

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 13, 2026

The Honorable Bryan Bedford
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20591

Dear Administrator Bedford:

We write regarding the tragic helicopter crash near Superior, Arizona that took the lives of four Oregonians; Rachel McCarty, Faith McCarty, Katelyn Heideman, and David McCarty. On January 2, 2026, the helicopter struck a slackline suspended across Telegraph Canyon in the Tonto National Forest. On January 21, 2026 the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) released a preliminary report of the accident, though NTSB's full investigation into the crash is ongoing and could take over a year to complete.

While a thorough investigation is necessary to develop comprehensive, data-based recommendations, it's clear that immediate action must be taken to prevent another similar tragedy. As the investigation proceeds, we urge you to continue working closely with the NTSB and promptly adopt initial safety suggestions they may have based on their preliminary findings. In addition, we respectfully ask that you respond to the following by Friday, February 27, 2026.

1. Please describe how the FAA currently regulates slackline visibility and notifications for pilots.
2. In light of this tragic helicopter crash, what are you doing to ensure awareness of existing FAA regulations regarding marking and notifications of obstructions? How will you work with other agencies and organizations to share these policies?
3. Are you considering any immediate adjustments to FAA policies in order to increase the physical marking or visibility of slacklines? Are there any options the FAA could explore related to the standardized marking, lighting, or other visual measures that would allow slacklines to be more easily identified by pilots during both daytime and nighttime operations?

4. Will the FAA consider implementing a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) over slacklines as a precautionary and interim measure until the NTSB issues final recommendations? What factors does the FAA consider in making TFR determinations?

Thank you for your careful consideration of these questions.

Sincerely,

Ron Wyden

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley

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United States Senator