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## Flying The City's Unregulated Skies

By: Josh Robin

*The view of Manhattan from a private aircraft is exhilarating, but last week's aircraft crash over the Hudson River showed that air safety can be a very fragile condition. NY1's Josh Robin filed the following report*

There's a singular beauty and power to the city seen from 2,000 feet, but there's also a realization of danger and intensity. Pilots report what a novice easily spots, that the recent fatal crash along the narrow Hudson River corridor was no fluke.

The helicopter and plane that collided over the Hudson River on August 8 where the latest casualties of the unregulated, self-guided airspace at the same height as the city's spires.

"It really ends up being quite a harrowing experience flying up there, if you're just flying up there without air traffic control," said Dan Rose, a Navy-trained pilot.

On Friday, I flew in a private plane piloted by Rose, and it quickly became obvious how valuable air traffic controllers are in identifying what's easily missed.

Moments after liftoff from Westchester County Airport, a voice barked that a landing plane was bearing in directly at us. Rose banked sharply left.

Off the wing was the fleeting sight of passing birds.

Finally, approaching Manhattan, growing dots of passing helicopters looked faint against the glare and clouds.



The radio squawked repeated warnings, as did our four-seater's automated navigation.

"Can you imagine throwing in a lot of planes particularly coming out of Teterboro [Airport], which you saw was in the middle of the Hudson corridor there, it's just a recipe for disaster, if you will," said Rose.

For Rose, his more than two decades at the controls were not always a joyride. Often, he was dealing with a bevy of instructions over the radio. Some complain all that noise is a distraction but he disagrees, saying the swarms of aircraft eager for the views make the space as unruly as the Wild

West. Such conditions demand more structure, not less.

Investigators found an air traffic controller working August 8 was distracted by a phone call. Probers, however, say that did not trigger the collision.

To Rose, who kept above 1,100 feet, there's no substitute for the help and proper navigation equipment.

Our plane, unlike helicopters and many other aircraft, came with a traffic collision avoidance system, something that our pilot and many others say could have avoided the crash.

Lawmakers are calling for the Federal Aviation Administration to require the systems in all small aircraft.

Meanwhile, controllers are more zealous in keeping safe distances between aircraft. Many pilots have been wary and skittish since the crash and are staying away.

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