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Helicopter crash nyc midtown manhattan

NEW YORK -- A pilot killed this month when his helicopter hit the roof of a New York City skyscraper in rain and fog said before taking off from a Manhattan heliport that radar showed a 20-minute window to make it out, according to an investigative report released Tuesday. Pilot Tim McCormack flew south over the East River for five to seven minutes, toward the helicopter's home airport in Linden, New Jersey, before radioing that he wanted to return to the heliport but did not know where he was, the National Transportation Safety Board report said. McCormack, 58, was not authorized to fly in limited visibility, according to Federal Aviation Administration records. Onlookers watch the scene after a helicopter crashed on top of a building in Midtown Manhattan on June 10, 2019. Johannes Eisele /AFP - Getty Images The helicopter moved erratically during an 11-minute flight, changing direction and altitude several times before making a sweeping turn and flying into the roof of the 750-foot (229-meter) AXA Equitable building in tightly controlled airspace near Trump Tower. The crash obliterated the Agusta A109E helicopter, sparking a fire and forcing office workers to flee. This briefly sparked memories of 9/11 and fears of a terrorist attack, but authorities were quick to reassure the public that there was no indication the crash was intentional. The initial report did not include conclusions about the cause of the crash, but the details contained point to the strong possibility that foul weather played a role in the crash. It also raises the possibility that the helicopter went down quickly when it hit the roof. The helicopter was tracked at an altitude of 1,570 feet above ground level - about twice the height of the building - moments before it crashed, investigators said. Engine control is found in flight position and throttle lever is set to MAX. Social media video reviewed by investigators showed the helicopter diving out of the clouds, leveling and climbing back into the clouds and out of sight few minutes into the flight, the report said. McCormack constantly checked the weather conditions on his tablet computer for about two hours before deciding to take off, the report said, and just before leaving told heliport staff about seeing a window to fly. Flights to Linden will take a helicopter south, over the city's harbour and past the Statue of Liberty. It ended up falling in an area where the flight wasn't supposed to happen. Flight restrictions in place since President Donald Trump took office banning airplanes below 3,000 feet (914 meters) within a 1-mile (1.6-kilometer) radius of Trump Tower, just a few from the crash site. Helicopters entering and exiting the heliport on Manhattan's East Side are only allowed to fly in restricted areas if they have a permit and communicate with air traffic control at LaGuardia Airport. Investigators said McCormack never made such a request and did not contact air traffic control. McCormack, a former fire chief north of Clinton Corners, has 15 years of experience flying helicopters and single-engine aircraft and was certified as a flight instructor last year. Linden airport director Paul Dudley said he was a highly experienced and highly respected pilot. Continues reading the main story Only after taking off over the East River, he says he wants to go back to the heliport but doesn't know where he is. Firefighters responded to 787 Seventh Avenue in Midtown Manhattan on Monday after a helicopter crashed on the roof of a building. Credit... Jefferson Siegel for The New York Times By Patrick McGeehan and William K. Rashbaum [What you need to know to start the day: Get New York Today in your inbox.] The helicopter took off in damp fog and raced down the East River. But within minutes, the pilot tried to get back to the heliport he had just left. The pilot, an experienced flyer named Timothy McCormack, told the heliport he could not find his way. McCormack later stated that he did not know where he was, a law enforcement official said on Tuesday. It was Mr. McCormack's last communication before he fell and died on the roof of a 51-story office tower in central Manhattan on Monday afternoon, the official said. Now investigators will try to figure out why Mr. McCormack got lost within 11 minutes after he took off, bound for the airport in Linden, N.J., where he usually parks helicopters. A team of investigators from the National Transportation Safety Board arrived on Monday night to begin unifying a frightening sequence that for a moment made New Yorkers fear another terrorist attack in their city. Police officials said they quickly ruled out that possibility. The investigators may not have much to work with. The helicopter, the twin engine of the Agusta A109E, slammed so hard into the roof of the building, at 787 Seventh Avenue, that the plane was almost completely destroyed. Doug Brazy, an investigator for the safety board, said the post-crash fire consumed most of the debris. Once the bodies are examined on the roof of the building, which has been closed since the crash, a rescue company will remove it - perhaps down a flight of stairs or in an elevator, Mr. Brazy said. He said the helicopter did not have a recorder for voice or flight data, but some of its instruments had memories that investigators hoped to retrieve and analyze. At a news conference near the building's base on Tuesday afternoon, Mr. Brazy said Mr. McCormack flew a passenger from suburban Westchester County to the East Side of Manhattan in about 15 minutes on Monday morning. He said passengers reported reporting nothing seemed unusual flight. Mr. Brazy said Mr. McCormack may have attempted to make an emergency call near the end of the flight, but he could not confirm that anything had been received. He said that Mr. McCormack tracked the weather for nearly two hours he spent on the heliport, but that he did not know what influenced his decision to leave the heliport. Should helicopters fly? I don't know yet, says Mr. Brazy. According to the Federal Aviation Administration, Mr. McCormack is not rated flying by instrument alone, which is a requirement for low visibility conditions. Mr. McCormack did not need permission to fly the standard route from the heliport to Linden, Mr. Brazy said. But he would need permission from air traffic control at LaGuardia Airport to cross Manhattan, he added. People who know Mr. McCormack say he is familiar with the skies above New York and has flown around the city for years, mostly without incident. A few years ago, he calmly landed a helicopter full of passengers after a bird hit the windshield, a former employee recalled. Just two hours before the crash, Mr. McCormack had dropped off the passenger, identified by law enforcement officials as Danielle Bodini, in a city-owned heliport at the eastern end of 34th Street along the East River. Mr. Bodini, founder and chairman emeritus of American Continental Properties, a real estate company, used a helicopter to commute into town from home in Westchester. McCormack, who also lives in the north, has been flying for Mr. Bodini's company for five years, a company spokesman said. Seeing a break in the weather, Mr. McCormack took off at 1:32 p.m., law enforcement officials said. Five minutes later, he was on the radio, saying he turned around and asked for a landing spot, the official said. His helicopter is seen swooping up and down the river. Mr. Brazy said he believed that the erratic flight captured on video on Monday was Mr. McCormack's helicopter. Instead of landing on a heliport, it has landed to some of the country's most tightly controlled airspace. At 1:45 p.m., a caller working at the Bank of America office made the first 911 call about the crash, law enforcement officials said. Callers reported that a plane crashed on top of the building between 51st and 52nd Streets. Firefighters raced to the roof and extinguished the blaze. No one, other than Mr. McCormack, was injured in the crash. A pilot died when a helicopter crashed onto the roof of a Midtown Manhattan building in a hard landing on Monday, filling the air with smoke and clogging city streets with fire trucks, according to police and firefighters. The pilot, Tim McCormack, is people a board a privately owned Agusta A109E helicopter, police and firefighters said. No one else was injured in the crash, which happened in the heart of New York City, just a few blocks from the Times according to city officials. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, center, and first responder personnel walk near the scene where a helicopter reportedly crashed landing on top of a downtown building, June 10, 2019, in New York. New York City firefighters dressed at the scene after a helicopter crashed on top of a building and caused a fire in the Manhattan area. N.Y., June 11, 2019. Belated, officials said. Firefighters at the scene of a helicopter crash at 787 7th Ave. in New York, June 10, 2019. A New York City Fire Department truck is seen outside 787 7th Avenue in the city center where a helicopter reportedly crashed, June 10, 2019. 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