

NTSB Chief Promotes 21st Century Aviation Safety Toolkit



The safety investigator's role has changed significantly over the past 15 years and investigators cannot use 20th century techniques to investigate 21st century accidents, **NTSB chairman Deborah Hersman** told last month's **International Society of Air Safety Investigators (ISASI)** seminar in Baltimore.

"Today, there are four major tools in aviation safety's 21st century toolkit: continued emphasis on **forensics, data collection and analysis, new and emerging technologies and, to be sure, international cooperation.**" Forensics helps investigators learn to become less reactive and more predictive by evaluating incidents against what might happen across the rest of the fleet. Another tool is data, the basis for today's safety management systems (SMS).

Hersman said the NTSB's goal is to ensure it does more than simply gather numbers. "We don't want to become information rich and knowledge poor," she stated. "We need to know the right questions to ask. And just as important is knowing what we don't know."

Investigators must also continue to exploit new sources of information, such as "non-volatile memory and new tools such as geographic information systems." Non-volatile memory retains information even if system power is cut off. "The last tool is perhaps one of the most effective: our counterparts and colleagues," said Hersman. "We must continue to help each other and share what we know. Our professional relationships lead to improved collaboration, better understanding and more effective recommendations."

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