

Fresno couple, daughter and 2 others die in fiery South Lake Tahoe plane crash

Updated Aug. 26 3:17pm:

Javier de la Mora has told KOL0-TV in Reno that his brother Francisco de la Mora was piloting the plane that crashed in South Lake Tahoe on Saturday night. The pilot is one of the registered owners of the plane.

The four others on board are believed to be de la Mora's wife, daughter and two other people.

Updated Aug. 26 3:10pm:

Federal officials are waiting for family members of the deceased to be notified before releasing the names of the people who died in the Aug. 25 plane crash in South Lake Tahoe.

The fire that was ignited by the downed plane was about 1 acre in size.

Updated Aug. 26, 2012, 2:05pm:

Francisco J. De La Mora of Fresno and Shannon D. Fleck, hometown unknown, are the registered owners of the plane that crashed into a field off the runway of Lake Tahoe Airport on Saturday night, according to the FAA Registry.

The Piper that disintegrated on impact, killing all on board, was a fixed wing single-engine.



Federal officials are on scene at the site of the Aug. 25 plane crash in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Claire Fortier

This same plane was involved in an accident on March 5, 2005, in Destin, Fla., according to the National Transportation Safety Board. In that accident the two people aboard were not injured.

NTSB records said the cause of that accident was, "The pilot's inadequate compensation for wind during a crosswind takeoff resulting in a loss of directional control and subsequent collision with terrain."



The plane did not get far off the runway

before crashing Aug.
25. Photo/Claire
Fortier

FAA and NTSB officials are in South Lake Tahoe investigating the Aug. 25 accident that is believed to have killed five people who had been in Tahoe for only a few hours. The plane seats seven.

Updated Aug. 26, 2012, 9:10am:

By Kathryn Reed

FAA officials believe five people could have been on board the plane that crashed Saturday night on take-off from Lake Tahoe Airport.

The Piper Cherokee could seat six people.

The Federal Aviation Administration in Southern California would not give details about the victims, nor where they are from or what makes them believe there were five people on board.

In looking at the wreckage from Saturday night's plane crash in South Lake Tahoe, officials the morning of Aug. 26 were not able to recover any identifiable markings.

"It's just a charcoal circle," City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Nor have there been any calls from the airport the plane originated from.

Mountain West Aviation officials, which runs the operations, told investigators that the plane landed Aug. 25 at the South Lake Tahoe airport for a few hours and that the occupants requested a taxi. The taxi took them to a local restaurant and

returned them to the airfield.

The plane crashed about 9:45pm into a field on the north end of the runway.

FAA officials from Reno are to be at the site this morning.

National Transportation Safety Board officials will be coming from Idaho today or Monday.

Because the plane landed on El Dorado County property, the sheriff's office is taking control locally. However, neither the local lieutenant nor the lieutenant in charge of media relations was available Sunday morning.

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By Kathryn Reed

A plane crashed after taking off from Lake Tahoe Airport on Saturday night. No one on board survived.

Because the plane was completely engulfed in flames and only the fuselage remained intact, rescue personnel do not know what type of plane was involved. And because no flight plan was filed, it is not known how many people were on board.

The South Lake Tahoe airport does not have a tower, so information about planes taking off and landing is not as complete as it is at other airports. There is a recording the pilot made, but it has limited information.



A fire started immediately after the plane crashed Aug. 25. Photo/Dan Wilvers

What officials could determine from what the pilot said is that the plane was not involved in the air show that took place at the airport earlier in the day. The plane also is not registered at Lake Tahoe Airport.

Because no part of the tail could be seen where the plane landed, it is not possible to match what is on the recording to what is on the ground.

South Lake Tahoe Police-Fire Chief Brian Uhler is the one who got closest to the plane, and as someone who owns a small plane, would know what to look for. It is hoped daylight will reveal a piece of the tail section.

Officials are saying it's possible the plane was a four- or six-seater Lancer. The plane was registered to more than one person living outside the Lake Tahoe Basin. No fuel or other services were purchased locally.

"Witnesses report sputtering, that the engines didn't sound good," City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*.

She said people saw the plane try to bank to the right. It's

not known if this was to try to return to the airport or avoid structures.

The aircraft crashed nose first into the dry brush north of the runway by Winnemucca Drive. No buildings were hit. On impact a brush fire of a few acres broke out that took firefighters about an hour to fully extinguish.

According to the National Weather Service in Reno, the wind at Lake Tahoe Airport at 9:45pm Aug. 25 was out of the south at 4 to 8mph.

Flying in and out of the mountains always poses risks, and more so in the summer because of the density of the air. A heavy plane can prevent a pilot from being able to gain enough altitude.

National Transportation Safety Board and Federal Aviation Administration personnel have been notified. It's possible they will be on scene Sunday.

Overnight, local public safety personnel will secure the perimeter so no one can tamper with evidence. The body or bodies are likely to be recovered Sunday, with autopsies to follow.

Officials hope a flight plan was filed where the plane originated from so when it is overdue, that airport's staff will call Lake Tahoe as another mechanism to confirm who was on the plane.

The last plane crash at Lake Tahoe Airport was Aug. 5, 2007, that killed the Bay Area pilot on impact when he took off on a summer morning heading south.

The crash is not expected to interfere with any airport operations on Sunday, including the Young Eagles flights that will be taking place. Capt. Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger, who landed an Airbus in the Hudson River, will be at the airport

for the Young Eagles event.