Live TV The helicopter that crashed killing nine people, including Kobe Bryant, dropped more than 2,000 feet a minute, NTSB says By Christina Maxouris, Holly Yan and Darran Simon, CNN Updated 4:48 AM EST, Wed January 29, 2020 (CNN)The helicopter that crashed over the weekend in California killing nine people, including NBA legend Kobe Bryant, dropped more than 2,000 feet a minute and was in one piece until impact into a hillside, a National Transportation Safety Board member said Tuesday."While the world mourns the loss of a dynamic athlete and humanitarian, I mourn the loss of two people just as important ... their impact was just as meaningful, their loss will be just as keenly felt, and our hearts are just as broken," Todd Schmidt, a former principal at the elementary school Payton once attended, wrote in a Facebook post.According to Homendy, "preliminary information is that the helicopter was in one piece when it impacted the terrain." As investigators scour for clues, the pilot's last words with air traffic control illustrate a foggy scene in the sky. Pilot Ara Zobayan said he was climbing to avoid a cloud layer, Homendy said Monday. But when air traffic control asked him what he planned to do, there was no response. Visibility was so low Sunday morning that the Los Angeles Police Department had decided to ground its helicopters that morning. A photo from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department shows foggy conditions at the site of the crash Sunday. A photo from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department shows foggy conditions at the site of the crash Sunday. But it's still not certain what caused the helicopter to crash, killing parents, children, and one of the greatest athletes of all time. Bryant, 41, and his daughter Gianna, 13, were heading to a basketball game in Thousand Oaks, where he was expected to coach and she was expected to play. The other six passengers included two of Gianna's teammates with their parents and an assistant girls basketball coach. The pilot, Zobayan, was also killed. The LA County Department of Medical Examiner-Coroner announced Tuesday that four of the nine bodies recovered, including Kobe Bryant, were officially identified through the use of fingerprints. Investigators are still working on identifying the five remaining bodies. How the pilot got special permission to fly Moments before the crash, the pilot received SVFR clearance -- or special visual flight rules clearance, according to audio recordings between the pilot and air traffic control. SVFR clearance allows a pilot to fly in weather conditions worse than those allowed for regular visual flight rules. Pilots sometimes request SVFR clearance mid-flight if weather conditions suddenly change, CNN transportation analyst Peter Goelz said. Those granted permission typically keep closer contact with air traffic control. While SVFR clearance is "pretty normal," Goelz said, "it's not something that's often recommended."CNN's Sarah Moon, Netctar Gan, Emiko Jozuka, Wayne Sterling, Sara Loaiza and Alexandra Meeks contributed to this report.StubHub announced all fees on tickets sold for Friday's game between the Los Angeles Lakers and the Portland Trail Blazers in Los Angeles will be donated to the Kobe and Vanessa Bryant Family Foundation.She said the NTSB has recommended that similar helicopters be equipped with the safety feature following a fatal crash in Galveston, Texas that killed 10 people in 2004.Ara Zobayan named as pilot of the helicopter crash that killed him, Kobe Bryant and seven others Ara Zobayan named as pilot of the helicopter crash that killed him, Kobe Bryant and seven others "We are working closely with the National Transportation Safety Board to investigate the cause of the accident and we are grateful to the first responders and local authorities," Island Express said in an earlier written statement.Investigators initially struggled to access the site of the wreckage due to the

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difficult terrain, Villanueva, the sherriff said.After the pilot requested special permission to fly through the area, the helicopter circled for 12 minutes until air traffic control approved SVFR clearance, Homendy said.When the pilot flew into the Burbank and Van Nuys airspace at 1,400 feet, he requested radar assistance to avoid traffic, Homendy said.View this interactive content on CNN.com Zobayan said he was going to climb higher, and air traffic controllers responded.The chopper is reliable, safe and capable, aviation analyst Miles O'Brien told CNN.Fans worldwide turn grief into aid From China to Italy, where Bryant spent much of his childhood and became fluent in Italian, grieving fans remember Bryant's global impact –- not just as a player, but as a humanitarian."The NBA family starts with the people of Japan, the survivors of the earthquake and the Pacific tsunami," Bryant said."It's a workhorse," O'Brien said.

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