



Recommendations

It is the Board's opinion that good leadership can direct a culture to adapt to new realities. NASA's culture must change, and the Board intends the following recommendations to be steps toward effecting this change.

Recommendations have been put forth in many of the chapters. In this chapter, the recommendations are grouped by subject area with the Return-to-Flight [RTF] tasks listed first within the subject area. Each Recommendation retains its number so the reader can refer to the related section for additional details. These recommendations are not listed in priority order.

PART ONE – THE ACCIDENT

Thermal Protection System

- R3.2-1 Initiate an aggressive program to eliminate all External Tank Thermal Protection System debris-shedding at the source with particular emphasis on the region where the bipod struts attach to the External Tank. [RTF]
- R3.3-2 Initiate a program designed to increase the Orbiter's ability to sustain minor debris damage by measures such as improved impact-resistant Reinforced Carbon-Carbon and acreage tiles. This program should determine the actual impact resistance of current materials and the effect of likely debris strikes. [RTF]
- R3.3-1 Develop and implement a comprehensive inspection plan to determine the structural integrity of all Reinforced Carbon-Carbon system components. This inspection plan should take advantage of advanced non-destructive inspection technology. [RTF]
- R6.4-1 For missions to the International Space Station, develop a practicable capability to inspect and effect emergency repairs to the widest possible range of damage to the Thermal Protection System, including both tile and Reinforced Carbon-Carbon, taking advantage of the additional capabilities available when near to or docked at the International Space Station.
- For non-Station missions, develop a comprehensive autonomous (independent of Station) inspection and repair capability to cover the widest possible range of damage scenarios.
- Accomplish an on-orbit Thermal Protection System inspection, using appropriate assets and capabilities, early in all missions.
- The ultimate objective should be a fully autonomous capability for all missions to address the possibility that an International Space Station mission fails to achieve the correct orbit, fails to dock successfully, or is damaged during or after undocking. [RTF]
- R3.3-3 To the extent possible, increase the Orbiter's ability to successfully re-enter Earth's atmosphere with minor leading edge structural sub-system damage.
- R3.3-4 In order to understand the true material characteristics of Reinforced Carbon-Carbon components, develop a comprehensive database of flown Reinforced Carbon-Carbon material characteristics by destructive testing and evaluation.
- R3.3-5 Improve the maintenance of launch pad structures to minimize the leaching of zinc primer onto Reinforced Carbon-Carbon components.
- R3.8-1 Obtain sufficient spare Reinforced Carbon-Carbon panel assemblies and associated support components to ensure that decisions on Reinforced Carbon-Carbon maintenance are made on the basis of component specifications, free of external pressures relating to schedules, costs, or other considerations.

- R3.8-2 Develop, validate, and maintain physics-based computer models to evaluate Thermal Protection System damage from debris impacts. These tools should provide realistic and timely estimates of any impact damage from possible debris from any source that may ultimately impact the Orbiter. Establish impact damage thresholds that trigger responsive corrective action, such as on-orbit inspection and repair, when indicated.

Imaging

- R3.4-1 Upgrade the imaging system to be capable of providing a minimum of three useful views of the Space Shuttle from liftoff to at least Solid Rocket Booster separation, along any expected ascent azimuth. The operational status of these assets should be included in the Launch Commit Criteria for future launches. Consider using ships or aircraft to provide additional views of the Shuttle during ascent. [RTF]
- R3.4-2 Provide a capability to obtain and downlink high-resolution images of the External Tank after it separates. [RTF]
- R3.4-3 Provide a capability to obtain and downlink high-resolution images of the underside of the Orbiter wing leading edge and forward section of both wings' Thermal Protection System. [RTF]
- R6.3-2 Modify the Memorandum of Agreement with the National Imagery and Mapping Agency to make the imaging of each Shuttle flight while on orbit a standard requirement. [RTF]

Orbiter Sensor Data

- R3.6-1 The Modular Auxiliary Data System instrumentation and sensor suite on each Orbiter should be maintained and updated to include current sensor and data acquisition technologies.
- R3.6-2 The Modular Auxiliary Data System should be redesigned to include engineering performance and vehicle health information, and have the ability to be reconfigured during flight in order to allow certain data to be recorded, telemetered, or both as needs change.

Wiring

- R4.2-2 As part of the Shuttle Service Life Extension Program and potential 40-year service life, develop a state-of-the-art means to inspect all Orbiter wiring, including that which is inaccessible.

Bolt Catchers

- R4.2-1 Test and qualify the flight hardware bolt catchers. [RTF]

Closeouts

- R4.2-3 Require that at least two employees attend all final closeouts and intertank area hand-spraying procedures. [RTF]

Micrometeoroid and Orbital Debris

- R4.2-4 Require the Space Shuttle to be operated with the same degree of safety for micrometeoroid and orbital debris as the degree of safety calculated for the International Space Station. Change the micrometeoroid and orbital debris safety criteria from guidelines to requirements.

Foreign Object Debris

- R4.2-5 Kennedy Space Center Quality Assurance and United Space Alliance must return to the straightforward, industry-standard definition of "Foreign Object Debris" and eliminate any alternate or statistically deceptive definitions like "processing debris." [RTF]

PART TWO – WHY THE ACCIDENT OCCURRED

Scheduling

- R6.2-1 Adopt and maintain a Shuttle flight schedule that is consistent with available resources. Although schedule deadlines are an important management tool, those deadlines must be regularly evaluated to ensure that any additional risk incurred to meet the schedule is recognized, understood, and acceptable. [RTF]

Training

- R6.3-1 Implement an expanded training program in which the Mission Management Team faces potential crew and vehicle safety contingencies beyond launch and ascent. These contingencies should involve potential loss of Shuttle or crew, contain numerous uncertainties and unknowns, and require the Mission Management Team to assemble and interact with support organizations across NASA/Contractor lines and in various locations. [RTF]

Organization

- R7.5-1 Establish an independent Technical Engineering Authority that is responsible for technical requirements and all waivers to them, and will build a disciplined, systematic approach to identifying, analyzing, and controlling hazards throughout the life cycle of the Shuttle System. The independent technical authority does the following as a minimum:
- Develop and maintain technical standards for all Space Shuttle Program projects and elements
 - Be the sole waiver-granting authority for all technical standards
 - Conduct trend and risk analysis at the sub-system, system, and enterprise levels
 - Own the failure mode, effects analysis and hazard reporting systems
 - Conduct integrated hazard analysis
 - Decide what is and is not an anomalous event
 - Independently verify launch readiness
 - Approve the provisions of the recertification program called for in Recommendation R9.1-1.

The Technical Engineering Authority should be funded directly from NASA Headquarters, and should have no connection to or responsibility for schedule or program cost.

- R7.5-2 NASA Headquarters Office of Safety and Mission Assurance should have direct line authority over the entire Space Shuttle Program safety organization and should be independently resourced.
- R7.5-3 Reorganize the Space Shuttle Integration Office to make it capable of integrating all elements of the Space Shuttle Program, including the Orbiter.

PART THREE – A LOOK AHEAD

Organization

- R9.1-1 Prepare a detailed plan for defining, establishing, transitioning, and implementing an independent Technical Engineering Authority, independent safety program, and a reorganized Space Shuttle Integration Office as described in R7.5-1, R7.5-2, and R7.5-3. In addition, NASA should submit annual reports to Congress, as part of the budget review process, on its implementation activities. [RTF]

Recertification

- R9.2-1 Prior to operating the Shuttle beyond 2010, develop and conduct a vehicle recertification at the material, component, subsystem, and system levels. Recertification requirements should be included in the Service Life Extension Program.

Closeout Photos/Drawing System

- R10.3-1 Develop an interim program of closeout photographs for all critical sub-systems that differ from engineering drawings. Digitize the closeout photograph system so that images are immediately available for on-orbit troubleshooting. [RTF]
- R10.3-2 Provide adequate resources for a long-term program to upgrade the Shuttle engineering drawing system including:
- Reviewing drawings for accuracy
 - Converting all drawings to a computer-aided drafting system
 - Incorporating engineering changes



Columbia

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