

But without having the physical inspections that verify compliance, I think it leaves everyone wondering exactly where we are. I think until the FAA integrates that piece back into their process, it is going to be a flawed process. I don't care how much data you collect, if you don't know that the data is good, it is meaningless, it is absolutely useless, as you mentioned earlier, Mr. Chairman.

I think until the agency is forthcoming about that and faces that problem and deals with it, this is not going away. I will conclude on that and I look forward to any questions you might have.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Thank you for your candor.

Ms. Goodrich?

Ms. GOODRICH. I am going to turn this over to Rick Andrews.

Mr. ANDREWS. Chairman Oberstar, Members of this Committee, thank you for holding these hearings on the relationship between the FAA and the airlines. My name is Richard Andrews. I was employed as an aviation safety inspector by the FAA at the American Eagle Certificate Management Office in the Southwest Region and assigned as an aircrew program manager in the American Eagle unit until March 31st of this year.

I am a member of the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists and I served as the PASS representative for the American Eagle Airlines Operations Unit in that Certificate Management Office.

I have worked for the FAA over 31 years. During that time, I have witnessed dramatic changes in the aviation industry. When I first started my career with the FAA, safety of the system was the priority. With the financial hardships facing many of the airlines and the pay for performance mentality of FAA managers, safety has become a second thought.

My work at the Certificate Management Office has proven to me that management's primary goal is to fill the quotas for the office, in other words, producing members is the focus, rather than getting the job done right. As FAA inspectors, we are the workforce trained to focus only on the safety of the system. It is beyond frustrating when we discover a problem with an air carrier and are prevented from doing anything about it. We are frequently stopped in our tracks by several layers of management and our focus is on pleasing the airlines.

Thirty-one years ago, I was out in the field with my hands on airplanes and looking for safety problems. I had the power to make a difference. Now, in the age of self-disclosure and the tight relationships between FAA management and the airlines, inspectors are sitting at their desks getting their information into a computer. Unfortunately, what suffers most from all this is the safety of the system.

I have seen and experienced the repercussions of these cozy relationships between the FAA and airlines in the past. A recent situation illustrates the point. In October of 2007, I met with the American Eagle Unit assistant manager and principal operations inspector to discuss the status of American Eagle Airlines' flight operations and training. It was agreed that American Eagle should be under surveillance, and I was asked to start doing an in-depth evaluation of their manuals and programs. After several months of working on this project, in addition to my other full-time assign-