

Plane Crash (online version)

Patrick Harwood

Sept. 24, 2014

Word Count: 393

## **Francis Marion Plane Crash Kills Heart Transplant Team and Pilots**

*By Patrick Harwood*

A small plane carrying four Medical University Hospital heart transplant specialists, two pilots and a heart packed in ice crashed this morning in the Francis Marion Forest, killing all aboard.

The [Cessna](#) plane was flying from Charleston to Myrtle Beach where a critically ill man was being prepared at [Grand Strand Regional Medical Center](#) to receive a heart transplant.

The [Citation Latitude](#) corporate jet took off from [Charleston International Airport](#) at 6:45 this morning. It was expected to land at [Myrtle Beach International Airport](#) at 7:20 a.m. where a team was waiting to take the transplant team and its valuable cargo to the hospital, according to Tony Ciuffo, a spokesperson at Medical University Hospital where members of the transplant team all worked.

Sandra Weathers, an investigator with the [National Transportation Safety Board](#), said shortly after takeoff one of the Cessna's pilots reported he was having difficulty steering the plane because of trouble with its trim system. The trim, according to the NTSB official, is used to control the bank and pitch of the plane.

According to Weathers, the pilot signaled an emergency and indicated that he was heading back to Charleston's airport. Shortly after that communication, the plane crashed,

--more--

## **Plane Crash (p. 2)**

she said. At this hour recovery teams are at the crash site, which is located in the Francis Marion Forest in an area off Highway 17 near [McClellanville](#).

The crash killed all four members of the transplant team: cardiac surgeon Katherine Pinch, transplant donation specialists Richard Moore and Michael Shapiro, and physician-in-training Maram Longford. Also killed were pilots Dennis Wholey and Robert Sadera.

The patient who was awaiting the transplant was put back on a waiting list as the search began for another heart. Hospital officials in Myrtle Beach did not release his name, citing privacy reasons. But a hospital spokesperson said there was no telling how long the patient might be able to live without a transplant.

“Everyone in the operating room went quiet,” said Justin Brain, MUSC’s transplant surgery chief, when the tragic news was heard. “This is such a tragedy for so many people.”

NTSB officials say they will next speak to the media at McClellanville’s town hall at 2 p.m. today.

###