

accident described in subsection (a), the Board shall, to the maximum extent practicable, ensure that the families of passengers involved in the accident—

(1) are briefed, prior to any public briefing, about the accident, its causes, and any other findings from the investigation; and

(2) are individually informed of and allowed to attend any public hearings and meetings of the Board about the accident.

(f) **USE OF AIR CARRIER RESOURCES.**—To the extent practicable, the organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2) shall coordinate its activities with the air carrier or foreign air carrier involved in the accident so that the resources of the carrier can be used to the greatest extent possible to carry out the organization's responsibilities under this section.

(g) **PROHIBITED ACTIONS.**—

(1) **ACTIONS TO IMPEDE THE BOARD.**—No person (including a State or political subdivision) may impede the ability of the Board (including the director of family support services designated for an accident under subsection (a)(1)), or an organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2), to carry out its responsibilities under this section or the ability of the families of passengers involved in the accident to have contact with one another.

(2) **UNSOLICITED COMMUNICATIONS.**—In the event of an accident involving an air carrier providing interstate or foreign air transportation and in the event of an accident involving a foreign air carrier that occurs within the United States, no unsolicited communication concerning a potential action for personal injury or wrongful death may be made by an attorney (including any associate, agent, employee, or other representative of an attorney) or any potential party to the litigation to an individual injured in the accident, or to a relative of an individual involved in the accident, before the 45th day following the date of the accident.

(3) **PROHIBITION ON ACTIONS TO PREVENT MENTAL HEALTH AND COUNSELING SERVICES.**—No State or political subdivision thereof may prevent the employees, agents, or volunteers of an organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2) from providing mental health and counseling services under subsection (c)(1) in the 30-day period beginning on the date of the accident. The director of family support services designated for the accident under subsection (a)(1) may extend such period for not to exceed an additional 30 days if the director determines that the extension is necessary to meet the needs of the families and if State and local authorities are notified of the determination.

(h) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section, the following definitions apply:

(1) **AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT.**—The term "aircraft accident" means any aviation disaster regardless of its cause or suspected cause.

(2) **PASSENGER.**—The term "passenger" includes—

(A) an employee of an air carrier or foreign air carrier aboard an aircraft; and

(B) any other person aboard the aircraft without regard to whether the person paid

for the transportation, occupied a seat, or held a reservation for the flight.

(i) **STATUTORY CONSTRUCTION.**—Nothing in this section may be construed as limiting the actions that an air carrier may take, or the obligations that an air carrier may have, in providing assistance to the families of passengers involved in an aircraft accident.

(j) **RELINQUISHMENT OF INVESTIGATIVE PRIORITY.**—

(1) **GENERAL RULE.**—This section (other than subsection (g)) shall not apply to an aircraft accident if the Board has relinquished investigative priority under section 1131(a)(2)(B) and the Federal agency to which the Board relinquished investigative priority is willing and able to provide assistance to the victims and families of the passengers involved in the accident.

(2) **BOARD ASSISTANCE.**—If this section does not apply to an aircraft accident because the Board has relinquished investigative priority with respect to the accident, the Board shall assist, to the maximum extent possible, the agency to which the Board has relinquished investigative priority in assisting families with respect to the accident.

(Added Pub. L. 104-264, title VII, §702(a)(1), Oct. 9, 1996, 110 Stat. 3265; amended Pub. L. 106-181, title IV, §401(a)(1), (b)-(d), Apr. 5, 2000, 114 Stat. 129; Pub. L. 108-168, §3(a), Dec. 6, 2003, 117 Stat. 2033.)

#### AMENDMENTS

2003—Subsec. (j). Pub. L. 108-168 added subsec. (j).

2000—Subsec. (g)(2). Pub. L. 106-181, §401(a)(1), substituted "transportation and in the event of an accident involving a foreign air carrier that occurs within the United States," for "transportation," inserted "(including any associate, agent, employee, or other representative of an attorney)" after "attorney", and substituted "45th day" for "30th day".

Subsec. (g)(3). Pub. L. 106-181, §401(b), added par. (3).

Subsec. (h)(2). Pub. L. 106-181, §401(c), amended heading and text generally. Prior to amendment, text read as follows: "The term 'passenger' includes an employee of an air carrier aboard an aircraft."

Subsec. (i). Pub. L. 106-181, §401(d), added subsec. (i).

#### EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2000 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 106-181 applicable only to fiscal years beginning after Sept. 30, 1999, see section 3 of Pub. L. 106-181, set out as a note under section 106 of this title.

#### EFFECTIVE DATE

Except as otherwise specifically provided, section applicable only to fiscal years beginning after Sept. 30, 1996, and not to be construed as affecting funds made available for a fiscal year ending before Oct. 1, 1996, see section 3 of Pub. L. 104-264, set out as an Effective Date of 1996 Amendment note under section 106 of this title.

### § 1137. Authority of the Inspector General

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Inspector General of the Department of Transportation, in accordance with the mission of the Inspector General to prevent and detect fraud and abuse, shall have authority to review only the financial management, property management, and business operations of the National Transportation Safety Board, including internal accounting and admin-

istrative control systems, to determine compliance with applicable Federal laws, rules, and regulations.

(b) DUTIES.—In carrying out this section, the Inspector General shall—

(1) keep the Chairman of the Board and Congress fully and currently informed about problems relating to administration of the internal accounting and administrative control systems of the Board;

(2) issue findings and recommendations for actions to address such problems; and

(3) report periodically to Congress on any progress made in implementing actions to address such problems.

(c) ACCESS TO INFORMATION.—In carrying out this section, the Inspector General may exercise authorities granted to the Inspector General under subsections (a) and (b) of section 6 of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.).

(d) AUTHORIZATIONS OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

(1) FUNDING.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Transportation for use by the Inspector General of the Department of Transportation such sums as may be necessary to cover expenses associated with activities pursuant to the authority exercised under this section.

(2) REIMBURSABLE AGREEMENT.—In the absence of an appropriation under this subsection for an expense referred to in paragraph (1), the Inspector General and the Board shall have a reimbursable agreement to cover such expense.

(Added Pub. L. 106-424, §12(a), Nov. 1, 2000, 114 Stat. 1887; amended Pub. L. 109-443, §4, Dec. 21, 2006, 120 Stat. 3299.)

#### REFERENCES IN TEXT

Section 6 of the Inspector General Act of 1978, referred to in subsec. (c), is section 6 of Pub. L. 95-452, which is set out in the Appendix to Title 5, Government Organization and Employees.

#### AMENDMENTS

2006—Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 109-443 amended heading and text of subsec. (d) generally. Prior to amendment, text read as follows: “The Inspector General shall be reimbursed by the Board for the costs associated with carrying out activities under this section.”

### § 1138. Evaluation and audit of National Transportation Safety Board

(a) IN GENERAL.—To promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in the administration of the programs, operations, and activities of the National Transportation Safety Board, the Comptroller General of the United States shall evaluate and audit the programs and expenditures of the National Transportation Safety Board. Such evaluation and audit shall be conducted as determined necessary by the Comptroller General or the appropriate congressional committees.

(b) RESPONSIBILITY OF COMPTROLLER GENERAL.—The Comptroller General shall evaluate and audit Board programs, operations, and activities, including—

(1) information management and security, including privacy protection of personally identifiable information;

(2) resource management;

(3) workforce development;

(4) procurement and contracting planning, practices and policies;

(5) the extent to which the Board follows leading practices in selected management areas; and

(6) the extent to which the Board addresses management challenges in completing accident investigations.

(c) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—For purposes of this section the term “appropriate congressional committees” means the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation of the Senate and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives.

(Added Pub. L. 109-443, §5(a), Dec. 21, 2006, 120 Stat. 3299; amended Pub. L. 113-188, title XV, §1502, Nov. 26, 2014, 128 Stat. 2025.)

#### AMENDMENTS

2014—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 113-188 struck out “at least annually, but may be conducted” after “Such evaluation and audit shall be conducted”.

### § 1139. Assistance to families of passengers involved in rail passenger accidents

(a) IN GENERAL.—As soon as practicable after being notified of a rail passenger accident within the United States involving a rail passenger carrier and resulting in a major loss of life, the Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board shall—

(1) designate and publicize the name and telephone number of a director of family support services who shall be an employee of the Board and shall be responsible for acting as a point of contact within the Federal Government for the families of passengers involved in the accident and a liaison between the rail passenger carrier and the families; and

(2) designate an independent nonprofit organization, with experience in disasters and post-trauma communication with families, which shall have primary responsibility for coordinating the emotional care and support of the families of passengers involved in the accident.

(b) RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD.—The Board shall have primary Federal responsibility for—

(1) facilitating the recovery and identification of fatally injured passengers involved in an accident described in subsection (a); and

(2) communicating with the families of passengers involved in the accident as to the roles, with respect to the accident and the post-accident activities, of—

(A) the organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2);

(B) Government agencies; and

(C) the rail passenger carrier involved.

(c) RESPONSIBILITIES OF DESIGNATED ORGANIZATION.—The organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2) shall have the following responsibilities with respect to the families of passengers involved in the accident:

(1) To provide mental health and counseling services, in coordination with the disaster re-