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Small plane crashes, two dead

By Noreen Gillespie
 THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

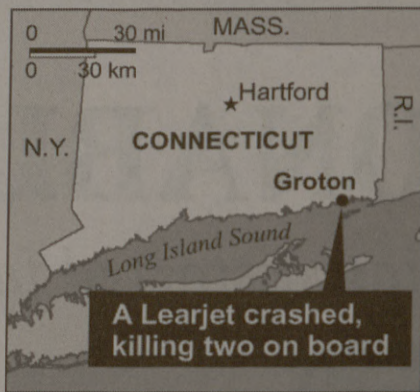
GROTON, Conn. — A small business jet crashed into three houses Monday, setting two of them on fire, then cartwheeled into a river less than a mile short of an airport. Both people aboard the plane were killed, authorities said.

Nobody on the ground was seriously hurt, although one woman was treated for minor injuries after she jumped out a window of her home, Poquonock Bridge Fire Marshal Michael Richards said. Thirteen people were either left homeless or told they could not return to nearby homes Monday.

The Learjet was approaching the airport when it slammed into the homes in the Poquonock River Bridge section of Groton.

"People were running down the street, and all I could see was blazing fire and smoke and people running up and down the street," said Pauleatha Glover, 55. "It was an explosion, you know, I thought somebody had blown up the Poquonock River Bridge."

Richards said the plane clipped a vacant home before cutting through two others and setting them on fire. The plane broke apart



SOURCES: Associated Press; ESRI AP

and the pieces landed in the river, he said. Ross Finlayson, 17, said he saw the plane hit the houses and a riverside walkway in the residential area.

"It did a cartwheel," Finlayson said. "It exploded. It clipped over the top of that house and went right through the next house."

Police did not immediately release the names of those on board.

Gloria Aldana leaped from her burning home when the plane hit her one-story house, her husband said. She was treated at

a local hospital. "She got panicked and jumped out the window," Edwin Aldana said. "She's doing OK."

The Learjet went down about a half-mile from the runway at Groton-New London Airport, Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Jim Peters said. He said it had taken off from Farmingdale Republic Airport on New York's Long Island.

Catherine Young, the Groton airport manager, said the plane was on its second approach when it went down. The crash happened 20 minutes before the tower opened and airport officials were using recording of air-to-ground communication to piece together what happened, she said.

"The pilots announced something about coming to the airport, but it was garbled," she said. The FAA and state Department of Environmental Protection were on the scene.

The plane is registered to Jetpro LLC, a corporation based at New Hyde Park, N.Y.

The plane was believed to be carrying about 1,200 gallons of jet fuel, said Ne Torres, who works for the Department of Environmental Protection's oil and chemical spill unit.

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Doctors struggling over best candidates for obesity surgery

By Lauran Neergaard
 THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Amy Topel had tried exercise, weight-loss pills and every diet, real or fad, around. But at age 15, she'd reached 260 pounds and a difficult decision: It was time to try surgery.

Operating was scary, but her mother had undergone it and lost 100 pounds — and Amy was tired of classmates' taunts. So in June, a surgeon shrank Amy's stomach. She's dropped 30 pounds and counting.

Gastric bypass surgery has long been a dramatic solution for obese adults, but more doctors are operating on teenagers, too. Now, the first pediatric guidelines are due out soon, and they'll urge doctors to put more limits on teen surgery than on adults — because nobody yet knows the long-term outcomes of such a radical operation on a still-developing body.

The main recommendations:

—To qualify, teens should have obesity-caused problems, either physical or, like Amy, from the stigma of being fat — and a starting weight at least 30 pounds higher than adult candidates.

—Don't operate before teens nearly reach their full height potential — usually around age 13 for girls and 15 for boys — because the surgery limits nutrient absorption.

—Hospitals should establish a panel of experts in adolescent obesity, psychology and nutrition to evaluate teens' physical and psychological well-being and pick the best candidates.

Surgery clearly will help some teens, but "it made sense to all of us to set the bar a bit higher," says Dr. Thomas Inge of the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, who co-authored the guidelines with fellow specialists in pediatric surgery and obesity.

The guidelines have been submitted to a medical journal for publication later this year, and promise to be somewhat controversial. Some surgeons say there's no reason to be more cautious with teens. After all, heart disease, diabetes and other obesity-related illnesses can take root in childhood — and teens will have longer to reap the benefits of being slimmer.

"There's no doubt surgery is a drastic meas-

ure. It is a risk to life. But at times, living with a condition like this obesity — it is a risk to life by itself," says Dr. Constantine Frantzides of Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center in Chicago, who operated on Amy.

There are no statistics on how many teens get gastric bypass; the number is believed very small but growing.

The operation entails stapling closed part of the stomach, forming a small pouch that's connected to one end of the small intestine. That limits how much food it's possible to consume, and how much is absorbed. Typically, patients lose 70 to 80 percent of their excess body weight in about a year.

But the surgery itself comes with risks, such as wound infections, the possibility of stomach leaks, and occasionally, life-threatening blood clots.

Once patients recover, they must follow stringent rules: They eat small servings, carefully counting to get enough protein. They take vitamins and calcium to counter nutrient deficiencies, including bone loss.

Gorging causes vomiting. The body no longer processes sugar properly, so too much causes dizziness and diarrhea. Regularly breaking the rules can bring back the weight.

Such changes are hard enough for adults. So the pending pediatric guidelines stress having experts evaluate if a teen is mature enough, and has stable family support, to follow the rules before surgery is offered.

As for size, obesity is measured with a height-to-weight ratio called the body mass index. A BMI of 30 is obese — for someone 5-foot-8 like Amy, 197 pounds. For teen surgery candidates, the new guidelines will recommend a BMI of 40 — an additional 60 pounds — plus serious obesity-caused illnesses; or a BMI of 50 if they have less serious obesity-related problems, such as being maliciously teased.

Adults, in contrast, qualify with a BMI of 35 plus obesity-caused illness.

Amy is the youngest of the 19 teenagers Chicago's Frantzides has operated on. His top criteria is that the teen's family be overweight, under the theory that people genetically predisposed to obesity are less likely to benefit from diet and exercise alone.

Impasse

Continued from page 1

special session or Dewhurst restores a Senate tradition of requiring two-thirds of senators to agree to take up a bill on the Senate floor. Under that tradition, the Democratic senators blocked redistricting in the last special session.

Dewhurst said he would not change his mind about the so-called "two-thirds rule," saying it is a tradition for the Senate not to have it in place when lawmakers tackle redistricting.

"I don't think our 11 colleagues are in a position to ask for anything," Dewhurst said. "They have broken the Texas Constitution. They need to come back. They were elected to do a job."

Democrats said that is not going to happen without movement from Perry or Dewhurst.

"If I were a betting man considering a wager on how long we'll continue, if we'll hold or if we'll fold, I'd place my chips on the Texas 11," said West, invoking the name the Senate Democrats have been calling themselves.

The Texas Senate met briefly Monday afternoon and then broke for the day because of a lack of quorum with the Democrats gone.

The Democrats, meanwhile, held their daily meeting, reading aloud letters of support from constituents as photographers took their pictures.

Austin folk singer Steven Brooks, who said he was touring in New Mexico, stopped by the hotel briefly and entertained the senators with a song he wrote called the "Killer Ds of Texas." An often-repeated line in the song goes: "The killer Ds of Texas put the sting on Tom DeLay."

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