

## Aviation Group Client Update

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### **NTSB ISSUES RECOMMENDATIONS TO FAA FOR IMPROVING IN-FLIGHT FIRE SAFETY ABOARD CARGO AIRCRAFT**

On [November 28, 2012](#), the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) issued three recommendations to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for improvements to in-flight fire safety on cargo aircraft in the following areas: (1) early detection requirements; (2) cargo container standards; and (3) active fire suppression systems. NTSB recommendations are not binding on the FAA, although the FAA does take action on many of the NTSB's recommendations, including those requiring the development of new technology.

Over a period of six years, the NTSB investigated three fire-related accidents involving cargo aircraft. The first accident occurred on February 7, 2006, when United Parcel Service (UPS) Flight 1307 was forced to land in Philadelphia after the crew reported a cargo smoke indication. Two crewmembers were treated for minor smoke inhalation, but the aircraft was substantially damaged. The second incident occurred on September 3, 2010 when UPS Flight 6 crashed nine miles outside of the Dubai International Airport. The NTSB found that the crewmembers had just two and a half minutes between the time the fire was detected and critical systems failure. The two flight crewmembers were killed and the aircraft was destroyed. Finally, on July 28, 2011, Asiana Cargo operated Flight 991 crashed, killing both crewmembers and destroying the airplane.

In August 2011, NTSB investigators conducted cargo container fire tests in an effort to better understand the characteristics of cargo fires, the threats they impose, and whether current fire protection strategy is sufficient to address those threats. The NTSB found that current FAA regulations do not adequately address fire protection issues unique to cargo aircraft. The fire protection regulations are the same for cargo aircraft as they are for all transport category aircraft. These regulations limit the flammability of construction materials used in cargo compartments and specify minimum fire resistance requirements for cargo compartment liners. However, there is limited regulation regarding fire protection for cargo containers. The selection of materials used to construct cargo containers does not prohibit the use of highly combustible materials.

In order to address these issues and improve fire safety aboard cargo aircraft, the NTSB made three recommendations to the FAA:

- Develop fire detection system performance requirements for the early detection of fires originating within cargo containers and pallets and, once developed, implement the new requirements. (A-12-68)

- Ensure that cargo container construction materials meet with the same flammability requirements as all other cargo compartment materials in accordance with 14 CFR 25.855. (A-12-69)
- Require the installation and use of active fire suppression systems in all aircraft cargo compartments or containers, or both, such that fires are not allowed to develop. (A-12-70)

Please contact our office for additional information or questions regarding the NTSB recommendations.

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