

Board Urges Air Safety Device

The National Transportation Safety Board has recommended that all large U.S. commercial jet aircraft be equipped with a device to warn pilots that they are approaching an airport at too low an altitude.

The recommendation was contained in a letter to Federal Aviation Administrator Alexander P. Butterfield. It said that "more than 50 per cent of the major air carrier accidents within the past five years have occurred during the approach segment . . .

"We believe that a number of these accidents could have been avoided if a glidepath deviation alarm had been available to prompt pilot action."

There was no immediate response from Butterfield. However, the FAA has taken the

position that the alarm system is not yet perfected. An FAA spokesman said that warning systems already installed in Pan American planes sometimes issue false alarms.

"You can't shut the damn thing off," said an FAA spokesman.

The warning system recommended by the safety board would actually be a fifth mode on a device the FAA has already ordered commercial aircraft to install by Dec. 1, 1975. That device, actually a computer, already monitors four different factors that could result in crashes on take-off or landing. The Safety Board, in effect, is asking that the fifth mode be required also.

The device, which costs

about \$10,000, gives the pilot a voice command such as, "Whoop, Whoop, Pull Up, Pull Up."

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