## MEDICAL HELICOPTER CRASH CLAIMS THREE LIVES

Written by Josie Cooper Thursday, January 03 2013 15:48

The investigation continues into the fatal crash of the Mercy North Iowa Air Medical helicopter north of Ventura Wednesday night.

The helicopter, based out of Mason City, crashed at about 9pm as it was flying from Mason City to Emmetsburg to pick up a patient.

Two Mercy-North Iowa employees, nurse Shelly Lair-Langenbau and paramedic Russell Piehl, as well as the pilot of the helicopter, Gene Grell, died in the accident.

The helicopter is owned by Med-Trans of Dallas Texas, a company that has partnered to provide helicopter service for Mercy since April 2011.

Med-Trans C-E-O Fred Buttrell says he's not going to guess right now what caused the crash and wait for the investigation to be completed.

{audio}COPTER.mp3{/audio}

Mercy North C-E-O Dan Varnum says the Mercy family is mourning the loss of the crew which he called "selfless healthcare workers that gave their lives to providing care for others each and every day."

Bob Peebles, the CEO of Sioux City's Mercy Medical Center, says their thoughts and prayers go out to their friends and associates in Mason City. Mercy-Sioux City provides air transport service here with a different make of helicopter. Peebles says safety is always top of mind.

Radio lowa contributed to this report.

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