

## 2 Killed as Plane Hits Radio Tower in Rainstorm Here

*This article appeared in the New York Times, Monday, August 28, 1967.*

At least two persons were killed yesterday when a single-engined plane crashed into a Bronx radio transmitter tower during a blinding rainstorm that stalled traffic, flooded basements, knocked out subway service and disrupted airline operations here.

The crash demolished the 541-foot tower on High Island near Orchard Beach and silenced the AM broadcasting operations of WCBS and WNBC.

The stations went off the air abruptly at 4:21 P. M. as thousands of bewildered listeners twisted their dials, wondering what had happened.

WCBS had been scheduled to begin all-news programming at 5:30 this morning on its AM frequency. The station announced last night that it would still try to do so, using an auxiliary WOR radio transmitter in New Jersey. If this transmitter could not be tuned in time, the new format will be broadcast over WCBS-FM, station officials said.

WNBC quickly made arrangements for temporary use of the WABC-AM auxiliary transmitter in Lodi, N. J. The station's signal from Lodi, however, was only 10,000 watts, compared to its normal 50,000 watt transmission.

The FM broadcasts of the two stations, which are transmitted from the Empire State Building, were not affected. [...]

The plane that crashed into the radio tower was a Piper Cherokee that authorities said was owned by the Zodiac Construction Corporation of 33 Sherman Avenue, Plainview, L. I., and leased by the Arrow Aviation Company at La Guardia Airport.

A spokesman for Arrow, who refused to give his name, said the plane had been taken without authorization. It was reported to have left La Guardia around 1:30 P. M. bound for East Hampton, L. I. It landed there about an hour later.

At 4:20 P. M., apparently on its way back to La Guardia, the plane ran into blinding rain and fog and was seen circling around the radio tower on High Island, which lies between City Island and Orchard beach in the Bronx.

A minute later, the plane slammed into the radio tower, which is owned by the Columbia Broadcasting System and the National Broadcasting Company. All but the lower 60 feet of the steel frame tower was shattered and large insulators were scattered around the quarter-mile island.

Tom Hertzog, a caretaker on High Island, heard the sound of the plane's engine "revving up like he was trying to gain altitude," then heard a crash.

"I said to my son, 'Hit the deck, a plane just hit the tower,'" Mr. Hertzog said.

Sections of the steel tower crashed to the ground near the caretaker's house, but he was not hurt. The green and white plane plunged into Long Island Sound about 200 yards east of High Island and sank in about 50 feet of water.

Two bodies floated to the surface almost immediately and were recovered by a police launch.

The victims were tentatively identified as Ronald Bumbalo, 31 years old, of 233 East 60th Street, and either William Sedutto, 32, of 29 Perry Street or Joseph Abraham, of 45 East 9th Street. Papers with both the names of Mr. Sedutto and Mr. Abraham were found on one of the victims.

The police said that members of Mr. Bumbalo's family had expressed the belief, on the basis of descriptions given over the telephone, that Mr. Bumbalo had been in the plane.

Dr. James Bumbalo of Jamestown, N. Y., Mr. Bumbalo's brother, was due to arrive here today to identify the body. Members of Mr. Bumbalo's family said he was employed by the American Management Association of 135 West 50th Street.

It was believed that a third man was aboard the plane and frogmen searched the area for several hours before discontinuing their hunt. The search will be resumed this morning. The plane was signed out of La Guardia Airport and East Hampton by Peter Barris of 19-24 81st Street, Jackson Heights,

WCBS has decided to initiate the all-news programming because of sagging ratings on its AM operation. Under the plan, the station will broadcast only news from 5:30 A. M. to 8:10 P. M. weekdays except from 10 A. M. to 11 A. M., when Arthur Godfrey's show is broadcast. That show is scheduled to be shifted to a 1:10 P. M.-to-2 P. M. slot in October.

From 8:10 P. M. to 11:30 P. M., the station will continue to broadcast the Jim Gearhart disk-jockey show, and from 11:30 P. M. to 5:30 A. M. it will carry its usual music-to-dawn program.

Weekend programming will remain as it was until after the first of the year, when it, too, will become all news. The news format will be expanded next year to run from 5:30 A. M. to 11:30 P. M.

WINS became New York's first all-news station in April, 1965. [...]

*(Deleted portions of the article above, indicated by [...], described the unusual recent weather conditions, and did not pertain directly to the tower collapse.)*

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## **WCBS-AM Goes Back on Air, Plans to Put Up a New Tower**

*This article appeared in the New York Times, Tuesday, Aug. 29, 1967.*

By MARTIN ARNOLD

WCBS radio went back on the air with its new AM broadcasting operations at 9:17 last night. The station's programs and those of WNBC-AM were knocked off the air Sunday when a single-engined plane hit their transmitting tower in the Bronx, killing at least two persons.

WCBS returned to the air broadcasting with a 10,000-watt transmitter in Long Island City, Queens, that was lent to it for the emergency by radio station WLIB.

Joseph Dembo, the newly appointed general manager of WCBS, said he had "no idea" when the 541-foot tower that was linked to the station's 50,000-watt transmitter at High Island, near Orchard Beach, would be repaired. The tower was demolished.

WNBC radio, which shared the tower, also was knocked off the air at 4:21 P. M. Sunday, but quickly made arrangements for temporary use of the WABC-AM auxiliary transmitter in Lodi, N. J. This transmitter is only 10,000 watts and WNBC normally transmits at 50,000 watts. WNBC was back on the air at 5:27 A. M. yesterday.

The bodies of two persons who died in the plane crash were identified by relatives yesterday. The police, using three scuba divers and two boats, continued to search Long Island Sound for the plane and for bodies of other persons believed to have been on it. The police said that the plane might have been carrying six or seven persons. A wing was recovered.

WCBS-AM's new all-news and information format was to start yesterday morning. The switch from the music, talk and news programs, planned for months, came after lagging ratings and sagging profits.

The new programming was started, but on the station's FM facilities, which had its regular 5:30 A. M.-to-8:10 P. M. programming pre-empted. Radio station WINS has been an all-news station since April, 1965.

Mr. Dembo said that an attempt would be made to set up a temporary tower on High Island, possibly by sometime today, to enable WCBS to start AM broadcasting again, but on 10,000 watts.

He said there was "a silver lining" to the problem. "Ten years ago," he said, "it wouldn't have happened but now all the radio and network people have called us and offered to help out."

Plans to use WOR's 10,000-watt transmitter in Carteret, N. J., did not work out because of technical problems.

With 10,000 watts, WNBC and WCBS can transit to the five boroughs and nearby suburban communities. Fifty thousand watts supplies enough power for the city and 18 metropolitan-area counties.

The known victims in the accident were identified by the police as William Sedutto, 32, of 29 Perry Street, and Ronald Bumbalo, 31, of 233 East 60th Street.

The plane crashed while apparently going to La Guardia Airport from East Hampton, L. I.

It was a single-engined Piper Cherokee owned by the Zodiac Construction Company of Plainview, L. I., but on lease to Arrow Aviation Company, which charts planes at La Guardia Airport.

Stanley Leonard, an official of Arrow, said yesterday that the plane, one of six operated by Arrow, had been taken on an unauthorized flight.

It apparently was signed out from La Guardia and East Hampton, Mr. Leonard said, by Peter Barris, a licensed pilot, of 19-24 81st Street, Jackson Heights, Queens, who had previously rented aircraft from Arrow.

"We grounded all our planes at 11 A. M. because of the bad weather," Mr. Leonard said. "Barris was one of several people in our office when we grounded them. He left with the rest."

Mr. Leonard said that he had approved closing the Arrow office at 2 P. M. Sunday after being told by telephone that the six planes were "all secured on the ground."

"At 3:30, someone went back to the office and called me to say one of the planes was missing from the line. We called all over and found that it had been on East Hampton," Mr. Leonard said. "It was an unauthorized flight, and we filed a stolen-from-airport report."

The police were unable to find Mr. Barris yesterday.