

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1104

May 7, 2019

The Honorable Robert L. Sumwalt
Chairman
National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20594

Dear Chairman Sumwalt,

Thank you for keeping me updated on the progress of the investigation that the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is conducting into the tragic crash of an air tour helicopter in Kailua, Hawaii on April 29.

I understand that two NTSB investigators are in Hawaii and that your agency expects to issue a preliminary accident report this week, but the final report will identify the causes of the accident. In this regard, can you detail the steps of the investigation to identify the causes of the accident and the estimated length of time the NTSB will take to complete the final report? Can you also provide an accounting of all air tour accidents and unintended landings in Hawaii for the last five years, the findings, recommendations and requirements from each of these incidents? I have separately written the Federal Aviation Administration to find out whether there has been appropriate follow up with the air tour companies/industry in each instance.

NTSB has previously issued safety recommendations to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regarding the Robinson R44 model of helicopter that was involved in the April 29 crash. The Los Angeles Times wrote a story on November 18, 2018, entitled "Danger Spins from the Sky," that specifically identifies safety issues with the R44 relating to the mast bumping and non-fortification of fuel tanks. Can you detail the safety issues that NTSB has identified with the R44 over its lifetime?

I look forward to your prompt response to these questions. Thank you for the work of the NTSB to make transportation safer in our country.

Sincerely,



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

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