

**WITNESS STATEMENT**  
(Please Print Legibly or Type)

*Pilot*

**THIS FORM IS TO BE GIVEN TO ALL EMPLOYEES WHO WITNESS AN INDUSTRIAL INJURY OR OCCUPATIONAL ILLNESS**

**NAME AND ADDRESS OF WITNESS:** [REDACTED]

**PHONE NUMBER:** [REDACTED]

**NAME OF EMPLOYEE INJURED:** [REDACTED]

**PLACE OF INCIDENT:** Green belt area behind [REDACTED]. Lamar Blvd. Austin TX 78704

**DATE AND TIME OF INCIDENT:** 4/27/2015 Approximately 2150

**DESCRIBE WHAT YOU OBSERVED:**

The evening of 27 Apr 2015 @ 2031, SF1 was dispatched for a wilderness rescue to the greenbelt on S Lamar [REDACTED]. When SF1 arrived on scene, the ground units were attempting to determine the location of some stranded / injured hikers on a trail down by Barton Creek. We soon located the hikers and established a hover & illuminated their position with the searchlight to aid the inbound ground rescue units (located approx. 100 yds uphill south of their location). Once the ground units arrived on scene, they ascertained that the hiker had suffered an ankle injury and would require a hoist recovery (too difficult & treacherous to attempt ground transport).

We briefed & executed a hoist deployment of the rescuer to the site of the injured hikers, then returned to deliver some rescue equipment (backboard) for the rescuer. We then conducted a recon for a 7m location at a local school track field (Ann Richards school for Girls, 2206 Prather Lane), and loitered over the greenbelt area [REDACTED] until the rescuer was ready for recovery. Upon receiving the call from the rescuer, we flew inbound and began to conduct a hoist recovery of the rescuer and injured hiker. Upon the "axis clear" call from the crew chief, I initiated a forward transition and slow climbout northeast along the creek towards the high ground (abeam the southwest end of Westhill Dr). When the crew chief stated the rescuer and hiker were just below the skid (approx. 100-120' AGL, I initiated a slight right turn towards the 7m location and then heard the crew chief stating that the rescuer was gone and had fallen from the hook.

At that point, the crew chief stated that we needed to turn back and look for her. I began to slow the aircraft and execute a right turn as I marked the GPS position, then we both realized that the hiker was still attached to the hook and had begun to spin. I then accelerated to stabilize the spin and headed towards the 7m location (while advising MedCom of our situation enroute), where we dropped off the injured hiker to the awaiting fire dept personnel. Without a rescuer to disconnect the hiker from the hook, it took a few moments of us requesting the ground personnel via radio to disconnect the hook for us. After the hook was disconnected, we repositioned approx 100' forward and landed, where the crew chief then walked over and briefed the ground units of our situation.

We then departed to go look for the rescuer, and made a callout on the UHF radio to see if the rescuer would answer. We did hear a faint reply from someone stating "...lost a lot of blood", and when I went to query, MedCom came over the radio and stated that one of the residents in the area had located the rescuer. Since the location was difficult to ascertain and the GPS position was further to the east than we had estimated (almost right over S Lamar), we backtracked from our hoist position and stopped right where we thought we had lost the rescuer (end of Westhill Dr. [REDACTED]). We then noticed multiple flashlights under the tree canopy, and was advised by radio that it was the correct location. We established a hover overhead & offset to illuminate the area, although the tree canopy was very dense and difficult to see anyone underneath. We then remained in a hover overhead until we were advised by MedCom that we

Hospital), we were told to land in the immediate vicinity ASAP.

So we returned to the 7m location at the Ann Richards school, and executed a landing abeam our previous 7m site, since the patient was still on the ground awaiting ground transport at the original intended landing point. After contact with STAR Flight command regarding our situation and ensuring that they had received the command page from MedCom, we met with the ground personnel (AFD & APD). They approached us and presented me a cell phone, stating that I needed to take it and it was very important. It was then that I was made aware by the onscene fire chief that our rescuer had received fatal injuries and did not survive the fall. We were then picked up by our Program Director, and driven back to the hangar.

**DID ANYTHING UNUSUAL HAPPEN TO CAUSE THIS INCIDENT: No**

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**DID YOU REPORT THIS INCIDENT: Yes**

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**SIGNATURE OF EMPLOYEE:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** 29 Apr 2015

**Please mail report to: Travis County Risk Manager, P.O. Box 1748, Austin TX 78701**

**If you have any questions, you may contact Risk Management at \_\_\_\_\_**

Travis County  
**WITNESS STATEMENT**  
(Please Print Legibly or Type)

260

**THIS FORM IS TO BE GIVEN TO ALL EMPLOYEES WHO WITNESS AN INDUSTRIAL INJURY OR OCCUPATIONAL ILLNESS**

**NAME AND ADDRESS OF WITNESS:** [REDACTED]

**PHONE NUMBER:** [REDACTED]

**NAME OF EMPLOYEE INJURED:** [REDACTED]

**PLACE OF INCIDENT:** Green belt area behind [REDACTED] S Lamar Blvd. Austin TX 78704

**DATE AND TIME OF INCIDENT:** 4-27-2015 Approximately 2150

**DESCRIBE WHAT YOU OBSERVED:** At 20:31 on 27-April-15, SF1 was dispatched to a Priority 4 Wilderness Rescue. SF1 Crew: [REDACTED] PIC, [REDACTED] HRS, [REDACTED] CC. SF1 crew rigged the aircraft for land based rescue as per ASM standard. HRS and CC completed safety checks of PPE prior to launch. After ensuring that the aircraft cabin and crew were secure, and confirming dispatch heading and distance, SF1 responded to incident location at approximately 20:40 (per dispatch CAD notes). Radio scene channel and ground contact were obtained from Med Comm. CC established radio communications with on scene command. Incident description and search area established. High hazard recon performed, Search commenced. SF1 located the subjects in a fairly short time. SF1 communicated location of victim(s) to ground resources. SF1 was later asked to move away from immediate area of rescue so that ground providers could establish verbal communications with victims. Ground providers arrived at side of victims, established that there was 1 injured person who had sustained an approximately 13 foot fall and sustained a possibly fractured ankle and had back pain with "deformity". Because of steepness and ruggedness of the terrain, ground resources requested a hoist extraction with the victim secured to a backboard and packaged in a Bauman Bag. SF1 performed an overhead recon of the area that the ground rescuers and victim were in. The crew established the plan of a direct insertion of the HRS and Medical Bag and Bauman Bag to the area, followed afterward by delivery of the SF 1 back board. During HRS delivery, CC conned the aircraft to an area downhill from the victim in order to minimize risk of HRS landing on victim, or from dislodging rock/debris and causing further hazard to victim and rescuers. Hoist altitude of approximately 100 feet above the target utilized. Incidental contact occurred with the HRS and hoist hook and tree branches. Once the HRS was on the ground and had declared "hook free". CC recovered the hoist hook, a branch with base approximately 3/4 of an inch was wedge onto the hoist bumper and came back to the aircraft. CC secured the branch with his hands as soon as within reach and directed PIC to wilderness area where there was no pedestrian traffic near the river to discard the branch at a lower altitude (approximately 80 feet). CC then performed a visual and tactile inspection of the hoist cable and hook to ensure no irregularities or possible malfunctions. None were noted, so CC and PIC elected to proceed with the operation. CC then prepared the back board for delivery using SF1 tag line for delivery. Back board delivered down the hill from the victim, again in effort to reduce risk of debris falling on to victim/rescuers. Ground rescue personnel retrieved the back board, and the full length of tag line was deployed. SF1 then performed aerial recon of the site selected during our initial recon to perform a 7 meter delivery. AFD unit Engine 32 was on location to secure the area. CC and PIC concurred that the area was a suitable site for the 7 meter delivery. SF1 resumed orbiting the area, remaining offset from the area of the victim as much as possible in order to not interfere with face to face communications between ground personnel. SF1 HRS later informed CC/PIC that she was "ready for pickup". CC and PIC elected to utilize a hoist altitude approximately 50 feet higher than we did on the direct deployment in order to minimize the effects of rotor wash on the ground personnel and victim. The hoist hook was delivered to the HRS. HRS announced "ready for extraction" on the radio. CC brought the cable taught and lifted the load off the ground. PIC gave clearance to "hoist up". HRS and victim made contact with light tree branches coming out of the extraction site. Once HRS and victim were above the tree canopy, they began to spin in the rotor wash. CC did not feel I could effectively lower them back down to the uneven terrain through the canopy

to arrest the spin, so I asked PIC for forward airspeed after announcing axis clear, in order to correct the spin. It was noted during the spin, that the HRS legs appeared to become parallel to the victim, it was thought that this was due to the spinning motion. After the aircraft gained forward airspeed, the spin slowed and had nearly completely stopped. At this time CC noticed that the HRS was hanging in an unusually "low" position relative to the Bauman Bag. It was at this time that the HRS fell from the rigging into the tree canopy below, leaving the victim/Bauman Bag and medical bag still attached to the hoist hook. CC and PIC elected to transport the victim to the 7 meter location and deliver the victim to the ground. We requested that the ground personnel unhook the victim from the hoist hook. PIC then repositioned that aircraft and landed. CC exited the aircraft and informed the ground personnel that the HRS had fallen and that we needed to go attempt to locate her, and I requested that they call for ground transport of the victim. CC retrieved the medical bag at this time and secured it to the floor of the aircraft. SF 1 launched and began searching for HRS on the ground. In the haste of the moment, CC inadvertently relayed communication of the fallen HRS on the incorrect radio frequency, delaying the dissemination of the information to the ground personnel. Med Comm reported that a bystander had located the injured HRS, SF1 was unable to visualize her, but we attempted to relay approximate location of the fall to the ground responders. SF1 maintained a high hover over location and illuminated the area with spot light until ground responders reported locating HRS. At that approximate time, Med Comm informed SF1 that, per SF command, we were to land at the nearest suitable location. SF 1 returned to the 7 meter location and shut down the aircraft. Engine 32 personnel had removed the victim from the Bauman Bag and gave it back to the CC, who placed it beside the aircraft at the landing site. SF command contacted by cell phone. SF1 PIC and CC were instructed to remain at the location with the aircraft. PIC and CC complied until SF Program Director Ping arrived by ground and returned us to the SF hangar.

██████████ EMT-P  
SF#1037

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**DID ANYTHING UNUSUAL HAPPEN TO CAUSE THIS INCIDENT: NTSB investigation ongoing. Operations were normal given environment/circumstances until point just prior to fall from hoist hook due to unknown cause.**

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**DID YOU REPORT THIS INCIDENT: Yes**

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**SIGNATURE OF EMPLOYEE:** 

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██████████ #1037  
**DATE:** 4-28-2015

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**Please mail report to: Travis County Risk Manager, P.O. Box 1748, Austin TX 78701**  
If you have any questions, you may contact Risk Management at ██████████