

6th Annual FAA International Aviation Safety Forum
Sept. 10, 2009
Washington, D.C.

Remarks by Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood

- Welcome to Washington!
- Many thanks to those of you who have traveled from Latin America, Europe, Asia and elsewhere, for taking time to participate this week.
- I want to thank Secretary General Benjamin for so clearly stating many of the important objectives we share.
- We at DOT and the FAA certainly agree that sharing safety-related information, improving transparency and data collection, and fostering global cooperation are critical to success for all of us.
- I also want to thank Randy Babbitt for leading the FAA during very challenging times. We are extremely fortunate to have such a knowledgeable, experienced, and innovative Administrator.
- I think everyone in this room can agree that even though business may have slowed down, our focus on safety cannot waiver. And our commitment to promoting a safety culture throughout the industry must remain strong.
- I want to highlight the actions we're taking at the U.S. Department of Transportation, both to strengthen our safety programs and policies domestically and help promote safe skies around the world, with our partners.
- First, the home front.
- While the United States enjoys one of the best aviation safety records in the world, we know we can – and should – do even better.
- The Obama Administration, Congress, and the flying public expect no less of us.
- We are moving aggressively to become more proactive, and less reactive, when mistakes and accidents happen.
- We're not waiting for investigators to issue a report. Instead, we're reaching out to the industry, and to experts, to identify areas where we can quickly improve.
- To make that happen, FAA recently held a series of 12 safety forums around the country, bringing carriers and labor unions together to candidly discuss our shared safety challenges and brainstorm effective ways to address the challenges we face.
- I think it was a great success. The meetings generated a lot of ideas for us to consider.
- Meanwhile, we're making progress on our overall safety agenda.
- We're reviewing a new proposed rule to address pilot fatigue, which is a high priority for us. We're going to move this along as quickly as possible, so that we can implement new flight times and rest rules that will lead to better, and more consistent, pilot performance.

- We're also evaluating new pilot training requirements. We want to see a greater use of cockpit simulation technology and closer supervision, among other changes.
- As part of the FAA's new pilot inspection plan, we're going to collect more data on pilot training programs and do more to track pilots with performance problems, so they may be offered additional training.
- I want to mention three key legislative provisions Congress has proposed in the FAA reauthorization bill that will likely affect safety policies of U.S. carriers and their workforce.
- First, there may be a requirement that air carriers more thoroughly examine FAA pilot records before hiring.
- Second, with respect to the Flight Operations Quality Assurance program: Major carriers would be required to analyze the safety information contained in flight data recorders on individual aircraft.
- And third, pilots would be required to disclose safety problems as part of their Aviation Safety Action Program. This will help everyone to more effectively and efficiently identify actions needed to resolve safety issues.
- Today, these are all voluntary compliance issues. But we're urging carriers to get out front, and make the investments and changes necessary to meet these possible mandates.
- Now let me turn to our work with the international community.
- Commercial flight is an increasingly global activity, with significant growth expected in Asia, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere, as the economy recovers.
- As we all know, safety must span geographic or political borders. And so we must reach agreement on core safety practices, as the industry continues to expand worldwide.
- For example, our Safe Skies for Africa program has provided technical assistance and training for over 600 aviation officials from African Countries, and continues to do so today.
- Some of the beneficiaries of this assistance are with us here today.
- We believe there is real value in working together to identify the best safety practices, share more data on safety trends, and identify the human and technology factors that contribute to accidents, so that we may all do better.
- International support for a strong safety culture is more important than ever, as we move ahead with our Open Skies partnerships.
- These bilateral agreements are very good for the flying public and for spurring growth in the industry.
- I'm pleased to tell you that this fall, the U.S. will have a new round of Open Skies negotiations with Japan. We'll also continue talks with the European Union on expanding our Open Skies agreement.
- I also want to mention that we are making progress to accelerate and implement NextGen – the next generation air transportation system.
- This is a high priority for the Obama Administration.

- FAA is preparing to enter into a new agreement with the air traffic controllers union that will provide greater flexibility for putting NextGen technologies in place.
- As you may know, NextGen will give controllers and pilots the same view of the air traffic system.
- We're confident this will improve situational awareness and safety in the long-run.
- In addition, we are working within the ICAO framework to build consensus so NextGen and comparable systems in Europe and Asia are not only environmentally sustainable, but also able to move safety forward.
- I believe very strongly that each of us bears a personal and professional responsibility to make flying as safe an experience as it can possibly be.
- And I believe that our combined efforts to tackle our safety challenges will be good for business, for pilots, for regulators, and for travelers.
- I want to see business and labor and pilots come together on safety.
- And I want to see carriers around the world, and their governments, come together to create a more level playing field for safety practices.
- Your presence here today suggests we are heading in the right direction.
- I encourage all of you to keep up the hard work, and listen and learn from your colleagues.
- Thank you.