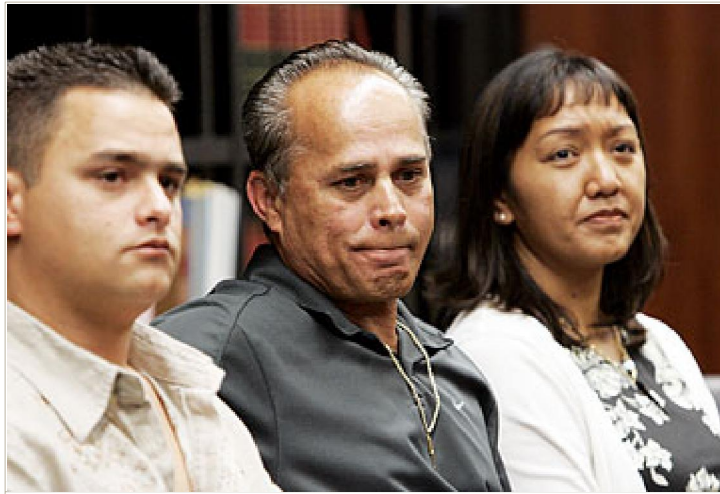


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RICHARD WALKER / RWALKER@STARBULLETIN.COM
Robert Moniz, center, father of Hawaii Air Ambulance crash victim Marlena Yomes, was flanked by his son Keith, and Keith's wife, Kanoe, at a news conference in attorney Rick Fried's downtown office yesterday.

Family hires attorney for plane crash inquiry

Relatives of one of the paramedics killed near Maui airport ask for safety assurances

By Rosemarie Bernardo
rbernardo@starbulletin.com

Family members of a paramedic who was among the three people killed in the Hawaii Air Ambulance crash on Maui have hired a Honolulu attorney to conduct their own investigation, saying they want to ensure that future flights are safe.

"We need to make sure whoever is going back up again has safe wings under them. It's a safety factor," Marlena L. Yomes' father, Robert Moniz, said at a news conference yesterday.

Moniz and Yomes' brother and sister-in-law, Keith and Kanoe Moniz, spoke about their intent of the investigation and about Yomes' passion of working as a paramedic, at attorney Rick Fried's office in Honolulu.

tation supervisor, Peter A. Miller, a pilot from Kailua, and Brien P. Eisaman, a nurse and Waipahu resident, were killed when their plane crashed at a BMW car lot Wednesday night. They were on their way to pick up a patient from Maui Memorial Medical Center to transport to Honolulu.

On the night of the crash, Yomes had planned to have dinner with her brother-in-law at 8 p.m. after she finished work but had received a call to assist in transporting another patient, her brother said.

Andrew Kluger, president and chief executive officer of Hawaii Air Ambulance, said the flight was added on to the schedule after the last Maui flight came in several hours earlier.

"It isn't an add on last minute, no," Kluger said. "An add-on flight means it was an additional flight on the schedule for Maui that night."

In a written statement, Kluger said they provided a full-time employee to assist in the investigation led by the National Transportation Safety Board.

"We are conducting separate, voluntary inspections of our remaining aircraft to further assure our employees, crews and the public that our planes are safe," Kluger said. "The voluntary inspections are in addition to regular inspections mandated by the FAA and necessary for certification by the Commission on Accreditation of Medical Transport Systems."

Family members said Yomes was working with personnel at Hawaii Air Ambulance to improve support and protection for employees and their families following a separate Air Ambulance crash two years ago that claimed the lives of three people.

"When the families get left behind, it's a burden for a lot of families. They didn't feel like what was given to those families was sufficient," Keith Moniz said.

Family members described Yomes as a person who made everyone laugh with her stories. She decided to become a paramedic after she assisted motorists involved in an accident that occurred on the H-1 freeway while she was on her way home from work. "For some reason, at that instant, she decided that's what she wanted to do," her father said.

Before she decided to become a paramedic, Yomes worked various jobs but was not content until she decided to become a paramedic, Moniz said. "Then it became her life. This is what she wanted to do. It's a passion that she got to love."

Four years ago, her husband, Gilbert, was diagnosed with a brain tumor and was told he would have six months to live. He underwent surgery and almost three years of chemotherapy. Yomes is also survived by son, Cody, 20; daughter, Kori, 15; and granddaughter, Zailah, 4 months old.

Services for Yomes are scheduled to be held at 5 p.m. on March 22 at the Mililani Memorial Park and Mortuary.

Star-Bulletin reporter Nelson Daranciang contributed to this report.

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