

## Put strobes on towers, judge says

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A fatality inquiry into the deaths of two RCMP special constables in a plane crash has recommended strobe lights be placed on transmission towers.

Special Const. Nancy Marie Puttkemery, 34, the pilot of a small plane, was killed about 4 p.m. Dec. 9, 1989, along with Special Const. Vincent Timms when the aircraft's left wing tip hit at least one guy wire supporting a transmission tower at Crossfield, 32 km north of Calgary.

They were returning to Edmonton following surveillance work in the Calgary area.

In his report released Thursday, provincial court Judge A.A. Fradsham said strobe lights would make towers more visible to pilots battling poor weather.

Puttkemery had radioed Calgary to say she lost visual contact with the ground before the accident. There was fog in the area at the time.

The judge concluded that from the weather conditions, the slow speed and flying pattern of the Cessna that Puttkemery intended to return to Calgary.

He noted the tower was not on the navigational charts. A system to transmit information about such structures to the proper authorities had worked for all towers but this one, he said, adding it has since been added to charts.

"In reviewing the evidence before me, I cannot honestly recommend an improvement in those systems that would prevent deaths in similar circumstances," he wrote. "No new system will thwart all omissions."

Fradsham said the Calgary-Edmonton air corridor is busy, and adverse weather is a fact of life along it. The tower isn't easily seen without aid, and the lighting system it uses loses significant effectiveness in fog.