



U.S. Department of
Transportation

News:

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

Contact: Mari Maseng
Tele.: (202) 426-4570

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE
DOT FEDERAL WOMEN'S WEEK
OCTOBER 23, 1984
WASHINGTON, D.C.

I am delighted by the fine turn-out this morning to mark the observance of Federal Women's Week at DOT. I also want to welcome Carmen Turner, Metro General Manager, and express my appreciation to her for joining us here today.

The Intradepartmental Council of the Federal Women's Program Managers has worked hard to put together a series of excellent workshops for this week. I encourage you to attend sessions of particular interest to you.

I am grateful to the Federal Women Program Managers and the Council chair, Joyce Norman, for their work on behalf of the Department's women employees. I want to also welcome Olivia Erikson, who has just recently joined FAA as Federal Women's Program Manager.

When I arrived at the Department, one of the first questions I asked was: How many of our employees are women? I was told 19 percent. Then I asked, what was the percentage when the Department was established in 1967? The answer: 18.5 percent. What's more, women in upper grade positions made up only one percent of the entire Department's work force. It didn't take long for us to design a program to change all that. Now we are helping more women enter our work force, and we're preparing more women than ever before to assume managerial responsibilities and expand existing skills. For example, we are helping women enter the air traffic controller field -- a traditionally male profession -- and to move into higher paying jobs. In a department with over 100,000 employees, it takes many people to move that percentage up even one point, but we are certainly committed to the task.

I especially want to recognize this group's continuing support for our ten-point program to improve opportunities for DOT women. As a result of this program, we are

- MORE -

helping more women enter our workforce; and we are preparing more women than ever before to assume managerial responsibilities, expand existing skills and move into higher paying jobs.

Let me take a few moments to share with you this program's progress to date. Women in DOT now comprise 20.5 percent of our employees. That's an improvement of two percent since the Department was established in 1967. That may seem small, but it represents a 1½ percent gain just in the last two years. With the enthusiasm being generated -- with the excellent support we are enjoying and the programs now in place -- I am confident we will extend career and promotion opportunities even further in the months and years ahead.

In our Department today, 58 percent of all permanent civilian jobs fall into seven major occupations: air traffic controllers -- alone accounting for one-third of all DOT jobs; electronic technicians; aviation safety; civil engineering; electronic and electrical engineering; computer specialists and general engineering. I am pleased that in each of these categories, the percentage of women has increased in the past two years. Because air traffic controllers represent so large a block of our work force, we place special emphasis on programs to qualify women for training and controllers. For example, our co-op program helps undergraduate students to enter the air traffic controller program through on-the-job training which gives them a better chance of passing the ATC exam. Of the 247 students in the current program, 41 percent are women and 63 percent are minority students. A pre-development program assists federal employees who pass the ATC exam, but whose scores are not high enough for competitive registers. Sixty-four employees have entered that program so far this year; 75 percent are women -- 28 percent are minority women.

Other opportunities for career advancement include the Upward Mobility Program. Thirty-six of the 50 designated upward mobility slots have been filled by women. Seventy-six additional positions have been provided by FAA, Coast Guard, Research and Special Programs, OIG and MARAD. Another women's initiative, career planning for employees with limited advancement opportunities, is for those at the top of a clerical, secretarial or paraprofessional field who have little advancement opportunity. This program is especially important because it was identified as a real need by the Department's employees. A task force of women in this category worked with us to develop a training course in career planning for women GS-8 through 10. Seventy-five have attended training since April; two more sessions are scheduled before the end of this year.

Undergraduate and graduate cooperative education programs allow students the opportunity to obtain relevant work experience. At present, 216 women are involved in these programs as undergraduates. Of those, 124 are minority women. We also have 31 women enrolled as graduate students, 15 of whom are minorities.

Management training opportunities for employees in mid-level grades include the seminar for prospective women managers. 381 women already have taken this course. There will be six more seminars during fiscal year 1985. And I look forward to hosting a dinner for all the graduates in January.

And the Mobility Assignment Program, which has been renamed the Professional Exchange Program to more accurately describe its objectives, is a temporary detail for employees in grades 11 through 14. Of the 517 candidates for this program, 88 percent of the women and 80 percent of the minorities who applied have been referred to key department managers for consideration. This is a popular program and we are encouraging each of our agencies to increase the number of available assignments.

In increasing participation in non-DOT management development programs, our goal is to double the rate of participation by women in training opportunities such as the Federal Executive Institute and the National Institute of Public Affairs. At the senior level, our goal is to increase female participation in the management skills seminar to 40 percent. In the second class of the SES Candidate Development Program, for example, there are 10 women; four of whom are minority women. The previous class had only two women, so we are definitely making a difference with this program.

I am truly encouraged by the progress we are making through our initiatives to improve opportunities for DOT women. With your help, we can reach and assist even more people. Our efforts must infuse every agency, every office and -- ultimately -- every manager and planner. In a Department of over 100,000 people, it takes many women to move the percentage of female employees up even one point. But let me assure you again -- I am totally committed to the task. I am sure I can count on your support. Give me your ideas, thoughts, as we continue to review, and build on these initiatives.

Let me share a few of the comment's I've received from women who have participated in our ten-point program. From an FAA employee in Texas: "I feel compelled to write to say thanks for the most rewarding training experience of my 20-year federal career. It is an exciting time to be a woman in the DOT workforce."

A headquarters employee wrote: "I've gained a better feeling for my strengths and capabilities and (have) a special appreciation for my job."

Another said: "I realize the responsibility for the success of the program rests with those participating and I, for one, plan to make every effort to achieve that goal."

And finally: "The skills we developed were extremely helpful not only for ourselves but more importantly, for the Department."

I find these remarks personally gratifying. They tell me our program is working. Together, we can build on these successes. Together we can join in the realization of a vision shared by women of courage and conviction -- who see beyond the commonplace, and reach for greatness. I think of Emily Dickinson who, though she never worked in an office or won a headline, inspired millions through her poetry.

We "dwell in possibility," she wrote more than 150 years ago. For so many women since, possibility has been their great hope. Today, by challenging the odds and overcoming the conventional wisdom, the possible has become the probable. And for many, in this Department and across our land, the possible has become reality. Today, we move boldly forward, as together we explore new opportunities for women -- at every point and every level in our Department and throughout our nation's work force.