

Pilot dies in S. Tahoe plane crash; 1 person survives



One person died, one survived after this plane crashed July 22 near South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

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By Kathryn Reed

The 67-year-old pilot of a single-engine plane crashed moments after taking off Monday from Lake Tahoe Airport.

Steven Lefton's wife, Karen Lefton, was the lone passenger of the 1963 Mooney. She was conscious when Calstar airlifted her from the meadow near Golden Bear to Renown Medical Center in Reno. She is expected to recover from her injuries.

The Palo Alto couple arrived at the South Lake Tahoe airport on July 18. They were taking off about 11:15am July 22 when

the plane banked to the right, lost altitude and crashed in a wooded area about three-quarters of a mile to the east of the airport.

"It's a fairly powerful plane, but on a hot day like this it's fairly easy to lose density altitude and have problems," El Dorado County sheriff's Lt. Pete Van Arnum told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Another plane in the area saw the four-seater flying low and heard the crash. Then the jet picked up the emergency beacon signal of the downed plane. From there Calstar was able to locate the crash site from the air.

The plane crashed into trees and flipped. It was resting upside down in a crumpled heap.

Beth Frisby, a flight nurse with Calstar, was the first person on the scene because she was on a walk in the area. She called her husband, EDSO Deputy Damian Frisby, who was able to track her location via GPS on the phones.

The plane was still running when Frisby came upon the crash site.

She was assessing the occupants of the plane as crews arrived.

"A lot of fuel was leaking, so we were concerned when we got here," Van Arnum said.

He said it was lucky the plane did not explode or cause much of a fire.

Investigators from the Federal Aviation Administration arrived within hours from Reno and National Transportation Safety board are expected Tuesday from Seattle. Guards will be onsite until investigators are done and the plane can be hauled away.