

Crews begin clearing aircraft wreckage from Japan runway collision

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Tokyo : Crews at Tokyo's Haneda Airport began clearing the charred wreck of a Japan Airlines plane from a runway on Friday, as investigators sought to retrieve its cockpit voice recorder to discover what caused its deadly collision with a Coast Guard aircraft.

The Japan Airlines (JAL) widebody jet collided with a Coast Guard turboprop on the runway while landing in Tokyo on Tuesday. All 379 people on the JAL aircraft escaped before it was engulfed in flames, but five of the six crew on the Coast Guard craft died.

Excavators equipped with cutting equipment ripped off the Airbus A350's wing, while another lifted debris from inside the burnt-out cabin into a large lorry as around a dozen personnel in white overalls and hard hats watched on.

Officials have not yet retrieved the cockpit voice recorder from the JAL plane but have recovered the flight data recorder and both recorders from the Coast Guard wreck, said the Japan Transport Safety Board (JTSB), which is leading an investigation by transport agencies into the crash.

Officials aim to complete the removal of the wreckage by Jan. 7 and it will be taken to its hangar for inspection, broadcaster TBS reported.

Haneda, the world's third-busiest airport, has seen hundreds of flights cancelled or delayed since the crash. The runway where the accident happened is expected to reopen on Jan. 8 if clearance operations go as planned, the transport minister said on Friday.

Additional personnel tasked with monitoring radar systems will reinforce the airport from Saturday as an emergency precautionary measure, the minister added.

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