



U.S. NEWS

## Missing commuter plane found crashed on Alaska sea ice and all 10 aboard died, authorities say



1 of 8 | This photo provided by the U.S. Coast Guard on Friday, Feb. 7, 2025, shows a small commuter plane that crashed in western Alaska on a flight that was bound for the hub community of Nome. (U.S. Coast Guard via AP)

BY [BECKY BOHRER](#) AND HALLIE GOLDEN

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JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — A small commuter plane that crashed in western Alaska on its way to the hub community of Nome was located Friday on sea ice, and all 10 people on board died, authorities said. The crash appeared to be [one of the deadliest](#) in the state in the last 25 years.

Mike Salerno, a spokesperson for the U.S. Coast Guard, said rescuers were searching the aircraft's last known location by helicopter when the wreckage was spotted. Two rescue swimmers were lowered to investigate.

A photo provided by the Coast Guard showed the plane's splintered body and debris lying on the sea ice. Two people in brightly colored emergency gear circled the wreckage.

"It's hard to accept the reality of our loss," U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski said during an evening news conference.

Nome Mayor John Handeland choked up as he discussed the deaths and the response effort.

"Nome is a strong community, and in challenging times we come together and support each other. I expect the outpouring of support to continue in the coming days as we all work to recover from this tragic incident," Handeland said.

A prayer service was announced for later in the evening.

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Already the focus was shifting to a recovery operation because of rapidly changing conditions. Officials outlined the challenges including bad weather expected in the next 18 hours and "young ice" that was slushy and not stable.

"They are on the ice as we speak," said Jim West, chief of the Nome Volunteer Fire Department. "The conditions out there are dynamic, and so we've got to do it safely and the fastest way we can."

The Bering Air single-engine turboprop plane was traveling from Unalakleet on Thursday afternoon with nine passengers and a pilot, Alaska's Department of Public Safety said. It was operating at its maximum passenger capacity, according to the airline's description of the plane.

The Cessna Caravan left Unalakleet at 2:37 p.m., and officials lost contact with it less than an hour later, according to David Olson, director of operations for Bering Air. There was light snow and fog, with a temperature of 17 degrees (minus 8.3 Celsius), according to the National Weather Service.

The Coast Guard said the aircraft went missing about 30 miles (48 kilometers) southeast of Nome.

Radar forensic data provided by the U.S. Civil Air Patrol indicated that about 3:18 p.m., the plane had "some kind of event which caused them to experience a rapid loss in elevation and a rapid loss in speed," Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Benjamin McIntyre-Coble said. "What that event is, I can't speculate to."

McIntyre-Coble said he was unaware of any distress signals from the aircraft. Planes carry an emergency locating transmitter. If exposed to seawater, the device sends a signal to a satellite, which then relays that message back to the Coast Guard to indicate an aircraft may be in distress. There have been no such messages received by the Coast Guard, he said.

All 10 people on board the plane were adults, and the flight was a regularly scheduled commuter trip, according to Lt. Ben Endres of the Alaska State Troopers.

Local, state and federal agencies assisted in the search effort, combing stretches of ice-dotted waters and scouring miles of frozen tundra.

The National Transportation Safety Board was sending nine people to the scene from various states.

Flying is an essential mode of transportation in Alaska due to the vastness of the landscape and limited infrastructure. Most communities are not connected to the developed road system that serves the state's most populous region, and it's common to travel by small plane.

Some high school teams fly to sporting events against rival high schools, and goods are brought to many communities by barge or by air.

The plane's disappearance marks [the third major U.S. aviation mishap](#) in eight days. A commercial jetliner and an Army helicopter [collided near the nation's capital](#) on Jan. 29, [killing 67 people](#). A [medical transportation plane crashed](#) in Philadelphia on Jan. 31, killing the six people on board and another person on the ground.

Bering Air serves 32 villages in western Alaska from hubs in Nome, Kotzebue and Unalakleet. Most destinations receive twice-daily scheduled flights Monday through Saturday. Two Bering Air planes appeared to be searching in a grid pattern just off the coastline Friday morning, according to the flight tracking service Flightradar24.

Unalakleet is a community of about 690 people about 150 miles (about 240 kilometers) southeast of Nome and 395 miles (about 640 kilometers) northwest of Anchorage. The village is on the Iditarod trail, route of the world's most famous sled dog race, during which mushers and their teams must cross the frozen Norton Sound.

Nome, a Gold Rush town, is just south of the Arctic Circle and is known as the ending point of the 1,000-mile (1,610-kilometer) Iditarod. The city said prayer vigils would be held Friday for those on board the plane, friends and family and those involved in search efforts.

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Golden reported from Seattle. Martha Bellisle in Seattle contributed to this report.



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