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Aviation Official Blames Crew for Deadly Kamchatka Crash

By The Moscow Times

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A senior aviation official on Wednesday blamed the crew of an An-28 propeller plane that crashed last month in the Far East for the deaths of 10 people on board and called for those operating the flight to be fired.

Alexander Neradko, head of the Federal Air Transportation Agency, said that the pilots of the An-28 plane had "not followed landing rules" and that this was the likely cause of the Sept. 12 crash, Interfax reported.

The plane, which was carrying 14 people, four of whom survived, was found on the side of the 500-meter-high Pyatibratka Mountain near the town of Palana, to the west of the far eastern peninsula.

On Wednesday, Neradko announced a string of additional safety measures put in place to prevent similar crashes from occurring on Kamchatka.

In particular, he said that his agency had established a mandatory approach route for pilots flying into the Kamchatkan airports of Palana, Ozyornaya and Nikolskoye — independent of weather conditions.

Neradko added that additional checks would be run on all aircraft operated by the Kamchatkan airline whose plane crashed and that a ground proximity warning system had been installed on the company's sole functioning An-28.

He also demanded that those those responsible for the upkeep of the airline's craft be fired and noted that pilots on Kamchatka regularly violated air traffic rules.

In the weeks following the incident, crash investigators determined that both pilots on the flight from the regional capital, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, had alcohol in their blood.

The Investigative Committee subsequently opened a criminal case on charges of violating air traffic rules, which carry a maximum sentence of seven years in prison. No one has been charged in the case.

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