

Remarks Prepared for Delivery
Jane F. Garvey
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Aviation Safety Expo 2001
Washington, DC
March 27, 2001

It is great to see so many people here today from across the aviation community to share how — together — we are making air travel safer. Recently, I testified at a hearing on airline delays. On the same day, a seminar at the University of Maryland addressed airport and airspace congestion. Delays and congestion are a serious issue. They can cost millions of dollars.

Yet, we are here to talk about *the* most serious issue — aviation safety. At that University of Maryland seminar, Dr. Arnold Barnett brought some perspective to the day's discussion. He said we endlessly heard about last summer being "the worst summer ever" for delays and disruption. Yet, for that all-time awful summer, he pointed out one statistic rarely heard — flying on U.S. domestic airlines last summer posed a safety risk of zero.

Zero. That perfectly safe summer — when, as Dr. Barnett said, "all the children got home" — is testimony to everyone here today. Zero risk, especially during the busiest, the worst weather travel season, speaks highly of the entire aviation community. It shows just how much we can achieve when we have the right priorities and when we work together.

We know that as strong as our safety record is, we can make it better. We also know that with the growing demand we must make it better. That is exactly what we are doing. In the three years since we announced Safer Skies, we have learned that using hard data, establishing priorities, and working together is the best way to lower the accident rate for both commercial and general aviation. Better yet, we're producing results.

Let me underscore "*we.*" We means the aviation community, be it the Commercial Aviation Safety Team or the General Aviation Joint Steering Committee. I especially want to recognize the excellent work and leadership of Captain Ed Soliday and Nick Lacey, co-chairs of the commercial aviation team, and of Jack Olcott and Kathy Perfetti, co-chairs of the general aviation team, for their commitment to the Safer Skies approach. Their work is making air travel safer.

You'll be hearing shortly about what the teams have accomplished. For commercial aviation, let me highlight that we are working on policies and procedures that will result in stabilized, vertical guidance approaches — approaches four times safer than non-precision approaches. These and other projects have the potential to reduce the total commercial fatal accident rate by about one-fourth.

For general aviation, the GA Joint Steering Committee identified key actions to reduce weather and CFIT accidents, two leading GA safety hazards. At the same time, the FAA and the GA community continue their individual and joint awareness campaigns directed towards these hazards. Last year was general aviation's safest year ever. Flight activity is increasing and the number of fatal accidents is down. The fatal accident rate is at an all time low.

Yes, we are headed in the right direction. Are we there yet? No.

I see three key areas where we must focus to make sure Safer Skies stays on course:

One, we must continue to get better data. On the commercial side, one of the most important information-gathering initiatives is FOQA, flight operations quality assurance programs that gather routine flight information from flight data recorders.

It has been difficult getting agreement — within the government and with industry — on the public policy for FOQA. There are a host of issues. But Congress gave us direction and we met the deadline to propose the rule. We've gotten comments, including some very strong ones, from the community. We're taking the comments seriously and are working hard on the final rule to have it completed by the end of April. Currently, ten airlines have FOQA programs. More plan to get started this year. By the end of this year, three out of ten aircraft operated by the major airlines will be gathering FOQA data.

The GA team realized early on that it needed better data. I'm pleased the GA community is taking action to improve the quality of accident data. The value of our data-based decisions is directly related to the quality of the data. The more we can refine and improve the data, the better our decisions will be.

The second area where we must focus is beyond our borders. We need to be better exporters and bigger proponents of the Safer Skies approach to improving safety. We must continue to work with the international aviation community. I'm pleased to see Europe's Joint Aviation Authorities partnering with CAST on the accident analysis teams and developing interventions for their operating environment.

Three, we must maintain the momentum. Everyone must keep their commitments — to do what we've said we will do; and to protect the resources — especially the human resources — dedicated to Safer Skies. We cannot get complacent.

The work that the people here today have done has not been easy. Each intervention takes time to identify, articulate, and reach commitment. Consensus and collaboration — this is hard work. Today, with the exhibits and the experts you can see the very real accomplishments of this targeted and collaborative program.

Jerome Lederer, the father of aviation safety, doesn't talk about enhancing safety. He says what we do is "risk management." Risk management implies that "risks are ever-present, must be identified, analyzed, evaluated and controlled." That is exactly what we are doing with Safer Skies. We are reducing risk with a disciplined and targeted approach. We are making clear progress. And thanks to everyone here today, more children will get home safely.

###