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All 8 passengers in Bonny chopper disaster feared dead — Police



NSIB investigates helicopter crash

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The Eastwind Aviation helicopter that crashed into Bonny River, in Rivers State, yesterday, has claimed the lives of its eight occupants.

The helicopter, carrying eight persons, six passengers and two crew members, crashed from Port Harcourt Military base to FPSO NUIM ANTAN (offshore Calabar).

Rivers State Police Command said all eight persons aboard the helicopter that ditched into the Atlantic Ocean have been reportedly dead.

The Police Public Relations Officer of the Command, Grace Iringe-Koko, in a statement in Port Harcourt, yesterday, said: "The Rivers State Police Command regrets to inform the public of a tragic incident that occurred today, at 11am.

"Mr. Ifeanyi Udogwu, a staff of Antan Producing Limited, Port Harcourt, reported to the Command that a helicopter with the call sign number 5N-BQG (S76C+), belonging to East Wing Aviation, departed from the NAF Base in Port Harcourt. The flight was bound for Nuim Antan OML123 fields, carrying two crew members and six passengers.

"Unfortunately, about 11a.m., the helicopter reportedly ditched into the ocean near Antan Producing Limited's Mimbo platform and FPSO. All eight persons onboard are feared dead.

"The Marine Division of the Rivers State Police Command is cooperating with other agencies to recover the aircraft and the occupants.

"The Rivers State Police Command extends its deepest condolences to the families of the tragic times. Aviation ministry confirms crash

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The incident was confirmed in a statement by the spokesperson of the Ministry of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Odutayo Oluseyi.

Meanwhile, Vanguard gathered that the oil workers were contract staff of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Limited, NNPC.

The statement said that three bodies have been recovered so far from the crashed helicopter, while search and rescue operations were ongoing to locate the remaining passengers.

"It said the helicopter, a Sikorsky SK76 with registration 5NBQG and operated by East Wind Aviation, was from Port Harcourt Military Base, DNPM, to the Nuimantan Oil Rig.

"The aircraft, with eight persons on board, ditched into the waters near Bonny Finima in the Atlantic Ocean.

"The National Safety Investigation Bureau, NSIB, has been notified and emergency response teams were immediately activated.

"Search and rescue operations are ongoing with the support of the Nigerian Search and Rescue Unit, the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority, NCAA, the National Safety Investigation Bureau, NSIB, and other relevant agencies. Neighbouring aerodromes have also been notified for support.

"While no Emergency Locator Transmitter, ELT, signal was received, manual efforts to plot the location of the accident are underway.

"And all available resources, including the military and low-flying aircraft, have been deployed to assist in locating and rescuing any survivor(s). So far, three bodies have been recovered," the statement added.

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Meanwhile, NSIB, has commenced investigation into the accident.

A statement by Director, Public Affairs and Family Assistance of NSIB, Mrs. Bimbo Oladeji, said:

"Operating under Visual Flight Rules, VFR, the helicopter did not transmit an Emergency Locator Transmitter, ELT, signal, prompting authorities to manually plot the accident's location to expedite search and rescue efforts.

Search and rescue operations were activated immediately, with the NSIB collaborating closely with NEMA, NCAA, the Nigerian Armed Forces and other relevant agencies. Emergency response teams are actively working to locate survivors, with three bodies recovered so far. The search continues with support from neighbouring aerodromes, military units, and low-flying aircraft.

Quoting the Director General of NSIB, Captain Alex Badeh Jr., the statement added: “Our thoughts and prayers are with the families affected by this tragic incident. We are fully committed to uncovering the circumstances surrounding this accident. We will work diligently to ensure that all necessary information is collected. The public must avoid speculation during this sensitive time, as our focus is on providing clarity and accountability through our investigation.”