

Amy and Jocelyn Gannon Helicopter Tour Safety Act

On December 26, 2019, a sightseeing helicopter carrying six passengers—including Amy and Jocelyn Gannon of Madison, Wisconsin—crashed in Koke'e State Park in Hawaii. The helicopter, operating as an on-demand commercial air tour flight, collided with a cliff along rugged shoreline and was destroyed by impact and a post-crash fire. The helicopter's pilot and all passengers were killed. According to a preliminary report from the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), visibility at the time of the crash was low due to fog and rain.

Helicopter tours are a popular way to experience remarkable sights around the country, particularly in Hawaii and Alaska and over national parks. As tourism has steadily grown, the number of fatal crashes has also increased, making clear the need for improved safety measures at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)—including measures that would implement longstanding recommendations from the NTSB. Of particular importance is ensuring operators and pilots have the information and training needed to make safer decisions while flying in areas that experience rapidly changing weather, as was the case in the December 2019 accident.

The **Amy and Jocelyn Gannon Helicopter Tour Safety Act** would address longstanding helicopter tour safety concerns, particularly flying in rapidly changing weather. The bill requires FAA to implement the following NTSB recommendations:

- A-13-025: Initiate an Aviation Weather Camera Program in Hawaii that includes the installation and maintenance of aviation weather cameras at critical locations and establish public access to real-time imagery
- A-13-026: Install and maintain aviation weather cameras in mountain passes identified as being high risk and establish public access to real-time imagery
- A-13-027: Equip FAA flight service station specialists with technical capabilities and training to provide verbal preflight and en route briefings using aviation weather camera imagery
- A-16-034: Require all Part 135 operators to install flight data recording devices capable of supporting a flight data monitoring program
- A-16-035: Require all Part 135 operators to establish a structured flight data monitoring program that reviews all available data sources to identify deviations from established norms and procedures and other potential safety issues

Additionally, the **Amy and Jocelyn Gannon Helicopter Tour Safety Act** would require FAA to do the following:

- Review and approve flight routes used by commercial air tour operators
- Work with National Weather Service to develop and implement a process to evaluate flight routes, or segments of flight routes, susceptible to rapidly changing weather
- Establish training requirements for commercial air tour operators to utilize real-time weather information made available through the Aviation Weather Camera Program
- Require commercial air tour operators to use pilots who hold instrument ratings
- Study the feasibility of requiring helicopters used for commercial air tours to be better equipped
- Study the feasibility of conducting audits of helicopter mounted videos for evidence of safe flying techniques and avoidance of dangerous terrain and rapidly changing weather events