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UPDATE: Couple watched as plane crashed near Mount Charleston

By [Mary Manning](#) · June 29, 2008 · 5:33 PM

(First posted at 12:30 p.m.) Jim and Carol Stivers were sitting at their dining room table in their mountainside cabin when Jim noticed a low-flying airplane whiz by the window.

"Omigosh! They're not going to make it," Carol Stivers said as the couple rushed out of their Echo Canyon home onto a back porch.

The crash made no sound, she said.

Instead, the Stiverses saw the fireball where the [Piper Cherokee PA 32-300](#) had crashed into the mountain at about 7,500 feet and they called 911. The crash killed four people and the ensuing fireball triggered a 12-acre brush fire that is expected to be contained by 6 p.m. Monday, Kirsten Cannon of the Bureau of Land Management said. Cannon said that State Route 157 would be opened by 6 p.m. today.

Of the 65 homes in Echo Canyon, Stivers said 10 are occupied year round. On Saturday night firefighters estimated 38 structures were in danger from the intense fire. Police called for a mandatory evacuation Saturday night.

The National Transportation Safety Board's chief investigator on this crash, Elliott Simpson, said he spent today on the mountain investigating the plane with a pilot and three passengers, none of whom survived.

No identities of the victims were available, but Clark County Coroner Mike Murphy told the Associated Press that two men and two women were aboard at the time of the crash. The bodies were removed from the rugged mountainside today.

Between 85 percent and 90 percent of the Piper had burned and its debris spread over 500 feet, Simpson said.

It will take up to 10 days for preliminary facts about the crash, Simpson said. Another six to nine months will pass until the NTSB releases a probable cause, Simpson said.

"We were very, very fortunate," said Pat Vannozzi, chief of the Mount Charleston Volunteer Fire Department, praising the 130 firefighters from the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, Nevada Division of Forestry, Clark County Fire Department, Metro Police and the Nevada Highway Patrol who responded to the fire and evacuated residents in danger.

He said that dry grasses and parched pine trees have put the Spring Mountains in extreme fire danger this summer.

State Sen. John Lee, D-Clark County, a Mount Charleston property owner, stood gazing up at Echo Canyon this afternoon.

"We had a horrific accident," Lee said, adding some advice to those who plan to venture up to Mount Charleston on the July 4th weekend: "Leave your fireworks at home."

Anyone caught with any fireworks, including safe and sane varieties, on any federal lands in Nevada can be fined up to \$10,000 and spend a year in jail, federal officials said.

For the past two years the Nevada Fire Safe Council has helped mountain home owners remove dead trees and brush from around their cabins and homes, said Kim Otero, a council member.

Nevada has \$1.5 million plus some funds from the Southern Nevada Public Lands

Management Act to help homeowners before there's a fire, Otero said.

Carol Stivers said she and her husband took the efforts to fireproof their home seriously.

Earlier this year they built a metal box to store their firewood.

"But if there's a fire in your canyon, you have to get out," Carol Stivers said, as she walked down a dirt road in Old Town to stay with friends until police let her back into her home later tonight.

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