



Kickoff to “Turn Off Distractions, Tune In to Safety” Campaign a Huge Success (3/29/2013)

NATCA and the FAA are asking everyone in the operational environment to “Turn Off” distractions and “Tune In” to safety. The kickoff to this educational and awareness campaign, at Communicating for Safety earlier this month, was met by an overwhelmingly positive response from CFS attendees.

The campaign even got a strong endorsement from National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Chairman Deborah Hersman during her keynote remarks on March 5 in which she praised NATCA members for their “dedication to excellence.”

“I’ll start with NATCA’s new “Turn Off, Tune In” anti-distraction campaign,” she said before addressing NATCA President Paul Rinaldi directly. “Paul, I appreciate your leadership on this issue. At the NTSB, we’ve seen the deadliness of distraction in all modes of transportation. We’ve investigated accidents caused by distracted truck and bus drivers, by distracted mariners, by distracted locomotive engineers, and by distracted drivers of personal vehicles.

“Distraction is a serious problem, which is only going to get worse as more and more devices and electronic options compete for our attention.”

To encourage people to “turn off and tune in” in all modes of transportation, Hersman added, the NTSB placed “eliminate distraction in transportation” on its 2013 Most Wanted List. That helped spark NATCA and the FAA to form a workgroup to proactively address and explore the issue and undertake an awareness campaign to eliminate distractions.

CFS was a natural place to start the campaign, with its emphasis on professional standards. A booth in the exhibition area was devoted to both professional standards and workplace distractions. CFS attendees were invited to come and talk to workgroup members, learn about the impact of distractions and take this pledge:

No text message, email, website or distraction is worth the risk of endangering the lives of the flying public and/or compromising the safety of the NAS. I pledge to eliminate distractions in the operational area. Together we can Turn Off Distractions and Tune In to Safety.

The level of commitment to professionalism by those in attendance energized NATCA National Professional Standards Representative and distractions workgroup member Garth Koleszar .

“I am so proud to be a part of a profession that is so committed and dedicated to not only maintaining safety, but that also actively pursues ways to continue to improve it,” Koleszar said. “The feedback and involvement of everyone at this conference regarding the importance of professionalism is incredible. The continued education and awareness regarding the importance of reducing distractions in

the workplace is another important piece in our efforts maintain and improve professionalism.”

Workgroup member Robert Vaughan, Front Line Manager at Philadelphia Tower and TRACON and the Independence District Supervisor’s Committee (SUPCOM) Chair, helped staff the booth and came away very impressed by the rollout of the campaign and the feedback he received.

“I was excited to represent SUPCOM as a member of this workgroup,” he said. “Unveiling ‘Turn Off, Tune In,’ at Communicating for Safety was the perfect venue. Response from both union members and management alike was overwhelmingly positive. This group has once again proven the power of a collaborative team with the quality and professionalism of the products developed.”

Workgroup member and NATCA Facility Representative at Tucson TRACON, Michael Ragucci, said the support they received at CFS was “nothing less than overwhelming.”

“I was truly inspired by my brothers and sisters, colleagues and invited guests who once again demonstrated their passion for safety to our profession,” he said. “Every individual that approached our booth immediately engaged in productive dialogue. They were more than willing to take our distractions pledge and to bring back our message to their respective facilities.”

Ragucci relayed some of the feedback received at the booth:

“The message and concept is so easy ... The difficult part is getting folks to understand the dangers of distractions.”

“This campaign is great. I fully support this and will do my part.”