National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Office of the Chairman

OCT 08 2010

The Honorable David L. Strickland
Chairman, Federal Interagency Committee on
Emergency Medical Services, and
Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. Strickland:

Thank you for the Federal Interagency Committee on Emergency Medical Services' (FICEMS) March 17, 2010, letter to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) regarding Safety Recommendations A-09-102 and -103, stated below. During calendar year 2008, the deadliest year on record for the helicopter emergency medical services (HEMS) industry, there were 12 HEMS accidents, 8 of which were fatal, and a total of 29 fatalities. Consequently, the NTSB conducted a 4-day public hearing to critically examine safety issues concerning this industry.

A-09-102

> Develop national guidelines for the use and availability of helicopter emergency medical transport by regional, state, and local authorities during emergency medical response system planning.

Your letter indicated that, through a cooperative agreement between the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and Children's National Medical Center (CNMC), FICEMS is conducting a pilot test of the National Evidence-based Guideline Model Process to develop evidence-based clinical guidelines for the helicopter transport of trauma patients at the state level. The NTSB notes that, before the guidelines are broadened to address regional and local authorities, CNMC intends to first use these guidelines to (1) develop, implement, and evaluate a helicopter transport protocol for the state of Maryland and (2) assist the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and NHTSA in developing national mode of transport guidelines, as recommended in Safety Recommendation A-09-103. The NTSB also notes that the CDC and NHTSA intend to use the information gathered from these efforts, as well as input from national HEMS stakeholder organizations, to develop national guidelines for regional, state, and local authorities during emergency medical response system planning. The NTSB believes that this plan partially addresses Safety Recommendation A-09-103; however, in order to fully satisfy this recommendation, the guidelines need to address all types of helicopter emergency medical transport requests.

ES10-007195

The NTSB requests that FICEMS provide periodic updates on progress made to address these efforts. Pending our review of the completed national guidelines, Safety Recommendation A-09-102 is classified "Open—Acceptable Response."

A-09-103

Develop national guidelines for the selection of appropriate emergency transportation modes for urgent care.

The NTSB notes that a panel will be formed to develop national mode-of-transport guidelines and, using the evidence-based guidelines that were developed in response to Safety Recommendation A-09-102, representatives from the CDC and the HEMS stakeholder community will develop the national guidelines that the NTSB has recommended. Pending our review of these completed national guidelines, Safety Recommendation A-09-103 is classified "Open—Acceptable Response."

Sincerely,

Deborah A.P. Hersman
Chairman

cc: Ms. Linda Lawson, Director
Office of Safety, Energy, and Environment
Office of Transportation Policy