

Dear Chairman Hart:

I write to request the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) undertake a comprehensive safety review of the recent string of small plane accidents on Long Island and across the country in order to help develop recommendations that could prevent future incidents. As the independent and objective federal agency charged by Congress with conducting thorough safety investigations, I call on your expertise and authority to immediately begin a comprehensive review of these repeated incidents. I strongly urge you not just to conduct yet another investigation following the recent crash in Southampton, NY, but to also undertake a comprehensive and system-wide review to understand why these accidents are happening and what can be done in order to decrease the occurrences. The number of airplane crashes across the system must be reduced.

As you know, on February 26, it was reported that a single-engine plane crashed in Southampton, NY, killing two people and injuring a third on the aircraft. Last May, a single-engine plane crashed in Syosset, New York killing three people on board and showering debris over a two-mile heavily populated area, close to two public schools. In the months before that incident, a small plane crashed in a Bayport neighborhood when the pilot lost power shortly after takeoff from a nearby airport and a Cessna flying from Republic Airport had to make an emergency landing on a Kings Park beach. Fortunately, in both incidents the passengers survived and neither incident harmed anyone on the ground. There is considerable and well-founded concern on Long Island about the frequency of these accidents, their lethality to those involved, and their potential to induce catastrophe to residents on the ground. Thus far, horrible collateral damage has been avoided, but the potential for this kind of devastating harm remains all-too-possible, and your agencies' recommendations on how to reduce this risk is sorely needed.

The NTSB has a long history of strong and independent safety advocacy. In that light, we ask that, as you examine the most recent accident in Southampton, you broaden your scope. We strongly urge you to not look at this accident just as an isolated incident, but rather to take a thorough examination of all related safety issues both in New York and across the country. Last May, I wrote to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Administrator Huerta expressing my concern about a recent uptick in aviation accidents on Long Island and asked the FAA to examine if this is a trend. I also wrote to the FAA last June over my concern about continued reports of drops in RAMP inspections – critical safety checks that occur before flights take off. With both the reduction in inspections and the continued instances of small plane crashes on Long Island, I believe strongly that the time has come for NTSB to conduct a top to bottom review of this issue.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to your response and to reviewing the findings of the examination to reduce the number of accidents. Should you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Schumer

United States Senator

