

Investigators blame icing for 2012 air crash in Siberia

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USPA News - A UTair Aviation passenger plane that crashed in a snowy field in Siberia last year, killing 33 people and leaving only 10 survivors, is believed to have been caused by icing, Russian officials said on Tuesday. A definitive cause is expected within months.

The accident happened at around 7:33 a.m. local time on April 2, 2012, when an ATR-72 twin-engine turboprop aircraft crashed in a snowy field about 3 kilometers (1.8 mile) from the runway at Roschino International Airport in Tyumen, the capital of the federal subject which carries the same name. The plane had taken off from the airport several minutes earlier. Vladimir Markin, a spokesman for Russia's Investigative Committee, said investigators believe the accident was caused by a lack of proper de-icing before the flight took off. He said the aircraft had remained in the open air throughout the night despite precipitation and temperatures as low as minus 2 degrees Celsius (28.4 Fahrenheit). UTair-Technic, which was tasked to protect planes from icing, did not examine the aircraft on the morning of April 2 and allowed it to fly despite obvious signs of icing. The captain of the aircraft also neglected to examine his plane, violating flight regulations, and decided to take off despite the signs of icing. UTair Aviation flight 120 was on a scheduled flight from Tyumen to Surgut International Airport in Surgut, a city about 640 kilometers (397 miles) northeast of Tyumen in the federal subject of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug. The aircraft was carrying a total of 39 passengers, all of them adults, and four crew members. Investigators discovered that the aircraft deviated 150 degrees to the right as it was attempting to take off from the airport, forcing the crew to turn the plane to the left side as they turned around to attempt an emergency landing. "Doing this, the plane touched the ground with its left engine and fell apart," Markin said. According to government records, the ATR-72 aircraft involved in the accident was built in 1991 and made its first flight in 1992. The aircraft had flown 35,000 hours prior to the crash and underwent its last major maintenance in Germany in 2010, two years before the crash. A routine maintenance had been carried out in Tyumen in February 2012. "At present, a comprehensive air and technical expert examination is underway, the conclusion of which will be based on a scientifically based decision of the International Aviation Committee," Markin said. "Based on the results of the forensic expert examination and decision of the International Aviation Committee, the responsible persons will be prosecuted." Thirty-one people died at the scene of the crash while twelve others were flown to two nearby hospitals in critical to grave conditions. Two of those injured later died of their injuries, raising the overall death toll to 33 with only ten survivors. A man who was supposed to be the flight's 40th passenger failed to arrive on time at the airport. Russia has seen a number of major aviation accidents over the last few years, in part because of its use of old aircraft, although industry experts also point to other problems such as poor crew training, out-of-date airports, lax government controls, and neglect of safety to maximize profits.

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