



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW SMITHSONIAN CHANNEL™ DOCU-SERIES
GOES BEHIND-THE-SCENES WITH
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD'S CRASH INVESTIGATION TEAM
ALASKA AIRCRASH INVESTIGATIONS
PREMIERES SUNDAY, MARCH 13 AT 9 PM ET/PT

Six-Episode Series with Unprecedented Access to NTSB's Alaska "Go Team" Provides Rare Glimpse Into Solving the Mysteries of Alaska's Plane Crashes

NEW YORK – February 2, 2016 – Alaska is more dependent on airplanes than any other state in the country. But with that dependence comes danger: during the summer, Alaska faces an average of one plane crash every other day. The region's plane accidents range from the historic crash that claimed the life of Senator Ted Stevens to the single-engine plane that crashed into an office building in downtown Anchorage in 2015. The new Smithsonian Channel series, ALASKA AIRCRASH INVESTIGATIONS, goes behind-the-scenes with unprecedented access to the National Transportation Safety Board's (NTSB) Alaska "Go Team." For the first time, The NTSB has allowed a television crew to follow its Alaska unit as it investigates the more than 125 crashes that occur in the state every year. The series, comprised of six hour-long episodes, premieres Sunday, March 13 at 9 p.m. ET/PT.

ALASKA AIRCRASH INVESTIGATIONS rides along with the NTSB and its interagency partners as they work together to determine the probable cause of aircraft accidents. These NTSB investigations provide a window into the integral role of air travel in Alaskan life, while raising awareness that might prevent future accidents.

ALASKA AIRCRASH INVESTIGATIONS follows five NTSB members as they risk their lives in extreme environments to access remote crash sites in the unpredictable Alaskan wilderness. From dense forests to raging rivers, there is no place impenetrable for the "Go Team." Every investigation tests these brave men and women, from the seasoned veterans to the rookies who are just beginning their careers in air safety.

The five "Go Team" members featured in the series are:

- Clint Johnson – Regional Chief of the NTSB Alaska Regional office in Anchorage, Johnson has 18 years of crash site experience and also spent 13 years as a helicopter pilot in Alaska.
- Millicent Hoidal – A former NTSB intern and flight instructor, Hoidal is the first female NTSB crash investigator assigned to the Alaska base.

- Shaun Williams – A former airline captain and flight instructor who recently transferred from the FAA, Williams believes that it's his calling to investigate crashes to help enhance safety in the skies.
- Chris Shaver – A former corporate jet captain, and now a seasoned NTSB aircraft accident investigator, Shaver has examined his fair share of accidents, but his greatest concern is dealing with the loss of life and the grieving families who put pressure on him to provide answers.
- Brice Banning - As a Senior Aircraft Investigator of the "Go Team," Banning sees each crash as both a human tragedy, and a fascinating mystery to be solved.

Every investigation has three major phases: the on-scene; the wreckage layout; and the off-scene. For the on-scene, the NTSB must overcome Alaska's rugged terrain to reach the accident site where they document the scene, collect wreckage, and gather evidence. On the wreckage layout, the NTSB painstakingly examines pieces of the wreckage to determine if there were any mechanical issues with the airplane that could have led to the crash. Finally, the NTSB delves into the pilot's history and plane records. Each phase is a piece of the puzzle, and when evidence in a stage is missing, the puzzle becomes more difficult to solve.

Each case presents its own unique set of challenges. From the nearly inaccessible crash site in dense forest, to the plane that crashes on a major road and bursts into flames, the Alaska NTSB is on the case.

EPISODES OF ALASKA AIRCRASH INVESTIGATIONS:

ALASKA AIRCRASH INVESTIGATIONS: FOREST FLIGHT DOWN

Premieres Sunday, March 13 at 9 p.m. ET/PT.

When a recent transplant to Alaska crashes a commuter plane west of Juneau, Chris Shaver launches an investigation to see whether the fatal crash was caused by mechanical issues or pilot error. On-scene investigation and a wreckage layout provide few clues. But recovered in-flight data reveals an unusual flight path, which might uncover the true cause of the tragedy.

ALASKA AIRCRASH INVESTIGATIONS: TRAPPER CREEK TRAGEDY

Premieres Sunday, March 20 at 9 p.m. ET/PT.

Senior Investigator Brice Banning goes to the site of an Alaskan tragedy: a bush pilot flying over his daughter's wedding party, who fatally crashed into nearby trees. Meanwhile, Investigator Millicent Hoidal looks into a crash near the remote town of Bethel and uncovers a troubling medical issue that could have contributed to the pilot's fatal flight.

ALASKA AIRCRASH INVESTIGATIONS: ENGINE OUT IN MIDAIR

Premieres Sunday, March 27 at 9 p.m. ET/PT.

When a Cessna 180 crashes on Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, two lives are lost... along with nearly all the evidence. After a terrible post-crash fire, investigator Shaun Williams must piece together eyewitness accounts from a grieving community, and compare that

with the surviving pieces of wreckage. It takes a trip to an Alabama engine factory and back to Alaska to begin to make sense of the mysterious final sounds of the aircraft.

ALASKA AIRCRASH INVESTIGATIONS: PLANE DOWN IN THE TUNDRA

Premieres Sunday, April 3 at 9 p.m. ET/PT.

A tourist flight crashes just after take-off from a remote fishing lodge, killing several passengers. The wreckage layout reveals that neither the airframe nor the engine caused the crash. Now the “Go Team” must launch a probe into the bizarre noises described by the survivors in the last minutes of the flight, and painstakingly determine whether the aircraft was overloaded past its weight limit.

ALASKA AIRCRASH INVESTIGATIONS: LOST OVER THE INLET

Premieres Sunday, April 10 at 9 p.m. ET/PT.

Newcomer Shaun Williams gets a report at midnight of a downed plane in a local bay, but by dawn, the aircraft has disappeared under the waters of the Knik Arm. With rescuers and helicopters attempting to recover the wreckage, Williams tries to determine what caused the plane to plunge only two miles before its planned landing. When the fatal crash is pulled from the water, the NTSB rules out mechanical problems, leaving the possibly damaged GPS as the only evidence that might solve the mystery.

ALASKA AIRCRASH INVESTIGATIONS: STALLED OVER THE HIGHWAY

Premieres Sunday, April 17 at 9 p.m. ET/PT.

A 23-year-old pilot’s Cessna plunges nose first into a public road near Big Lake, Alaska, and Investigator Millicent Hoidal must piece together the evidence remaining from the fiery crash. A set of missing logbooks and a propeller with no serial number complicate the investigation, which must rely on a deep dive into the young pilot’s history and training to determine the final cause of the disaster.

ALASKA AIRCRASH INVESTIGATIONS is produced by Lucky 8 TV, LLC and Vesper Entertainment for Smithsonian Channel. Executive producers for Lucky 8 are Gregory Palmer, Kimberly Woodard, Gregory Henry and Isaac Holub. Executive producer for Vesper Entertainment is James O. Fraioli. Executive producers for Smithsonian Channel are Tim Evans, Charles Poe and David Royle.

Smithsonian Channel™, owned by Smithsonian Networks™, a joint venture between Showtime Networks Inc. and the Smithsonian Institution, is where curiosity lives, inspiration strikes and wonders never cease. This is the place for awe-inspiring stories, powerful documentaries and amazing entertainment across multiple platforms. Smithsonian Channel combines the storytelling prowess of SHOWTIME® with the unmatched resources and rich traditions of the Smithsonian, to create award-winning programming that shines new light on popular genres such as air and space, history, science, nature, and pop culture. Among the network’s offerings are series including *Aerial America*, *Million Dollar American Princesses*, *The Weapon Hunter*, *Mighty Ships*, *Mighty Planes* and *Air Disasters*, as well as critically-acclaimed specials

that include *Civil War 360*, *9/11: The Heartland Tapes*; *MLK: The Assassination Tapes* and *The Day Kennedy Died*. Find out more at www.smithsonianchannel.com. Smithsonian Networks™, a joint venture between SNI and the Smithsonian Institution, which offers Smithsonian Channel™, and offers Smithsonian Earth™ through SN Digital LLC.

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