PROFESSIONAL NEGLIGENCE SUSPECTED IN FATAL PLANE CRASH IN OSAKA

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The Osaka Prefectural Police and the transport ministry are investigating Saturday's fatal plane crash at Yao Airport as a case of professional negligence resulting in death.

According to the ministry and the airport, a four-seater Mooney M20C bound for Yao left Kobe Airport at 4:03 p.m. but crashed while attempting to land at about 4:20 p.m., killing all four occupants.

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It apparently encountered trouble climbing to make the second landing attempt, officials said.

The police are investigating the cause of the accident and attempting to identify the victims, who they believe were all men.

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The ministry said the pilot was Yasushi Nishimoto.

The cockpit of the 7-meter-long, 10.7-meter-wide plane was destroyed in the crash and the fire extinguished at around 4:40 p.m., police and firefighters said.

Visibility was good at the time, and the wind speed at 4 p.m. was 5.4 kph.

The Japan Transport Safety Board said it will send two investigators to the airport.

The plane received its last airworthiness certificate in May 2015 after clearing the government's mandatory annual safety check. It was registered in 1997.

Yao Airport is in a residential district about 15 km southeast of Osaka Station. It is used mainly as a base for aerial surveys, pilot training and sightseeing rather than regular flight services.

The U.S. military returned the airport to Japanese control in 1954, and it began mainstream service in 1960.

Television footage showed that the plane incurred heavy damage from the crash, which nearly tore off the tail and broke its wing tips.

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