

Manitoba

Woman who was 1 of 2 student pilots killed in Manitoba plane crash was 'the essence of pure joy': family

2 student pilots from Harv's Air flying school were killed in mid-air crash near Steinbach on Tuesday morning

[Bryce Hoye](#) · CBC News · Posted: Jul 08, 2025 12:43 PM EDT | Last Updated: July 8, 2025



Listen to this article ⓘ

Estimated 4 minutes



Savanna May Royes, 20, has been identified by her family as one of two student pilots killed in a mid-air collision between two small planes on Tuesday morning near Steinbach, Man. (Submitted by family of Savanna May Royes)

The family of a 20-year-old woman killed in a mid-air plane crash in southern Manitoba on Tuesday morning says she had always dreamed of becoming a pilot, following in the footsteps of her father.

Savanna May Royes was one of the two student pilots killed when their single-engine planes collided Tuesday morning near Steinbach, roughly 50 kilometres southeast of Winnipeg, a family member said in a statement provided to CBC News.

She was "the essence of pure joy," the family said in a short written statement.

"Savanna's faith and laughter will forever touch everyone who was lucky enough to have known her, during her short life," the family said.

RCMP say the crash happened around 8:45 a.m. in the rural municipality of Hanover, south of Steinbach and west of Highway 12.

The bodies of the pilots were found in the wreckage of the single-engine planes, RCMP said.

There were no passengers aboard.

"We're devastated," said Adam Penner, president of Harv's Air flying school, adding the crash happened during a training exercise.

WATCH | RCMP speak about fatal plane crash:



Manitoba RCMP provide update after planes collide, leaving 2 student pilots dead

► July 8, 2025 | 5:53

RCMP provide details about a crash that left two student pilots dead after their planes collided in the rural municipality of Hanover, south of Steinbach, Man., on Tuesday morning.

Nathaniel Plett lives near the flight school. He and his wife were drinking coffee Tuesday morning when they heard a bang.

"I said to my wife, 'That's a plane crash,'" said Plett. "There was a pillar of black smoke coming up, and a little later [we] heard another bang, and there was an even bigger pop of black smoke."

Harv's Air president Penner, who was in the flight school office at the time, said the students collided when approaching the landing strip while practising takeoffs and landings.



Adam Penner, president of Harv's Air flying school, said the crash involved students and happened during a training exercise. (Trevor Brine/CBC)

"We don't understand how they could get so close together. We'll have to wait for the investigation," he said. "There was a commotion ... then I realized."

The collision was between a four-seater airplane, a Cessna 172, and a two-seater Cessna 152, he said.

One pilot was just a couple of months into training, while the other nearly had a commercial licence, Penner said.

Both were training to get their private and commercial licences to become airline pilots.

Mid-air collisions are exceedingly rare and make up less than half of one per cent of crashes ever recorded in Canadian airspace, a Transportation Safety Board spokesperson told CBC News in a statement.

Tuesday's crash was only the second such mid-air collision recorded in Manitoba.

Not including the Tuesday crash, there have been [45 such collisions in Canada since 1990](#), when the TSB was founded, and only one is known to have occurred in Manitoba history prior to the latest crash, according to the statement.

'A shocking morning': instructor

Penner said the flight school, which his parents started in the early 1970s, has students from Canada and around the world training for professional and recreational purposes. The school trains about 400 student pilots a year.

Students receive one-to-one training with an instructor, and it isn't unusual for them to fly solo during training, he said.

"It's been a shocking morning," said Mohamed Shahin, an instructor at Harv's Air and former student. "Really heartbreaking, and we feel really sad for the parents of the students we lost."



Lucille Plett, who lives near the area where two small planes crashed south of Steinbach, Man., took this photo on Tuesday morning. (Submitted by Lucille Plett)

No information on the ages or the gender of the pilots has been released by RCMP.

"This is still evolving. Members are still on scene," RCMP media relations spokesperson Cpl. Melanie Roussel said during a news conference on Tuesday. "It's a two-vehicle plane collision, which is not something that happens every day."

WATCH | Reaction on the ground after the crash:



2 student pilots dead after mid-air crash in southern Manitoba

► July 8, 2025 | 2:10

Two student pilots are dead after their small planes collided Tuesday morning south of Steinbach, Man. — only the second such mid-air crash ever recorded in the province.

RCMP will continue to be involved in investigating the fatalities, said Roussel, though the Transportation Safety Board will take over the investigation into the cause of the crash.

The TSB, which investigates aviation incidents in Canada, said it has deployed a team of investigators to the crash scene.

Earlier this year, the TSB investigated a separate incident [involving a staff member of Harv's Air Service](#) at St. Andrews Airport north of Winnipeg.

The employee sustained "serious injuries" from a small fixed-wing aircraft propeller while helping a student who was struggling to start the plane, according to the TSB.

Corrections

- We initially reported that the crash happened at 4:45 p.m. In fact, it happened at 8:45 a.m.
Jul 08, 2025 12:55 PM EDT
-

With files from Rosanna Hempel and Darren Bernhardt

