

Plane crash report released

Preliminary report doesn't point to single cause; final review expected in 12 to 18 months

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"Thank you, sir."

Georgina Joshi's final words to an air controller in Terre Haute were the last part of her flight to be recorded.

A preliminary report from the National Transportation Safety Board on the flight that killed five Indiana University Jacobs School of Music students was released Wednesday, but it fails to point to a single cause in the April 20 crash.

The report said investigators didn't find any electrical or mechanical problems that might have contributed to the accident, which occurred at about 11:45 p.m.

The Cessna 206 crashed about 500 yards south of the intersection of Kirby and Airport roads in a patch of dense forest.

Fuel was found in the gas tank and all electronic gear appeared to be properly connected.

"The on-scene investigation did not reveal any pre-impact anomalies," lead NTSB investigator Ed Malinowski wrote.

Also mentioned are weather conditions that appear - on face value - to have been less than ideal for flying.

Conditions observed at the Monroe County Airport at the time of the accident were less than a mile of visibility, overcast clouds with a ceiling of 100 feet, and winds reaching speeds of five knots.

At 11:37 p.m., Joshi radioed that the plane was approximately 6 miles south of the airport and was on course to land. The air traffic controller gave Joshi the radio frequency to use to help guide her into the landing.

Joshi thanked the tower.

Terre Haute authorities never heard a word more. The plane was found about four hours later.

Malinowski said the preliminary report would be sent to a review board, which would then be responsible for releasing a final report - including a determined cause - about their findings.

That process could take 12 to 18 months.

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Friends and family leave the Buskirk-Chumley Theater Wednesday evening after a memorial for five Indiana University music students, including Robert Samels, who were killed in a small plane crash near the Monroe County Airport. Dozens of mourners, some crying, some hugging, gathered in front of the theater after the ceremony. Jeremy Hogan | Herald-Times

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