

Coroner says plane crash victims died instantly

by James Boyd

331-4370 | jboyd@heraldt.com

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The five Indiana University grad students who perished in a Thursday night plane crash all died instantly, a Monroe County deputy coroner said.

Nicole Meyer said autopsies on all five victims were performed late Friday and Saturday, both at Bloomington Hospital and at the Terre Haute Regional Medical Center.

Those killed were identified as Georgina Joshi, Chris Carducci, Garth Eppley, Zachary Novak and Robert Samels.

"We'll have to wait for toxicology results, but our preliminary investigation shows all five died instantly of blunt force trauma," Meyer said Friday.

The shattered Cessna 206 that crashed just south of the Monroe County Airport Thursday night was still at the crash site Saturday.

Officials from Cessna and from the plane's engine manufacturer were expected to examine the wreckage either Saturday or today.

National Transportation Safety Board lead investigator Ed Malinowski said his agency would be working with the Federal Aviation Administration to determine what caused the 11:40 p.m. crash.

Malinowski said investigators needed to complete all the necessary aspects of examining the remains of the plane while it was still intact on the ground. Local law enforcement agencies have been given the task of trying to locate witnesses.

But the top priority for aviation officials is to get as much work done on the ground as possible.

"We have to look at perishable evidence on scene," Malinowski said. "We can go over witness statements anytime."

Several residents in the vicinity of the crash site reported hearing a low-flying plane rev its engines twice, followed by a crashing noise.

Malinowski said a preliminary report of the NTSB and FAA's findings should be completed by the end of next week.

A far more detailed report will then be forwarded to a federal review board, which will issue a probable cause of the crash in anywhere from six months to a year.

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National Transportation Safety Board investigator Ed Malinowski listens to a question during a news conference Friday evening about the Thursday night plane crash that killed five Indiana University music school graduate students. At left is Nicole Meyer, a Monroe County deputy coroner. David Snodgrass | Hoosier Times