



True or False? 94% of Traffic Crashes Are Due to Human Error

The Honorable Jennifer Homendy

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Virginia Air & Space Center
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It can be tempting to blame “human error” when something goes wrong on our transportation system, whether it’s an aviation accident or incident, train derailment, roadway crash, marine casualty, pipeline disaster, or a commercial space mishap — all of which the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigates. But human error is inevitable and present in everything we do; even automated technology systems are not immune, despite what some might have you believe. In this lecture, NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy will share how the NTSB employs a systems approach in its investigations to uncover the root cause of human error and crafts safety recommendations to prevent their reoccurrence. She will address the widely held misperception that technology can “engineer-out” human error and share examples of ways technology can and should be leveraged to save lives. Chair Homendy will close by sharing the NTSB’s belief in the view expressed by Prof. Nancy Leveson: “Human error is a symptom of a system that needs to be redesigned.”

The Honorable Jennifer Homendy was sworn in as the 15th Chair of the NTSB in August 2021, having been a Board Member for three years prior. She is the fourth woman to serve as Chair. Ensuring the NTSB workforce is ready for the future of transportation safety is among her top priorities. Under her leadership, the agency is ensuring its readiness to investigate accidents and incidents involving emerging technologies in all modes of transportation, including advanced driver assist systems, automated vehicles, commercial space transportation, uncrewed aircraft systems, advanced air mobility, supersonic aircraft, high-speed ground transportation, and clean energy sources to fuel vehicles.

Prior to appointment to the NTSB, Chair Homendy served as the Staff Director of the Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the U.S. House of Representatives. In that role, she successfully advocated for the inclusion of NTSB safety recommendations in relevant legislation.

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