

Beat: Local

Small plane crashes off the Channel Islands near France, killing 2

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USPA News - A small plane carrying an English businessman and his wife crashed off the coast of the Channel Island of Jersey on Wednesday morning, but no survivors were found, emergency services said. The cause of the crash was not immediately known.

The accident happened at approximately 10:20 a.m. local time when the twin-engine Cessna Crusader aircraft ditched into the English Channel approximately 5 miles (8 kilometers) west of Jersey Airport. It is believed to have carried English businessman Carl Whiteley and his wife Kathryn. States of Jersey Police said the aircraft was coming in for landing after a flight from Dinan in northwestern France. Search and rescue vessels, including lifeboats, private boats and the Royal Navy frigate HMS Northumberland, along with two British and French rescue helicopters, participated in the rescue operation. But the search was called off about 2.5 hours later after neither survivors nor bodies were found, although some debris from the aircraft was recovered. "We now believe there were no survivors of this morning's light aircraft crash," a police spokeswoman said, adding that the operation was hampered by poor visibility. Jersey authorities did not immediately release the identities of the victims, but England-based Belmont Regency identified them as its co-founder Carl Whiteley and his wife Kathryn. They were on their way to their home in Jersey when the aircraft went down, according to Belmont Regency managing director Brett Hannon. "Carl jointly founded the company in 1982 with myself and apart from being business partners for over 31 years, Carl was a close friend who will be greatly missed," Hannon said. "The fondest memories will remain with myself and our staff of our dear departed colleague. Our thoughts are with his family at this tragic time." Chief Minister Ian Gorst, the head of government of Jersey, extended his condolences to the families of the victims on behalf of the Council of Ministers and the States Assembly. "We were deeply saddened to learn of the accident," he said. "I would like to thank all those who took part in the search and rescue operation." "It was a difficult search operation in reduced visibility and our thoughts are with all those affected by this tragic incident," Gorst added. "Jersey Airport controlled the flow of aircraft movements during the search and the ambulance service and hospital were on major incident standby." It was not immediately known what caused Wednesday's accident, which will be investigated by Jersey Police and the UK's Air Accident Investigation Branch (AAIB). "The States of Jersey Police will now be working alongside the Air Accident Investigation Branch to establish what happened," the police spokeswoman said. Jersey is a British island off the coast of Normandy in northwestern France and has a population of more than 92,000. Together with Guernsey, the islands form the group known as the Channel Islands.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local

(702) 943.0233 Facsimile

info@unitedpressassociation.org

info@gna24.com

www.gna24.com