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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Plane Crash-Lands on Ob River, Killing 6

July 11, 2011



The damaged An-24 plane, owned by Angara Airlines, is seen after a hard landing on the surface of the Ob river in Tomsk region in western Siberia July 11, 2011. The plane, which flew from Tomsk to Sur

A twin turboprop passenger plane carrying 37 people made a crash-landing on the Ob River on Monday after one of its engines caught fire, killing at least six.

The An-24 plane operated by Angara Airlines was cruising at an altitude of 6,000 meters when the fire engulfed the left engine about 30 minutes into a flight from Tomsk to Surgut, Interfax reported.

Pictures from the crash scene indicate that the plane came down hard, with the tail and back part of the fuselage ripping off.

"The plane glided smoothly right over our boat and toward the shore," said a crew member of the TNG-208 ferry who witnessed the landing, Interfax reported. "Its left engine was on fire. When it hit the water, its tail tore off the fuselage."

The plane came down at 11:50 a.m. about one kilometer from the village of Medvedevo in the Tomsk region and 65 kilometers from the nearest airport in Nizhnevartovsk, a city in the

Khanty-Mansiisk autonomous district, news reports said.

The precise death toll was not immediately clear.

Vesti television said seven passengers were killed, two were missing and the other 24 were hospitalized, including an infant girl and her mother and a 13-year-old boy.

Interfax said six people were dead and one was missing.

Vesti said the four crew members survived the crash and were hospitalized.

The cause of the fire also remained unclear.

The crash is the second involving an aging Soviet-build passenger plane in less than a month. A Tu-134 jet operated by another small airline, RusAir, crashed short of the runway while trying to land in poor weather in Petrozavodsk on June 20, killing 47 of the 52 people on board.

After that crash, President Dmitry Medvedev said airlines should start phasing out Tu-134s from their fleets. On Monday, Medvedev said An-24s also should be grounded. "Everything I said about Tu-134 planes must be applied equally to An-24s," he said during a meeting with government ministers at his Gorki residence outside Moscow, Interfax reported.

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