Beat: Technology

ISU coach among 7 dead in Illinois plane crash after NCAA tournament final

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USPA News - A private plane returning from the NCAA tournament final in Indianapolis crashed in a field in central Illinois on early Tuesday, killing all seven people on board, including two members of Illinois State University`s Athletics department staff, officials said. The incident was first reported at 12:15 a.m.

CT when air traffic control notified the Bloomington-Normal Airport Authority in Illinois that it had lost radar contact with a private plane that had departed Indianapolis in Indiana a little after midnight ET. Airport Authority staff responded to the Central Illinois Regional Airport in Bloomington to see if the plane had arrived there, but it was determined not to have landed. Emergency officials then launched a coordinated search and rescue operation, after which a Bloomington Police Department officer located the plane`s wreckage at about 3:15 a.m. CT in a field close to the airport, according to a news release from the McLean County Sheriff`s Department. Rescue personnel determined that none of the seven people on board the plane had survived. Illinois State University confirmed that two of its Athletics department staff members were killed in the crash. The university identified the victims as Torrey Ward, the associate head coach of the Redbirds menÃ¢€™s basketball team, and Aaron Leetch, the deputy director of Athletics for external operations. "The Redbird family and the Bloomington-Normal community has suffered a terrible loss today," said Larry Lyons, Illinois State Director of Athletics. "Our hearts go out to the families and loved ones of those involved. There is no play in the playbook for times like these. We will miss Aaron and Torrey deeply, and we will support their families in any way that we can." It was not immediately known what had caused Tuesday`s accident.

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