



NATCA Air Safety Investigations

What to Expect During NTSB Investigations

Quick Reference Guide for Facility Representatives and their Designees.

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WHAT TO EXPECT DURING NTSB INVESTIGATIONS

This guide is intended to serve NATCA Facility Representatives and their designees prior to the NTSB conducting an investigation within their facility. It is created in chronological order of a typical NTSB investigation.

- 1. The NTSB decides to launch an investigation to determine probable cause. They notify AJI-12 (Quality Assurance Group) who notifies NATCA ASI Chair. NATCA requests party status which is generally approved by the NTSB.**
- 2. The NATCA ASI Chairman will assign an ASI to the investigation once granted party status. Since they are the regulator, the FAA has party status by default. All others on the ATC group must request party status based on what value they add to the investigation. It is not uncommon to have NTSB meteorologists or experts in human factors as part of the investigation.**
- 3. Keep in mind ASIs serve as subject matter experts to the NTSB and have signed a non-disclosure agreement. Any breach of data, collusion, or compromise could result in NATCA's loss of party status.**
- 4. Once the NTSB team (including the FAA designee and the NATCA ASI) arrives, the facility conducts an in-brief. The meeting typically includes the facility manager, Facrep, QC manager, Training manager, and an OM. An FAA lawyer may also be present during the in-brief. Typically the meeting consists of a narrative, review of all media and recordings, and any corrective action the facility may have initiated. The Facrep or designee should request to be present for the in-brief.**
- 5. The facility will disclose any and all information pertinent to the event including but not limited to:**
 - a. Facility Logs**
 - b. Recordings (ERAM, Falcon, audio, etc)**
 - c. Training folders**
 - d. Refresher training materials**
 - e. Weather products from CWU**
 - f. Orders, References, SOP, and Letters of Agreement**
- 6. The FAA will provide a guided tour of the facility. During such, the NTSB group may ask questions.**
- 7. The FAA AJI-12 conducts pre-briefs with all who will be interviewed by the NTSB. An FAA lawyer may be present while the pre-brief takes place. During such, a comprehensive review of the event takes place directly before the NTSB interview. They will likely play video and audio recordings to refresh memory and ask a series of questions related to the event. These are Weingarten meetings and should be conducted accordingly with a rep.**

- 8. After the pre-brief with FAA AJI-12, the NTSB will proceed with interviews. The primary goal of the interview is to gather factual information. The controller will be offered a representative for the NTSB interview. Be sure the interviewee knows to ask for a NATCA representative. The NATCA ASI does not rep the controller, but serves as a SME to the NTSB. Contact your RVP or NATCA ASI Chairman if you have questions or concerns.**
- 9. During questioning, expect the NTSB to ask about employment history, if they have a valid medical, restrictions, shift schedule, fatigue, distractions, etc. Then they will ask the controller to discuss the event as they recall. Once the NTSB has completed initial questioning, they allow the other parties (generally NATCA and the FAA) to ask questions. Afterwards, the NTSB may ask follow up questions and summarize the interview. The interviews are a bit awkward as everyone is writing and/or typing notes as voice recordings of the interview are prohibited. At any point, the interviewee or the rep may request a break to discuss matters outside the room. The NTSB group may also take a break during the middle of an interview.**
- 10. Generally, the NTSB will also interview the FLM, QC manager, the OM, and anyone else that may have valuable information about the event. When an FAA manager is interviewed, they typically have an FAA lawyer representing them during the questioning.**
- 11. Once interviews are completed, the NTSB workgroup reviews all notes and ensures they are accurate. All members of the ATC workgroup come to a consensus on the validity of the field notes.**
- 12. On the last day of the investigation, the NTSB may provide an out-brief to the facility where they discuss the workgroup findings and may also provide suggestions to the facility. It is normal to conduct the briefing with a telcon which may include senior FAA management. It is also possible that the out-brief will be conducted via telcon a few days after the on-site visit. Whenever possible, the NATCA facility representative should be present for this meeting.**
- 13. Once the telcon is complete, there are usually more candid, informal discussions about the findings, probable cause, and suggestions to the concerned facilities. The NTSB final report will normally take a year to complete. In the event that a party member disagrees with the NTSB report, they may submit a dissenting opinion that expresses their position on the findings.**