

Micron CEO dies in plane crash

Idaho, February 04: The head of memory chip maker Micron, long known for taking risks in stunt piloting, died Friday when a small experimental plane he was piloting steeply banked, stalled and crashed near an Idaho runway.

Steve Appleton, who survived a similar crash eight years ago and had a reputation as a hard-driving daredevil, was the only person aboard the plane when witnesses said it crashed shortly after its second take-off attempt in Boise, according to safety investigators.

Appleton's death was confirmed by Micron Technology Inc., the board accepted his high-octane hobbies as simply part of a work-hard and play-hard personality. Corporate governance experts raised questions in the past about whether Appleton, as CEO, should be engaging in a hobby as risky as stunt piloting.

Micron shares were up 23 cents at \$7.95 Friday before trading was halted for the announcement.

"Steve's passion and energy left an indelible mark on Micron, the Idaho community and the technology industry at large," Micron's board of directors said in a prepared statement.

Micron is one of many companies that make semiconductor chips for various devices, including computers, mobile devices, cameras, cars and industrial systems. It makes products under the Lexar and Crucial brands, and is one of Idaho's largest and most influential employers.

The company's shares have traded between \$3.97 and \$11.95 over the past year. In its latest fiscal year, which ended Sept. 1, Micron earned \$167 million, or 17 cents per share, and had revenue of \$8.8 billion.

The 51-year-old Appleton hadn't filed a flight plan and by all indications planned to stay in the area for a recreational flight, investigators said.

Zoe Keliher, air investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board, said the crash happened during Appleton's second attempt to fly that morning. She said Appleton's first take-off ended abruptly witnesses said the plane only got about 5 feet (1.5 meters) off the ground when he landed and returned to a hangar for about five minutes.

Keliher said witnesses reported that the plane then returned to the runway to take off again, but Appleton almost immediately told the tower he needed to turn around and re-land. His plane was about 100 or 200 feet (30 to 60 meters) in the air before witnesses say it crashed and caught fire. Appleton's body was thrown from the wreckage.

Keliher said the remains of the pilot weren't immediately identifiable, but Appleton's wallet and other belongings were among the debris. She said the body was being fingerprinted by authorities.

The weather was clear. Keliher said investigators planned to look for any evidence of equipment failure or other problems.

Airport spokeswoman Patti Miller said the aircraft was a fixed-wing prop plane Lancair, which is built from

kits.

Federal Aviation Administration's records show the tail number of the wrecked plane was registered to Raleighwood Aviation LLC out of North Carolina.

It was manufactured in 2007 and filed in the 'amateur built' category.

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