning, practices and policies;

(5) the process and procedures to select an accident to investigate;

(6) the extent to which the Board follows leading practices in selected management areas; and

(7) the extent to which the Board addresses management challenges in completing accident investigations.

(c) **APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.**—For purposes of this section the term “appropriate congressional committees” means the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives.

(Added Pub. L. 109-443, §5(a), Dec. 21, 2006, 120 Stat. 3299; amended Pub. L. 113-188, title XV, §1502, Nov. 26, 2014, 128 Stat. 2025; Pub. L. 115-254, div. C, §1110, Oct. 5, 2018, 132 Stat. 3435; Pub. L. 118-63, title XII, §1221(a), May 16, 2024, 138 Stat. 1432.)

Editorial Notes**AMENDMENTS**

2024—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 118-63 substituted “expenditures of the” for “expenditures of the National Transportation Safety”.

2018—Subsec. (b)(5) to (7). Pub. L. 115-254, §1110(1), added par. (5) and redesignated former pars. (5) and (6) as (6) and (7), respectively.

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 115-254, §1110(2), inserted comma after “Science”.

2014—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 113-188 struck out “at least annually, but may be conducted” after “Such evaluation and audit shall be conducted”.

§ 1139. Assistance to passengers involved in rail passenger accidents and families of such passengers

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—As soon as practicable after being notified of a rail passenger accident with-

in the United States involving a rail passenger carrier and resulting in any loss of life, and for which the National Transportation Safety Board will serve as the lead investigative agency, the Chairman of the Board shall—

(1) designate and publicize the name and telephone number of a director of family support services who shall be an employee of the Board and shall be responsible for acting as a point of contact within the Federal Government for the families of passengers involved in the accident and a liaison between the rail passenger carrier and the families; and

(2) designate an independent nonprofit organization, with experience in disasters and post-trauma communication with families, which shall have primary responsibility for coordinating the emotional care, psychological care, and family support services of passengers involved in the accident and the families of such passengers.

(b) RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD.—The Board shall have primary Federal responsibility for—

(1) facilitating the recovery and identification of fatally injured passengers involved in an accident described in subsection (a); and

(2) communicating with the families of passengers involved in the accident as to the roles, with respect to the accident and the post-accident activities, of—

(A) the organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2);

(B) Government agencies; and

(C) the rail passenger carrier involved.

(c) RESPONSIBILITIES OF DESIGNATED ORGANIZATION.—The organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2) shall have the following responsibilities with respect to passengers involved in the accident and the families of such passengers:

(1) To provide emotional care, psychological care, and family support services, in coordination with the disaster response team of the rail passenger carrier involved.

(2) To take such actions as may be necessary to provide an environment in which the families may grieve in private.

(3) To meet with passengers involved in the accident and the families of such passengers who have traveled to the location of the accident, to contact the families unable to travel to such location, and to contact all passengers and affected families periodically thereafter until such time as the organization, in consultation with the director of family support services designated for the accident under subsection (a)(1), determines that further assistance is no longer needed.

(4) To arrange a suitable memorial service, in consultation with the passengers and families.

(d) PASSENGER LISTS.—

(1) REQUESTS FOR PASSENGER LISTS BY THE DIRECTOR OF FAMILY SERVICES.—

(A) REQUESTS BY DIRECTOR OF FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES.—It shall be the responsibility of the director of family support services designated for an accident under subsection (a)(1) to request, as soon as prac-

ticable, from the rail passenger carrier involved in the accident a passenger list, which is based on the best available information at the time of the request.

(B) USE OF INFORMATION.—The director of family support services may not release to any person information on a list obtained under subparagraph (A), except that the director may, to the extent the director considers appropriate, provide information on the list about a passenger to—

(i) the family of the passenger; or

(ii) a local, Tribal, State, or Federal agency responsible for determining the whereabouts or welfare of a passenger.

(C) LIMITATION.—A local, Tribal, State, or Federal agency may not release to any person any information obtained under subparagraph (B)(ii), except if given express authority from the director of family support services.

(D) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in subparagraph (C) shall be construed to preclude a local, Tribal, State, or Federal agency from releasing information that is lawfully obtained through other means independent of releases made by the director of family support services under subparagraph (B).

(2) REQUESTS FOR PASSENGER LISTS BY DESIGNATED ORGANIZATION.—

(A) REQUESTS BY DESIGNATED ORGANIZATION.—The organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2) may request from the rail passenger carrier involved in the accident a passenger list.

(B) USE OF INFORMATION.—The designated organization may not release to any person information on a passenger list but may provide information on the list about a passenger to the family of the passenger to the extent the organization considers appropriate.

(e) CONTINUING RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD.—In the course of its investigation of an accident described in subsection (a), the Board shall, to the maximum extent practicable, ensure that the families of passengers involved in the accident—

(1) are briefed, prior to any public briefing, about the accident and any other findings from the investigation; and

(2) are individually informed of and allowed to attend any public hearings and meetings of the Board about the accident.

(f) USE OF RAIL PASSENGER CARRIER RESOURCES.—To the extent practicable, the organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2) shall coordinate its activities with the rail passenger carrier involved in the accident to facilitate the reasonable use of the resources of the carrier.

(g) PROHIBITED ACTIONS.—

(1) ACTIONS TO IMPEDE THE BOARD.—No person (including a State or political subdivision thereof) may impede the ability of the Board (including the director of family support services designated for an accident under subsection (a)(1)), or an organization designated

for an accident under subsection (a)(2), to carry out its responsibilities under this section or the ability of passengers involved in the accident and the families of such passengers to have contact with one another.

(2) UNSOLICITED COMMUNICATIONS.—No unsolicited communication concerning a potential action or settlement offer for personal injury or wrongful death may be made by an attorney (including any associate, agent, employee, or other representative of an attorney) or any potential party to the litigation, including the railroad carrier or rail passenger carrier, to an individual (other than an employee of the rail passenger carrier) injured in the accident, or to a relative of an individual involved in the accident, before the 45th day following the date of the accident.

(3) PROHIBITION ON ACTIONS TO PREVENT CERTAIN CARE AND SUPPORT SERVICES.—No State or political subdivision thereof may prevent the employees, agents, or volunteers of an organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2) from providing emotional care, psychological care, and family support services under subsection (c)(1) in the 30-day period beginning on the date of the accident. The director of family support services designated for the accident under subsection (a)(1) may extend such period for not to exceed an additional 30 days if the director determines that the extension is necessary to meet the needs of the passengers and families and if State and local authorities are notified of the determination.

(h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) RAIL PASSENGER ACCIDENT.—The term “rail passenger accident” means any rail passenger disaster that—

- (A) results in any loss of life;
- (B) the Board will serve as the lead investigative agency for; and
- (C) occurs in the provision of—
 - (i) interstate intercity rail passenger transportation (as such term is defined in section 24102); or
 - (ii) high-speed rail (as such term is defined in section 26105) transportation, regardless of its cause or suspected cause.

(2) RAIL PASSENGER CARRIER.—The term “rail passenger carrier” means a rail carrier providing—

- (A) interstate intercity rail passenger transportation (as such term is defined in section 24102); or
- (B) interstate or intrastate high-speed rail (as such term is defined in section 26105) transportation,

except that such term does not include a tourist, historic, scenic, or excursion rail carrier.

(3) PASSENGER.—The term “passenger” includes—

- (A) an employee of a rail passenger carrier aboard a train;
- (B) any other person aboard the train without regard to whether the person paid for the transportation, occupied a seat, or held a reservation for the rail transportation; and

(C) any other person injured or killed in a rail passenger accident, as determined appropriate by the Board.

(4) PASSENGER LIST.—The term “passenger list” means a list based on the best available information at the time of the request, of the name of each passenger aboard the rail passenger carrier’s train involved in the accident. A rail passenger carrier shall use reasonable efforts, with respect to its unreserved trains, and passengers not holding reservations on its other trains, to ascertain the names of passengers aboard a train involved in an accident.

(i) LIMITATION ON STATUTORY CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section may be construed as limiting the actions that a rail passenger carrier may take, or the obligations that a rail passenger carrier may have, in providing assistance to the families of passengers involved in a rail passenger accident.

(j) RELINQUISHMENT OF INVESTIGATIVE PRIORITY.—

(1) GENERAL RULE.—This section (other than subsection (g)) shall not apply to a rail passenger accident if the Board has relinquished investigative priority under section 1131(a)(2)(B) and the Federal agency to which the Board relinquished investigative priority is willing and able to provide assistance to the victims and families of the passengers involved in the accident.

(2) BOARD ASSISTANCE.—If this section does not apply to a rail passenger accident because the Board has relinquished investigative priority with respect to the accident, the Board shall assist, to the maximum extent possible, the agency to which the Board has relinquished investigative priority in assisting families with respect to the accident.

(k) SAVINGS CLAUSE.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to abridge the authority of the Board or the Secretary of Transportation to investigate the causes or circumstances of any rail accident, including development of information regarding the nature of injuries sustained and the manner in which they were sustained for the purposes of determining compliance with existing laws and regulations or for identifying means of preventing similar injuries in the future, or both.

(Added Pub. L. 110-432, div. A, title V, §501(a), Oct. 16, 2008, 122 Stat. 4894; amended Pub. L. 114-94, div. A, title XI, §11316(a), Dec. 4, 2015, 129 Stat. 1676; Pub. L. 115-254, div. C, §1109(d), Oct. 5, 2018, 132 Stat. 3435; Pub. L. 118-63, title XII, §1215(c), May 16, 2024, 138 Stat. 1428.)

Editorial Notes

AMENDMENTS

2024—Pub. L. 118-63, §1215(c)(1), substituted “to passengers involved in rail passenger accidents and families of such passengers” for “to families of passengers involved in rail passenger accidents” in section catchline.

Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 118-63, §1215(c)(2), substituted “Board shall” for “National Transportation Safety Board shall” in introductory provisions.

Subsec. (a)(2). Pub. L. 118-63, §1215(c)(3), substituted “emotional care, psychological care, and family sup-

port services” for “emotional care and support” and “passengers involved in the accident and the families of such passengers” for “the families of passengers involved in the accident”.

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 118-63, § 1215(c)(4)(A), substituted “passengers involved in the accident and the families of such passengers” for “the families of passengers involved in the accident” in introductory provisions.

Subsec. (c)(1). Pub. L. 118-63, § 1215(c)(4)(B), substituted “emotional care, psychological care, and family support services” for “mental health and counseling services”.

Subsec. (c)(3). Pub. L. 118-63, § 1215(c)(4)(C), substituted “passengers involved in the accident and the families of such passengers who have traveled to the location of the accident” for “the families who have traveled to the location of the accident” and inserted “passengers and” before “affected families”.

Subsec. (c)(4). Pub. L. 118-63, § 1215(c)(4)(D), inserted “passengers and” before “families”.

Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 118-63, § 1215(c)(5), amended subsec. (d) generally. Prior to amendment, subsec. (d) related to requests for passenger lists and use of such information.

Subsec. (g)(1). Pub. L. 118-63, § 1215(c)(6)(A), substituted “passengers involved in the accident and the families of such passengers” for “the families of passengers involved in the accident”.

Subsec. (g)(3). Pub. L. 118-63, § 1215(c)(6)(B), in heading, substituted “prevent certain care and support” for “prevent mental health and counseling” and, in text, substituted “providing emotional care, psychological care, and family support services” for “providing mental health and counseling services” and inserted “passengers and” before “families”.

Subsec. (h)(1)(B). Pub. L. 118-63, § 1215(c)(7)(A), struck out “National Transportation Safety” before “Board”.

Subsec. (h)(4). Pub. L. 118-63, § 1215(c)(7)(B), added par. (4).

2018—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 115-254, § 1109(d)(1), substituted “resulting in any loss of life, and for which the National Transportation Safety Board will serve as the lead investigative agency” for “resulting in a major loss of life” in introductory provisions.

Subsec. (h)(1). Pub. L. 115-254, § 1109(d)(2), amended par. (1) generally. Prior to amendment, text read as follows: “The term ‘rail passenger accident’ means any rail passenger disaster resulting in a major loss of life occurring in the provision of—

“(A) interstate intercity rail passenger transportation (as such term is defined in section 24102); or

“(B) interstate or intrastate high-speed rail (as such term is defined in section 26105) transportation, regardless of its cause or suspected cause.”

2015—Subsec. (a)(1). Pub. L. 114-94, § 11316(a)(1), substituted “telephone number” for “phone number”.

Subsec. (a)(2). Pub. L. 114-94, § 11316(a)(2), substituted “post-trauma communication with families” for “post trauma communication with families”.

Subsec. (j). Pub. L. 114-94, § 11316(a)(3), substituted “rail passenger accident” for “railroad passenger accident” in pars. (1) and (2).

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2015 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 114-94 effective Oct. 1, 2015, see section 1003 of Pub. L. 114-94, set out as a note under section 5313 of Title 5, Government Organization and Employees.

ESTABLISHMENT OF TASK FORCE

Pub. L. 110-432, div. A, title V, § 503, Oct. 16, 2008, 122 Stat. 4899, provided that:

“(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary [of Transportation], in cooperation with the National Transportation Safety Board, organizations potentially designated under section 1139(a)(2) of title 49, United States Code, rail passenger carriers (as defined in sec-

tion 1139(h)(2) of title 49, United States Code), and families which have been involved in rail accidents, shall establish a task force consisting of representatives of such entities and families, representatives of rail passenger carrier employees, and representatives of such other entities as the Secretary considers appropriate.

“(b) MODEL PLAN AND RECOMMENDATIONS.—The task force established pursuant to subsection (a) shall develop—

“(1) a model plan to assist rail passenger carriers in responding to passenger rail accidents;

“(2) recommendations on methods to improve the timeliness of the notification provided by passenger rail carriers to the families of passengers involved in a passenger rail accident;

“(3) recommendations on methods to ensure that the families of passengers involved in a passenger rail accident who are not citizens of the United States receive appropriate assistance; and

“(4) recommendations on methods to ensure that emergency services personnel have as immediate and accurate a count of the number of passengers onboard the train as possible.

“(c) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act [Oct. 16, 2008], the Secretary shall transmit a report to the House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation containing the model plan and recommendations developed by the task force under subsection (b).”

§ 1140. Information individuals¹ involved in accidents and families of such individuals

In the course of an investigation of an accident described in section 1131(a)(1), except an aircraft accident described in section 1136 or a rail passenger accident described in section 1139, the Board may, to the maximum extent practicable, ensure that individuals involved in accidents and the families of such individuals, and other individuals the Board deems appropriate—

(1) are informed as to the roles, with respect to the accident and the post-accident activities, of the Board;

(2) are briefed, before any public briefing, about the accident, its causes, and any other findings from the investigation; and

(3) are individually informed of and allowed to attend any public hearings and meetings of the Board about the accident.

(Added Pub. L. 115-254, div. C, § 1109(e)(1), Oct. 5, 2018, 132 Stat. 3435; amended Pub. L. 118-63, title XII, § 1215(e), May 16, 2024, 138 Stat. 1430.)

Editorial Notes

AMENDMENTS

2024—Pub. L. 118-63 substituted “individuals involved in accidents and families of such individuals” for “for families of individuals involved in accidents” in section catchline and “individuals involved in accidents and the families of such individuals” for “the families of individuals involved in the accident” in introductory provisions in text.

SUBCHAPTER IV—ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES

§ 1151. Aviation enforcement

(a) CIVIL ACTIONS BY BOARD.—The National Transportation Safety Board may bring a civil

¹ So in original. Probably should be preceded by “for”.