



Nancy Legerski, ND State Chaplain, presenting the DCW American Heroes Award to Bismarck Air Med

Three die in air ambulance crash Near Mandan, cause of crash under investigation

JACK DURA Bismarck Tribune Nov 19, 2018

Three people died Sunday night when a Bismarck Air Medical plane crashed northwest of Mandan.

According to a release from CHI St. Alexius Health, the plane, which was flying to Williston to assist in a patient transport, went down prior to arrival. A Bismarck Air Medical pilot and paramedic, along with a CHI St. Alexius Health registered nurse, were on board. There were no survivors.

Around 11 p.m. Sunday, the Bismarck Airport tower reported the aircraft as missing about a half-hour after taking flight.

Search efforts by the Morton County Sheriff's Office, Mandan Rural Fire Department, Civil Air Patrol and an Air Force Rescue Team located the crash site around 2 a.m. Monday. Cellphone forensics and radar analysis helped track the plane's last location, according to a Morton County press release.

Morton County spokeswoman Maxine Herr said the crash site is about 15 to 20 miles northwest of Mandan. The fuselage and other debris are spread over "a large area" in a "remote pasture" about 3 miles west of North Dakota Highway 25 northwest of Mandan, according to the press release.

The National Transport Safety Board and the Federal Aviation Administration will investigate the incident. The cause of the crash is under investigation.

The plane was a Cessna 441 turboprop that was built in 1982, according to FAA records. The weather from 11 p.m. Sunday to midnight Monday, as observed at the Bismarck Airport, had low hanging clouds and light snow showers moving in, said Nathan Heinert, meteorologist with the Bismarck National Weather Service. He also said visibility had dropped to 5 miles. Chelsey Kralicek, marketing specialist for CHI St. Alexius Health in Bismarck, said the hospital is offering employee assistance program services through its professional counselors to employees and their families.

In a joint statement, Schaefer and Kurt Schley, CHI St. Alexius Health Bismarck president said: "It is a sad day here for both of our organizations. We are grieving for the family members of those who were on board." "The names of the individuals are not being released until families are notified. We are focused on supporting the families and associates from both organizations. We ask for your prayers and support at this very difficult time for all."

Bismarck Mayor Steve Bakken offered a statement on behalf of the Bismarck City Commission following news of the crash: "We are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of life of these individuals who selflessly dedicate themselves to saving the lives of others, and provide this vital service to our communities. We send our heartfelt sympathies and prayers to the families, friends and colleagues in the medical and first responder communities."

Gov. Doug Burgum also offered words in the wake of the crash. "We are deeply saddened by the news of last night's airplane crash that claimed the lives of the pilot, a paramedic and a registered nurse – individuals who dedicated their lives to saving the lives of others. We are forever grateful for their service," the governor said in a statement. "Kathryn and I extend our deepest condolences and heartfelt prayers to their families, friends and colleagues in the medical and first responder communities."

Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D., also issued a statement. "Mikey and I are deeply saddened to hear of the air ambulance crash last night near Mandan," Hoeven said. "Those on board were committed to serving others and providing life-saving medical care. We extend our condolences to their families and loved ones."

Bismarck Tribune reporter Blair Emerson contributed to this report.