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Res. No. 1659

Resolution calling upon the Federal Aviation Administration to issue an expeditious response to the findings of the Aging Transport Systems Rulemaking Advisory Council concerning the crash of TWA Flight 800 and the maintenance of aging airplane systems including electric wiring and cables.

By Council Members Stabile, Malave-Dilan and Freed; also Council Members Foster, Leffler, Nelson, O'Donovan, Rivera, Robinson and Golden

Whereas, The sudden crash of TWA Flight 800 on July 17, 1996 near East Moriches, New York took the lives of 230 persons and caused widespread concern about the safety of aging aircraft; and
Whereas, The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has concluded a far reaching and painstaking investigation into the procedures that might prevent such a crash and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is nearing a conclusion; and
Whereas, The NTSB unanimously adopted findings on August 23, 2000 that the crash was caused by "an explosion of the center wing fuel tank" and while the source of "ignition energy for the explosion could not be determined with certainty," the most likely possibility "was a short circuit outside the center wing tank that allowed excessive voltage to enter it through electrical wiring associated with the fuel quantity indication system;" and
Whereas, The NTSB's approach was to seek the exact cause of the accident, and in addition to give its attention to the more comprehensive task of determining potential causes in order that all the hazards might be mitigated; and
Whereas, The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) used a similar approach and on October 1, 1998 sought comprehensive revisions of its Aging Transport Non-Structural Systems Plan by enhancing the standards governing the maintenance and replacement of airplane systems including wires and cables; and
Whereas, The NTSB in its findings concluded that an industry-wide problem existed and that the wiring system of the Boeing 747-131 that crashed "was maintained in accordance with prevailing accepted industry practices" and concluded that "until recently, insufficient attention" was being paid to the condition of aircraft electrical wiring resulting "in potential safety hazards;" and
Whereas, A survey of six older aircraft in commercial service revealed, according to a Newsday Article "FAA Ponders Age Limits on Wiring" published on October 12, 2000, that there were two to five cases of damaged insulation for every thousand feet of wiring; and
Whereas, As part of its response to this crash and its investigative findings, the FAA is now examining a report by a committee of experts called the Aging Transport Systems Rulemaking Advisory Council; and
Whereas, Experts and members of the public have voiced the opinion that wire and cable systems should be taken out of service after a specified period of time; and
Whereas, Other experts believe that the widespread damage to wiring has causes other than normal wear and tear; and
Whereas, Under this alternative view, the damage to wiring is attributed to ill-considered maintenance procedures that led to chafing of the insulation and the exposure of the naked wires and cables; and
Whereas, Even if the wiring were replaced after a specified time, the insulation would be breached if the old maintenance procedures were used; and
Whereas, In one of its findings, the NTSB called on the FAA to improve training of maintenance personnel to ensure adequate recognition and

repair of potentially unsafe wiring conditions; and
Whereas, The FAA is now in a position to issue new rules; now, therefore, be it
Resolved that the Federal Aviation Administration issue an expeditious response to the findings of the Aging Transport Systems Rulemaking Advisory Council concerning the crash of TWA Flight 800 and the maintenance of aging airplane systems including electric wiring and cables.

12/7/00
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