

Crisis News Release — SVC Writing for PR
Cynthia Mullis

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sightseeing Plane Carrying Cruise Ship Passengers Crashes in Southeast Alaska

Seattle, WA (June 16, 2016) -- A sightseeing plane carrying eight passengers from the ms Westerdam, a Holland America Line cruise ship, crashed in Southeast Alaska. Nine people aboard, including the pilot, were killed.

The plane, operated by Promech Air, was on a sightseeing tour of the Misty Fjords. It is not immediately known what caused the crash, which happened about 20 miles north of Ketchikan, Alaska.

Holland America said that the passengers were on a seven-day cruise aboard the ms Westerdam, which left Alaska on June 20.

Clint Johnson, head of the National Transportation Board's Alaska office, said that it was too early to determine what caused the crash. It is unknown whether the DeHaviland DHC-3 Otter turboprop experienced a mechanical malfunction that caused it to crash, or if limited visibility caused it to fly into the mountainside.

The plane had been reported missing after failing to return to port on time. A helicopter search team spotted the wreckage of the plane on a granite rock face of a cliff 800 feet above Ella Lake. The plane was severely damaged and initial contact with the downed plane determined that there were no survivors.

The crash site is located in steep, mountainous terrain which, along with poor weather conditions, prevented the rescue team from immediately recovering the bodies. Another attempt to reach the crash site will be made Friday. The NTSB is sending its Alaska team to investigate the crash--the "go-team" will include three members from Alaska and at least two people from Washington, D.C.

"At this moment, all of us share in the pain and anguish of this terrible event. There is nothing I can say that can alleviate the overwhelming sense of loss that we and the loved ones of those affected are feeling," Marcus Sessoms, president of Promech Air, said in a statement.

Stein Kruse, chief executive of Holland America Line said, "We are incredibly distressed by this situation, and our thoughts and prayers are with those onboard the plane and their families."

Holland America Line is extending its full support to traveling companions of the guests involved. The names of the victims are being withheld until their families have been notified.