



National
Transportation
Safety Board

Importance of Safety-Focused Highway Crash Investigations

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Personal Journey



"Learning from Tragedy"



“Learning from Tragedy”



Mission: Prevention of Future Crashes



The NTSB is an independent federal agency, charged by Congress to investigate transportation accidents, determine the probable cause, and issue safety recommendations to **prevent** their recurrence.

NTSB

Aviation Investigations Aimed Toward Prevention of Future Crashes

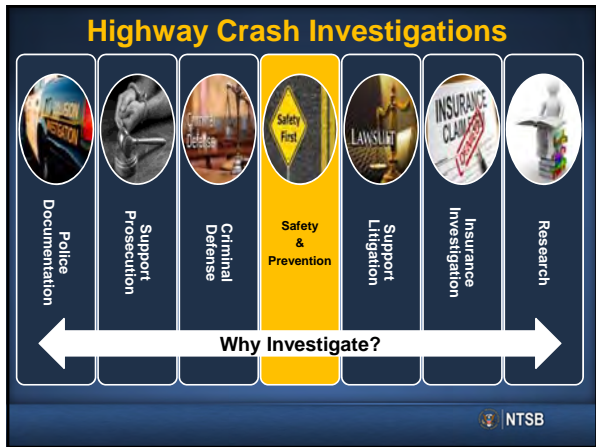


*“The sole purpose of the investigation of an accident or incident shall be the **prevention** of accidents and incidents.”*

ICAO Annex 13, Paragraph 3.1

NTSB





First NTSB Highway Crash Investigation Joliet, Illinois (August 12, 1967)

Finding: “. . . Accident investigations conducted by State and local authorities are enforcement oriented, and on that account fail to develop data necessary to support accident prevention activities.”

Recommendation to FHWA: Develop corps of investigators whose focus is prevention.

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Purpose of Accident Investigations: Prevention



What's Happening with Most Highway Crash Investigations?

Documenting? or Investigating?
Who?, What?, When?
and How?

Determining Root Causes
to find out Why?

Checking the Box? or Solving the Puzzle?

The slide features a central graphic with two parts. On the left is a grid of several accident report forms, some with handwritten entries. On the right is a 3D puzzle with several colorful pieces (red, blue, green, yellow, purple) that are missing, leaving a gap. The NTSB logo is at the bottom right.

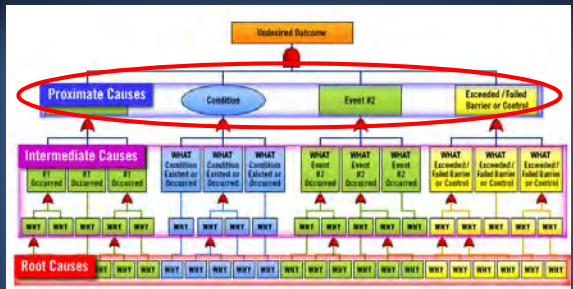
Why Investigate?

Without understanding the cause, how can you fix the problem? How can you learn from it?

- Prevent a repeat of the same type of crash
- Identify and eliminate hazards (human, vehicle and environment)
- Affect necessary changes to safety programs
- Improve the quality of data
- Determine the truth for victims and families
- Restore public confidence

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Crash Investigators Need to Ask Why?



www.nsc.nasa.gov/RCAT

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Crash Investigators Need to Ask Why?



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Crash Investigators Need to Ask Why?



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Crash Investigators Need to Ask Why?

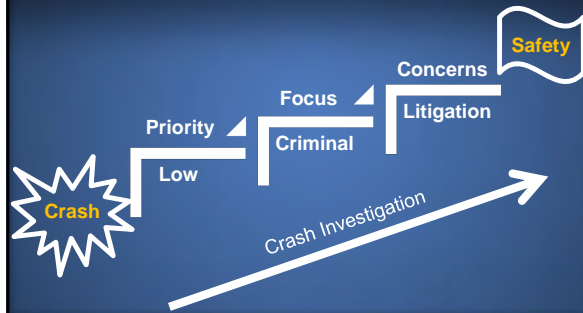


OR

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Challenges to Safety- Focused Investigations



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Vision Zero

International Safety-Focused Investigations



Sweden: Detailed investigations of all fatal crashes



Germany: German In-Depth Accident Study (GIDAS)



Norway: NPRA Accident Study Groups
Notification of all fatal crashes



Ireland: Collision Prevention Program
Traffic Safety Teams

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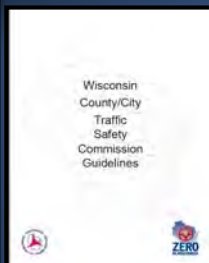
Vision Zero Action Plans U.S. Safety-Focused Investigations



- Multi-disciplinary Rapid Response Team responds to every fatal crash
- Task force studies the crash and recommends:
 - Street design changes
 - Judicial or legislative follow-up
 - Required community outreach



Vision Zero Action Plans U.S. Safety-Focused Investigations



- County Traffic Safety Commission
- Required by WI statute (83.013)
- Public meetings held quarterly
- Membership: LE, DOT, Medical, Legal, Education, etc.
- Review of traffic crash spot maps
- Review of serious/fatal crash reports
- Safety recommendation development

<http://wisconsindot.gov/Documents/safety/education/frms-pubs/tsc-booklet.pdf>

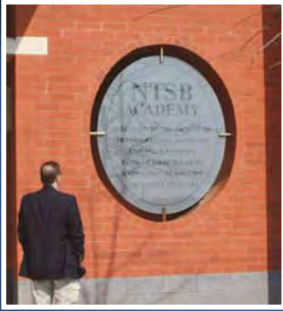


Presentation Summary

- Crash investigation is an underutilized safety tool
- Crash investigations need to be more safety-focused
- Crash investigations should look beyond the “human”
- Some jurisdictions use crash investigation effectively as part of their local Vision Zero strategy
- All Vision Zero Action plans should incorporate safety- focused crash investigations into strategy



Crash Investigators = Lifesavers



“From Tragedy
We Draw
Knowledge
to Improve the
Safety of Us All”

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