

Crash pilot moved to Tasmania to learn to fly, company says

The body of the pilot who died when a twin-engine plane crashed in the Tasmanian wilderness during poor weather on Saturday morning has been retrieved.

The aircraft, owned by Tasmanian charter company Par Avion, and its pilot went missing on Saturday over mountainous terrain in the state's south-west, after being in the air for about 40 minutes.

Par Avion said the pilot, whose name has not been released, had learnt to fly with Par Avion and moved to Tasmania to become a pilot.

On Saturday evening police said the wreckage had been sighted 100 metres below the summit at West Portal, near the Western Arthur Range, and that there was "zero chance of survivability".

Search and rescue investigators from Tasmania Police were winched down to the scene in the Southwest National Park on Sunday afternoon.

Tasmania Police Inspector Dave Wiss said the pilot's body had been recovered and forensic evidence gathered.



© ABC News: Annah Fromberg A Par Avion Britten-Norman Islander twin-engine plane, similar to one that crashed in southwest Tasmania.

"It was important to achieve both objectives for the sake of the family and to ensure a greater understanding of the events that contributed to this tragic event," Inspector Wiss said.

"Thankfully, both have been successfully achieved."

The plane's Emergency Location Transmitter was extricated from the wreckage and taken to Hobart for examination.

Rescuers risk lives to bring pilot home

Earlier on Sunday, Inspector Wiss said two helicopters had flown as close as possible to the crash site on Saturday but clouds had moved in.

"There was predicted to be a break in the clouds at 7:00pm, we had a helicopter waiting nearby, the clouds did part and we darted the helicopter in and they located the crashed aircraft," he said.

"It was a calculated risk, with someone's life in the balance, the pilot's life in the balance it was a risk worth taking. There was thankfully that break in the weather and the helicopter got in."

However, once the scene became clear, it was realised it was a "catastrophic event" with no hope of survival for the pilot, he said.

"I won't be going into the exact details of the crash in the interests of the family, only to say that there is no chance that the pilot could have survived."

Inspector Wiss said three expert crash investigators were winched into the area again on Sunday — with all staying on safety lines due to the terrain and conditions.



© Provided by ABC News The missing pilot has been described as "very experienced and well qualified".

Airline staff in shock

Shannon Wells, the managing director of Par Avion's parent company Airlines of Tasmania, said the poor weather in the area at the time was not unusual.

"It's a region that gets 300 days of rain a year, it gets hurricane-force winds fairly frequently," Mr Wells said.

"Our company and our pilots are used to flying in that kind of weather."

He said Par Avion's staff and management were in shock over the loss.

"There's been a lot of tears shed by me and our colleagues, we're a small family business, we train up a lot of our family here and we see the same people every day," he said.

"We're only 30 staff so we know everyone by name and when one of us doesn't come home it hits us all quite hard."

Mr Wells said he would not confirm the pilot's identity out of respect for the family.

"The family are en route from interstate, so we'd rather get them here first and talk to them and then when they ready, I have no doubt in the next 24 hours more information will be made public."

Pilot moved to Tasmania to learn to fly

Mr Wells said the pilot had moved to Tasmania to become a pilot and learnt to fly with Par Avion.

"They did all their training here, they were well versed in Tasmanian flying conditions and this was their second year of flying commercially for us," he said.

The pilot had even begun "assisting and checking other pilots with their flying to the south-west", Mr Wells said.

He said the company, which had been operating since 1978, completes hundreds of flights over the south-west every year.

Tasmanian Police said they would work with the Australian Transport Safety Bureau and that the matter was now before the coroner.

Extracted from:

<https://www.msn.com/en-au/news/australia/crash-pilot-moved-to-tasmania-to-learn-to-fly-company-says/ar-BBQHtIR?li=AAgfYrC&ocid=mailsignout> On 10/12/18 at 05:38:10