

Record of Conversation

Person Interviewed:

Glen Christopher Gingras, Cert: [REDACTED]  
Lead Mechanic at Troy base

Observed By:

James Smith  
Regional Maintenance Manager & Lead Mechanic at Watumka base

Interviewed By:

Mr. Pat Hempen – FAA AVP 100  
Mr. Clay Perkins – FAA Aviation Safety Inspector  
Mr. Scott Tyrrell – FAA Rotorcraft Directorate

Subject: – ERA16FA140

The following text is a summary of the conversation and not intended to be a full transcript.

The helicopter was operated at the Troy, AL base. The base is located at the Troy Regional Medical Center. The base has crew quarters and a maintenance facility.

Maintenance Shifts are conducted from 06:30 – 3:30PM After maintenance is completed the mechanic is free to leave the base and is on a 45 min recall.

All heavy maintenance is accomplished at the regional base in Watumka, AL.

The base was established on 06 October 2015.

The last flight prior to the accident, the helicopter was from the regional base in Wetumpka, AL which is approx. 75 miles away. The aircraft was flown to that base to potentially shelter from a storm.

The aircraft did not fly the previous night.

Aircraft operated within the Haynes Ambulance system are N911GF (Accident Aircraft), N810LE, and N911ES. (ALL AS-350B2s)

The helicopter is serviced with fuel by the pilot or medical crew. The associated responsibilities with fueling such as ordering, delivery and testing are with the pilot or aircrew. Base has a standard ramp fuel of 80%. or approx. 100 gal.

The helicopter was a very reliable aircraft and there were no outstanding discrepancies or "hip- pocket" write-ups that the base mechanic was working.

When asked about outstanding MEL items the mechanic responded that the aircraft did not have any items that were outstanding or out of date.

The aircraft was equipped with Aero Dynamix STC NVG Lighting System. Other aircraft in the fleet were equipped with ASU.

Mechanic had previous experience with Sikorsky and PHI and received maintenance training within the company.

Approximate flying time for the aircraft during the Spring/Summer month is 70 HRS.

END OF CONVERSATION

Record of Conversation

Person Interviewed:

Eric Sikes  
Lead Pilot at Troy base

Observed By:

N/A

Interviewed By:

Mr. Pat Hempen – FAA AVP 100  
Mr. Clay Perkins – FAA Aviation Safety Inspector  
Mr. Scott Tyrrell – FAA Rotorcraft Directorate

Subject: – ERA16FA140

The following text is a summary of the conversation and not intended to be a full transcript.

Pilot retired from the U.S. Army and had experience flying at Fort Rucker.

Aircraft are modified for NVG flight operations – Pilots use NVIS 9 goggles

Lead Pilot received the call approx. 1:00 – 2:00 AM concerning the accident or missing aircraft. Pilot was not on duty or in the immediate area due to personal travel. Upon receiving the call, he requested the PAIP (Post Accident Incident Plan) be initiated.

The pilot on duty carries the cell phone and that was most likely what was providing the “Ping or Signal” for the First Responders.

Pilot is able to communicate with EMS ground personnel utilizing VHF frequency often referred to as Statenet.

The company **Night** weather minimums are 1,000 ft. ceiling with 3 statute miles visibility or **Night using an Approved NVIS or HTAWS** 800 ft. ceiling with 3 statute miles visibility. The pilot stated that he has personal minimums that are higher than the company minimums.

No pressure from either Metro or Haynes Ambulance to take flights.

HTAWS with integrated Radar Altimeter was operational on the accident aircraft on previous flights.

Discussed the Risk Assessment for the accident pilot and estimated that the flight would have been scored at a minimum 4-6 as it was a scene flight and it requires Lead Pilot approval at score of 15-16.

Possible weather resources available to the pilot while at the scene would be Enterprise, Troy or Fort Rucker. Pilot stated that the Shelby forecasts were known to be not accurate. (Lag behind)

As the Lead Pilot he stated that he had never flown with the accident pilot as he was newly assigned to the base. Lead pilot mentioned that he was interested in the pilots thought process, mechanical or material failure.

END OF CONVERSATION

Record of Conversation

Person Interviewed:

Bryan Ruhlman  
Pilot at Troy base

Observed By:

N/A

Interviewed By:

Mr. Pat Hempen – FAA AVP 100  
Mr. Clay Perkins – FAA Aviation Safety Inspector  
Mr. Scott Tyrrell – FAA Rotorcraft Directorate

Subject: – ERA16FA140

The following text is a summary of the conversation and not intended to be a full transcript.

Pilot retired from the U.S. Army as an Instructor Pilot flying UH-60A/L Blackhawk helicopters and had experience flying at Fort Rucker.

Discussed the company weather minimums and stated that he had personal minimums that were higher.

Weather was not available on the iPad (Non-3G equipped) (No Wi-Fi)

Pilot was a friend with the accident pilot and knew him fairly well as they were newly hired to a very small EMS operation. Knowledgeable of his flight experience in the off-shore helicopter industry.

The pilot stated that he has personal minimums that are higher than the company minimums.

No pressure from either Metro or Haynes Ambulance to take flights.

HTAWS with integrated Radar Altimeter was operational on the accident aircraft on previous flights.

END OF CONVERSATION

Record of Conversation

Person Interviewed:

Jason Godwin  
Pilot at Troy base

Observed By:

N/A

Interviewed By:

Mr. Pat Hempen – FAA AVP 100  
Mr. Clay Perkins – FAA Aviation Safety Inspector  
Mr. Scott Tyrrell – FAA Rotorcraft Directorate

Subject: – ERA16FA140

The following text is a summary of the conversation and not intended to be a full transcript.

Pilot has a background in Army aviation and currently flies in the Army National Guard. Commercial flying experience comes from off-shore and knew the pilot from this experience. Knowledgeable of accident pilot and stated that he flew the Bell 407 and the S-76 in the Gulf of Mexico (GOM). Impressed with training offered during this period of flying within the GOM industry.

The pilot stated that he has personal minimums that are higher than the company minimums.

No pressure from either Metro or Haynes Ambulance to take flights.

HTAWS with integrated Radar Altimeter was operational on the accident aircraft on previous flights.

END OF CONVERSATION

Date: 3-25-16 to 3-26-16

Name : buddy wise

Agent : coffee co sheriff deptment reserve deputy

Badge : [REDACTED]

On the night of 3-25-16 I responded to a wreck on co road 606 and after arriving on scene found a car had crashed. After assiting the first responders of removing the patient from the wreckage and putting him in the ambulance.

I was instructed to help get the life flight on the ground .

I proceed to guide the life flight helicopter to the field across the road from the wreckage and next to the address of 1363 county road 606

The copter circled around the field and proceed to come in for the landing and once the copter had landed I proceed to wait for the medic and nurse and lead them to the ambulance .

After patient was loaded into the air ambulance I watch it rise and proceed to go north from the scene .

While watching the copter proceed to rise for take off I didn't notice anything out of normal about the take off

I met with mr clay perkins and Alabama state trooper brock gwaltney and walked them tho the scene and showed them where the helicopter was landed and when I was standing and the route taken to the ambulance

This was done on 3-26-2016 around 330pm -400pm

Coffee co reserve deputy

[REDACTED]

Buddy wise [REDACTED]

B.W Ps 1 of 3 *[initials]*



Google earth

feet 10  
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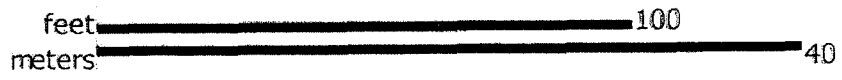
B.W. Pg 2 of 3 ~~4~~





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Rw Pg 3 of 3

Initial call was received from Enterprise Rescue of report of MVA, multiple overturned and with entrapment and location was given in the Goodman community. I, Dwain Ellis contacted Pilot Chad Hammond via company issued cell phone, and gave the information about the location and who they would be responding with and wanted to obtain from him a weather check to see if the call could be taken. Chad started checking the weather in the area and before he confirmed the call, he stated hold on wanted to check one more thing on his phone, and then he said that they would try to make the scene that he was not sure totally if they could. Once Chad stated that they would take the flight, I scrambled them and gave scene location and who they were responding with. Once the call was scrambled, I initiated the flights OCF-2 with initial lift off location and then the location of the scene. Once the crew was ready, OCF-2 given and the flight was initiated and the souls on board as well as fuel was given and they started to the scene. Once they got started flying to the scene, scene information was relayed to the crew that they were responding with Enterprise Rescue on report of MVA, multiple overturned and entrapment and that Enterprise Rescue was the LZ contact and that they were on the State Net. The crew made it to the area of the scene, but was having initial trouble making contact with the LZ contact and wanted me to contact Enterprise Rescue to see if they could make contact with them and give them the LZ information. This information was relayed to Goodman Fire at which time they made contact and safe landing at the scene was established. I was sitting watching the screens while the scene was worked and I noticed that they had their course plotted to Baptist South as their receiving facility. Life Flight 2 lifted from the scene, with number of souls given and the amount of fuel given and they were enroute to Baptist South ER. This information was entered in Zoll and Golden Hour, and all appeared to be normal via Metro Tracker. At approximately 8-10 minutes into the flight, I went to do a position check as protocol and I was unable to get coordinated. Once I was unable to get coordinated I attempted to contact Life Flight 2 via Southern Linc radio and was unsuccessful after several attempts, then I attempted to make contact via VHF radio and was unsuccessful. I made attempts via crew members Southern Linc radio and cell phone and was unsuccessful as well. Once I was unsuccessful making contact with the aircraft, the tracker information went from inflight to N/A. Several more attempts were made via Southern Linc to all radios on board the helicopter and was still unsuccessful. I contacted Enterprise Police Department to verify if they could check with Goodman Fire to make sure they had lifted off the scene, and it was verified they did lift from the scene. I made contact with the charge nurse from Baptist South to see if they had heard from Life Flight 2, and I was advised that they had not. I contact Dispatch Center Manager James Broadway and gave all above information about not being able to contact the crew at which time he contacted Chief Flight Nurse Jonathan Terrell. Attempts were made to contact the crew via satellite phone was unsuccessful as well. I contacted Metro OCC to see if they had heard from them or if they were tracking at this time, and was advised by them that they had not heard from them, nor were they tracking them. James Broadway called back at which time PAIP was initiated for overdue aircraft was initiated and calls initiated and logged on PAIP form. Calls were placed to agencies between the scene and Baptist South were made and search initiated for missing Life Flight was started. Follow up calls from agencies involved were received and follow up calls from OCC and FAA as well during the search was made and updated information was given to each as we received it.

Dwain Ellis

March 28, 2016

March 28, 2016

**Life Flight Crash Notes (3/25/16)**

Dispatched to wreck rollover county road 606, one patient w/ entrapment. Immediately my partner began contacting local air ambulances in the area. Weather conditions appeared to be ok at the time. Did not appear to have foggy conditions while enroute to scene. Misty rain at times.

Prolonged extrication of patient from vehicle due to rollover conditions and patients leg being pinned with the door. Local volunteer fire dept. was unable to get extrication tools to work so the work had to be done by crowbars and man power. Patient had bleeding from head; groggy at times; in and out of consciousness; right femur fracture fracture; Took an estimated 30 minutes to get patient extricated from vehicle which required moving the ambulance forward to get in line w/ chopper. Flight nurse advised us, ***"Because of the slant to the ground the blades look lower but we will be ok."***

Advised local volunteer fire dept. 4 times to have helicopter land in the street because of recent rainy conditions to the ground. Volunteer FD had chopper land in open field next to residence about 100 yards away from ambulance.

When my partner (Chase Hendrix) asked flight nurse if they were taking patient to SAMC in Dothan, the nurse quickly responded saying, ***"No. We're going to Montgomery due to the fog."***

By the time we got the patient extricated from the vehicle there was a steady rain falling. While we were loading the patient into the ambulance to get the patient care started I could hear the helicopter flying overhead. No unusual sounds.

Chopper took off with no apparent problems or unusual sounds as chopper flew directly over us (wreck site) heading north. Only thing out of the ordinary appeared to be how low the chopper was. To me it appeared no more than maybe 120-150 feet off the ground; about as high as a water tank. Could see the bottom of the craft and the under light very good.

Chris Mahan

Enterprise Rescue, Inc.

Employee: Donald Jeffrey Jones

Occupation: Metro Aviation Operational Control Center

Date: March 30, 2016

**ACCIDENT STATEMENT FOR N911GF MARCH 25, 2016**

On March 24, 2016, a flight request came through Metro OCC a little after 23:00CST for TRO (N911GF). The flight was acknowledged and weather was reviewed using information from approved FAA resources and through the Sneider Electric weather source as an alternate resource for a potential turn down of the flight. To the best of my knowledge, there was no reason at the time for a weather turn down in the area, no reports of thunderstorms and/or low ceilings on the route of flight when it was checked. The flight for N911GF was also in the local flying area that the pilot is familiar with, such as weather and other local phenomenon.

About an hour went by and the COMM center, N911GF Dispatch, called Metro OCC around 00:17-00:20CST to report that the helicopter was not in contact with COMM center past 00:16CST. Outerlink GPS services were not showing updates to the aircraft's location or status. After receiving information from the COMM center, Steve Gentz and I began making phone calls to local authorities: Coffee County Sheriff's Department, Jacksonville ARTCC, and Alabama State Police. The Coffee County Sheriff's department dispatch acknowledged departure of N911GF from the vehicle accident scene near Goodman, AL. The departure was verified by one of the deputies and information was backed up by the EMS ground crew at the scene of the vehicle accident that the patient originated.

Jacksonville ARTCC was in communication with us at OCC trying to contact local airfields, KATL tower, and other authorities. At approximately 01:00CST, the aircraft was considered missing and we started PAIP, notification of the appropriate staff at Metro Aviation, and filing a report with Carl Studdard of the FAA. Overall, there was trouble contacting controlling agencies such as Jacksonville Center, Atlanta Approach, and the local Law Enforcement Agencies considering it was midnight on Good Friday.

Information received during the procedures of the incident

Aircraft: N911GF

Pilot: Chad Hammond

Base: TRO

Scene: 31.279350, -85.971285

Aircraft was at vehicle accident scene

Souls on board: 4 - pilot, 2 med crew, patient

Coffee County Sheriff's Office: [REDACTED]

Jacksonville ARTCC: [REDACTED]

Alabama State Police: [REDACTED]

3/30/16

On the night of March 25, 2016 I was working in the Metro OCC as the Secondary position. At approximately 12:30 A.M. (Mar. 26<sup>th</sup>) I overheard Jeff Jones (primary OCC) speaking to the Comm Center about this flight. They hadn't received a position report at this time. We both looked for a position report on Outerlink and saw the last known location for the aircraft. Shortly after this I suggested we generate the notification for an overdue/missing aircraft. We agreed it was prudent to do so, and I sent the notification out. I then made all the necessary phone calls on the list. At approximately 1:30 A.M. Milton Beltz arrived to assist us with the situation, followed by Jim Arthur at approx. 2:00 A.M. At ~~no~~ no time did I speak to the pilot regarding the release or operation of this flight. Nor did I speak to anyone in the Comm Center regarding this flight prior to its departure, or receive and acknowledge the flight request, as I was Secondary at the time. Furthermore, I had no discussion with Jeff Jones (primary OCC at the time) regarding the operation of this flight. I continued to make contact with the aircraft repeatedly to ~~no~~ avail. I also assisted with filling out all known information

(OVER) →

on the PAIP form. At approximately  
7:00 I learned (via Milton Gertz)  
that the wreckage had been located and  
that there were 4 fatalities. This is  
my best recollection of the events of  
March 25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup>, 2016.





## RECORD OF CONVERSATION

**Paul Suffern**  
**Investigator**  
**Operational Factors Division**

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**Date: August 23, 2016**  
**Person Contacted: Jeff Jones**  
**NTSB Accident Number: ERA16FA140**

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### **Narrative:**

Mr. Jones was contacted on August 17, 2016 regarding his statement and weather conditions surrounding the accident. Mr. Jones stated that he did not have any information to add and all information regarding his recollection of the accident was contained in the statement he provided on March 30, 2016.



## MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

**Todd Gunther**  
**Air Safety Investigator**  
**Eastern Region**

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**Date: August 31, 2016**  
**Person Contacted: Natalin Hammond (Pilot's Spouse)**  
**Subject: Pilot's Background Information**  
**NTSB Accident Number: ERA16FA140**

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- She met Chad Hammond in September 2005 and they got married in 2011.
- They have a daughter.
- She met her husband before he became a pilot, and she was with him throughout his flight training, his flight instruction, his years flying in the Gulf of Mexico for PHI as well as Metro Aviation where he realized his long-term career goal in EMS.
- In October of 2015, Chad left PHI, though he loved the company and flying the AW-139 to be home with his daughter more.
- He always wanted to be an EMS pilot from the beginning and was excited when an opening popped up an hour from home in Eufaula, Alabama, where he was born and raised.
- Chad began flying for Metro Aviation and Haynes Lifeflight/Ambulance in November 2015.
- Haynes had just opened a Troy base, where he would be stationed.
- As a pilot's wife, she was used to hitches and overtime, but was quite shocked by how much he worked in the months of December, January and February. She believed that he only had a few days off for the entire month of January.
- She was accustomed to the typical stresses everyone in a relationship in aviation deals with, so there was nothing out of the ordinary leading up to March.
- They enjoyed having him home more, and he got to attend his daughter's activities more and spend more time with her.
- Chad was off work Monday and Tuesday and watched their daughter since she was on Spring Break.

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Page 1 of 2



- Wednesday afternoon, Chad left from the house to report to the Troy base for work about 5:30pm since the commute from Eufaula took almost an hour.
- Wednesday night, they talked before they each went to bed, and there was nothing out of the ordinary, and discussed the color for the new shingles the roofers would be putting on their roof later in the week.
- Thursday morning after work, Chad drove home from the Troy base getting home about 8:30am. She and her daughter were at the doctor's office because her daughter had a slight fever the night before. She told Chad they would be home after lunch. When they got home, Chad was asleep. When he woke up, he played for a few hours before he went to work just like routine. He took his ambulance crew to eat at Sante Fe beside the base for dinner that night and called her and their daughter to talk for a little bit. He always wanted to wish their daughter goodnight before bed.
- Friday morning when Chad got off work, he drove home from the Troy base to their home. He visited his mother that morning since he had not flown that night. He played with their daughter for a few hours that afternoon, and she packed him and his crew a Boston Butt for dinner that night and helped him load up his car. He then left for work. at approximately 8:03 pm, Chad and his daughter talked on the phone about her Easter egg hunt that evening, and then she and Chad chatted briefly and said goodbye. He did not sound tired or any different than he had any other night, and said the dinner was good.
- On Saturday morning, at 3:09 am, she received a phone call from Shreveport, Louisiana. The Metro Employee's name was Milton. He asked her if she was alone, and she told him that her 4-year-old daughter was with her. He then informed her that they had lost contact with her husband's flight. She then asked him to call her mother-in-law to let her know since she was the only family within driving distance to her and her daughter.



## RECORD OF CONVERSATION

**Todd Gunther**  
**Air Safety Investigator**  
**Eastern Region**

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**Date: October 4, 2016**  
**Person Contacted: Grant Hearn (Friend of Pilot)**  
**NTSB Accident Number: ERA16FA140**

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Mr. Hearn was interviewed over the telephone.

According to Mr. Hearn, he and Chad Hammond (the accident pilot), had both been helicopter flight instructors in West Palm Beach together.

They both worked at PHI together, after they each separately left the flight school in West Palm Beach.

Mr. Hearn left PHI in 2012-2013 and went to fly internationally.

He considered Chad to be a friend, and a good pilot.

He could not remember Chad ever having anything major, or problems with his flying.



## INTERVIEW SUMMARY

**Todd Gunther**  
**Air Safety Investigator**  
**Eastern Region**

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**Date: October 13, 2016**  
**Person Contacted: Jeff Jones (Operational Control Specialist)**  
**NTSB Accident Number: ERA16FA140**

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Mr. Jones was interviewed over the telephone.

- On the night of the accident he was in training to become an Operational Control Specialist. He was on the 5<sup>th</sup> and last night of his rotation in the Metro Aviation Operational Control Center (OCC), when the accident occurred.
- He was being supervised by a senior operational control specialist; Mr. Steve Gentz.
- During the shift, Mr. Gentz double checked the flights that he was releasing.
- That night, Mr. Jones was using the "old system" known as "OCC Helper" which he was not that familiar with. The primary computer was being used to monitor the flights as they were being inputted and the secondary computer they would not usually use unless it was busy (a lot of flights being operated) as it would crash.
- On the old system a flight could be airborne for 15 minutes before you were aware of it and the program could actually crash while you were looking at it.
- The coordinates for the location of the automobile accident were correct but the format was not correct for the program they were using.

- The old system did not show them the weather that night as it did not recognize the format the coordinates were in. This was a common problem and sometimes they had to reformat the coordinates to get it to work. Haynes Ambulance would not have known this was a problem.
- Mr. Gentz had checked the weather but, there was not anything that drew their attention to the weather that night as they could only see the weather for the Troy Base, and Baptist Medical Center in Montgomery. They could not see the weather for Enterprise and Dothan because of the formatting problem.
- When it came time to report the helicopter as missing, Mr. Gentz was hesitant to do so and seemed to be in denial about what was going on.
- At the time, they did not have a manifest that showed them who was onboard.
- He did not use the old system very long, as they were transitioning to the new system.



## RECORD OF CONVERSATION

**Todd Gunther**  
**Air Safety Investigator**  
**Eastern Region**

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**Date: October 17, 2016**  
**Person Contacted: Steve Gentz (Operational Control Specialist)**  
**NTSB Accident Number: ERA16FA140**

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Mr. Gentz was interviewed over the telephone.

According to Mr. Gentz, he provided everything in his original statement, and that Mr. Jones was releasing the flights that night.

When asked if they had encountered any difficulties that night in the OCC, he advised that "we did have some software issues that night."

When asked if the software issues might have had anything to do with formatting of the latitude and longitude, he stated that the software issues, "could have led to OCC Helper not picking up the weather."

He also stated that "I am sorry but, I do not have anything else to offer" and declined to write down my telephone number to call me back in the future.



## RECORD OF CONVERSATION

**Todd Gunther**  
**Air Safety Investigator**  
**Eastern Region**

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**Date: October 17, 2016**  
**Person Contacted: Brian Ruhlman (Pilot)**  
**NTSB Accident Number: ERA16FA140**

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Mr. Ruhlman was interviewed over the telephone.

According to Mr. Rulman, he was based at the same base with Chad Hammond, the pilot of the accident helicopter.

He remembered that Mr. Hammond was "upbeat" and that he came in on the day of the accident before 1845. It was a normal turnover and there were no mechanical issues with the helicopter. Mr. Hammond checked the weather when he came in, and during the turnover, Mr. Ruhlman mentioned to him that the weather around Dothan had been "IFR most of the day."

Mr. Ruhlman hung around with Mr. Hammond and Mr. Hammond's crew for a little while and then Mr. Hammond and the flight nurse from his crew went out and walked "some laps" around the base. Mr. Ruhlman then left about 1915.

They used to have "grid coordinate" problems. It was a common problem. It started from the time when "we opened the base" and it was still occurring around the time of the accident.

Mr. Ruhlman advised that The program was big on "launch time" but he never really felt any pressure to "get out the door" or felt like he was being pushed.

Pilot's would check the weather when they checked in. Usually they would also check it when they would get a call from dispatch.

He advised that they used to go straight to the helicopter when "dispatch" would call/ launch them. They would then takeoff, and get the grid coordinates airborne by either text or radio (This was sometimes referred to by the crews, as an "auto-launch."). They would then enter the coordinates. Once airborne though it was "typical" that the coordinates would change and they would have to re-enter them.

Mr. Ruhlman also advised that now that they have switched to "Complete Flight," they do not get as many changes, and since the accident, everything has to go through "Shreveport" (Metro Operational Control Center), before they launch.



## RECORD OF CONVERSATION

**Todd Gunther**  
**Air Safety Investigator**  
**Eastern Region**

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**Date: November 10, 2016**  
**Person Contacted: Jayme Boswell (Nurse Practitioner)**  
**NTSB Accident Number: ERA16FA140**

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Ms. Boswell was interviewed over the telephone.

According to Ms. Boswell, she was good friends with the Flight Nurse (Stacy Cernadas).

She was also friends with the pilot (Chad Hammond).

She, Stacy, and Chad, would text routinely.

She advised that, Stacy was working a "48". This was Stacy's second shift. She had picked it up from someone else.

While texting, Stacy had mentioned the weather.

She also advised that, she met Chad, when the crew base opened in October of 2015. On the day of the accident he seemed to be his usual "upbeat" self.



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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IN RE: :
   
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THE FATAL HELICOPTER :
   
ACCIDENT THAT OCCURRED NEAR : NTSB Accident No.
   
COFFEE COUNTY ON MARCH 26, : ERA16FA140
   
2016 :
   
 :
   
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INTERVIEW OF: JASON ADKISON

Monday,
   
March 28, 2016

Adkison Residence
   
[REDACTED]
   
Enterprise, Alabama

BEFORE

SAM REDMON, Coffee County Sheriff's Office
   
JOHNNY KNOWLES, Coffee County Sheriff's Office

This transcript was produced from audio
   
provided by the National Transportation Safety Board.

NEAL R. GROSS
   
COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS



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INVESTIGATOR REDMON: This is Sam Redmon.  
It's March 28, 2016. It's 12:45 p.m. Myself,  
Investigator Johnny Knowles, Coffee County Sheriff's  
Office and Jason Adkison. You're with Goodman, right?

MR. ADKISON: Yes, Goodman Volunteer Fire  
Department.

INVESTIGATOR REDMON: All right. And you  
responded to the car wreck on the 25th, correct?

MR. ADKISON: Yes.

INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Just kind of tell us a  
little. What you can tell us.

MR. ADKISON: About the whole situation.

INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Yes, just tell us.

MR. ADKISON: Well, when I arrived --

INVESTIGATOR REDMON: About what time did  
you get paged?

MR. ADKISON: It was -- I'm not really sure  
on that. I would say around 11:30 p.m., 11:40 p.m.,  
something like that.

INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. It wasn't  
midnight. But we got there and the car was overturned.  
The patient was inside the car still. And finally got  
the car out and someone had already called Life Flight  
at this point.

1                   INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. But you don't  
2 know who.

3                   MR. ADKISON: No, that I don't. I assume it  
4 was a deputy, but I don't know. And then they got  
5 there within minutes of when I arrived because I was a  
6 little bit late getting there in my personal vehicle.

7                   But we saw the copter coming in above the  
8 fog. And he circled around maybe three times to get  
9 the location. And me and another deputy, we found a  
10 grass patch that he could land in and was flashing our  
11 flashlights for him to see it. And he finally  
12 understood I guess what we wanted him to do. And they  
13 landed.

14                  And two of the medics I guess you would call  
15 them got out, a male and female, went the rescue squad  
16 where we had the patient. Then they worked for a  
17 little while in there with the rescue squad unit.

18                  Then we got him out on the gurney and rolls  
19 him to the edge of the field. And then there were  
20 multiple people holding onto the gurney as we took it  
21 through the field with the patient on it.

22                  And one of the medics was, the male medic,  
23 the one in the lead of the gurney. We got him into the  
24 helicopter, strapped him in, shut the door and that was  
25 basically it. It was the last time we saw them. I

1 took off in my vehicle. That was it.

2 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: And you made the  
3 comment that you saw the pilot in the helicopter.

4 MR. ADKISON: Yes.

5 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: He never got out of  
6 the helicopter.

7 MR. ADKISON: No, he never got out. He  
8 never said anything. He nodded his head one time.

9 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: And you said he had  
10 something on his face.

11 MR. ADKISON: Yes, he had something over his  
12 eyes.

13 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Over his eyes.

14 MR. ADKISON: And then he had a helmet on  
15 and he had a mike that was down to his mouth.

16 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

17 MR. ADKISON: But he did have, yes,  
18 something over his eyes. It looked kind of squarish  
19 with -- like sunglasses but it was square looking. It  
20 was hard to tell because the lighting wasn't that good  
21 in the helicopter itself.


22 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Sure.

23 MR. ADKISON: But he never said anything.  
24 But he acted like to me he was a guy on a mission.

25 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. And the

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1 helicopter was running the whole time.

2 MR. ADKISON: Yes.

3 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Never shut it down.

4 MR. ADKISON: It was at to me seemed like a  
5 really fast idle.

6 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

7 MR. ADKISON: It was never idled down.

8 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: And nothing else  
9 looked out of the ordinary to you on the ground or  
10 anything like that.

11 MR. ADKISON: No.

12 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Takeoff, everything  
13 looked normal.

14 MR. ADKISON: The takeoff seemed fine.

15 There was a -- It seems like a long time now, but it  
16 probably wasn't a minute or so. But when we got back  
17 to the edge of the road before they ever lifted and I  
18 guess that's normal. They were probably working the  
19 patient. I don't know. I don't know anything about  
20 that.

21 But when he did lift off, he lifted straight  
22 up. He was guesstimation 100 feet in the air, way  
23 above any tree around there. And he put pitch in it  
24 because it nosed out and took off.

25 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

1 MR. ADKISON: When I say nosed out --

2 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: You mean accelerating.

3 MR. ADKISON: Yes, he was lifting up in a  
4 hurry.

5 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

6 MR. ADKISON: That was the last I saw of it.

7 MR. KNOWLES: The helicopter took off and it  
8 seemed -- no wavering.

9 MR. ADKISON: No.

10 MR. KNOWLES: Just like normal stuff.

11 MR. ADKISON: He went straight up just  
12 perfect.

13 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Like level straight  
14 up.

15 MR. ADKISON: Yes, just perfect. And then  
16 he started going the north direction and he took off.

17 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

18 MR. KNOWLES: Any odd noises? Anything out  
19 of the ordinary?

20 MR. ADKISON: Not as I heard. I mean I'm  
21 not a helicopter mechanic. I don't know.

22 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Yes.

23 MR. KNOWLES: Just sounded like a  
24 helicopter.

25 MR. ADKISON: I didn't hear anything making

1 any noise like a bearing rattling or anything.

2 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Yes. And will you  
3 describe the weather?

4 MR. ADKISON: The weather was really a heavy  
5 mist, not quite a rain but a real heavy mist. And  
6 ceiling was very low, maybe 100 foot.

7 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: But could you see the  
8 tops of trees?

9 MR. ADKISON: Yes, I could see tops of  
10 trees, but like I said earlier my flashlight I shined  
11 it up in the sky. And you can tell where fog starts  
12 with a flashlight real easy.

13 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Right. Yes.

14 MR. ADKISON: And it was maybe two to three  
15 times as high as the nearest tree.

16 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

17 MR. ADKISON: So he was way above the tree  
18 when he lifted.

19 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: And you said earlier  
20 you couldn't see the helicopter itself. You could just  
21 see the light shining down through the fog when he  
22 landed. Is that correct or?

23 MR. ADKISON: Well, as he got closer we  
24 could.

25 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Yes.

1 MR. ADKISON: When we first saw him, you  
2 could see the light blowing through the fog. As far as  
3 reading anything on the helicopter, no. It was  
4 impossible. We couldn't do it.

5 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: You couldn't see the  
6 helicopter itself.

7 MR. ADKISON: No.

8 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Just the light shining  
9 through.

10 MR. ADKISON: Yes. And as he started coming  
11 down we could.

12 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Yes, sure.

13 MR. ADKISON: He was actually hovering  
14 trying to figure out I guess exactly where to land  
15 above some trees. And you could make out certain  
16 pieces of the helicopter at that point.

17 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Right.

18 MR. ADKISON: But you couldn't read anything  
19 on it.

20 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

21 MR. ADKISON: And that's when he was coming  
22 in to land. But when he figured out where we were  
23 trying to put him I guess he had come in with no  
24 problem. I don't even think he bumped when he landed.

25 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

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1 MR. ADKISON: It was smooth as it can be.  
2 He was sitting there the whole time waiting for  
3 everybody.

4 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: And about how long  
5 would you say he was on the ground total, give or take?

6 MR. ADKISON: Ten, 12 minutes maybe.

7 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. That's fine.

8 MR. ADKISON: I mean that's hard to say.

9 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Yeah, I know. I'm  
10 just asking for you know.

11 MR. ADKISON: It wasn't 15. I'm sure. It's  
12 probably less than that, but I'm not certain.

13 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: That's fine. All  
14 right. That's really about it.

15 MR. ADKISON: Other than that, it just  
16 seemed I guess you would textbook or whatever.

17 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

18 MR. KNOWLES: And you said he kept the same  
19 level while he was there.

20 MR. ADKISON: Yes, he never wavered. Never  
21 wavered up or down.

22 MR. KNOWLES: At least not until takeoff.

23 MR. ADKISON: Yes. When he took off. And  
24 it was up higher when he came in.

25 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: All right. That's it.

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1 This is Investigator Redmon. Same persons present.

2 This concludes this interview. Off the record.

3 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter was  
4 concluded.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Fatal Helicopter Accident  
March 26, 2016, Coffee County  
Accident No. ERA16FA140  
Interview of Jason Adkison

DATE: 03-28-16

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 11 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

-----:
   
IN RE: :
   
:
   
THE FATAL HELICOPTER :
   
ACCIDENT THAT OCCURRED NEAR : NTSB Accident No.
   
COFFEE COUNTY ON MARCH 26, : ERA16FA140
   
2016 :
   
:
   
-----:

INTERVIEW OF: ALAN WILLIS

March 2016

Hampton Inn Enterprise
   
[REDACTED]
   
Enterprise, Alabama 36330

BEFORE

SAM REDMON, Coffee County Sheriff's Office
   
JOHNNY KNOWLES, Coffee County Sheriff's Office
   
PAT HEMPEN, FAA
   
CLAY PERKINS, Alabama/Northwest Florida Flight
   
Standards District Office, FAA
   
SCOTT TYRRELL, FAA Rotorcraft Standards Staff

This transcript was produced from audio provided by the National Transportation Safety Board.

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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

1  
2 INTERVIEWER: So your responsibility that  
3 night was?

4 MR. WILLIS: Search and rescue. I was  
5 looking for the aircraft. I was with Elba Fire  
6 Department.

7 INTERVIEWER: And how do you say that or  
8 spell that?

9 MR. WILLIS: E-L-B-A.

10 INTERVIEWER: E-L-B-A.

11 MR. WILLIS: Fire Department.

12 INTERVIEWER: Okay. So were you at the  
13 scene for the vehicle accident then?

14 MR. WILLIS: No, sir. I was called after.

15 INTERVIEWER: Or you were called after.

16 MR. WILLIS: I was called for the aircraft.

17 INTERVIEWER: Do you know what time that was  
18 approximately?

19 MR. WILLIS: When we were called? We were  
20 paged out probably 1:15 - 1:30 I imagine. I'm guessing  
21 around that time. All they said they had an aircraft  
22 down and they gave us an area of 518 and camera 509.

23 INTERVIEWER: 518 or 509 is what?

24 MR. WILLIS: Camera 518 and camera 509 is  
25 where the call came out in that area where they last

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1 sent the location.

2 INTERVIEWER: Okay. And you're recording  
3 this.

4 MR. REDMON: Um-hm. Unless you want me to  
5 stop.

6 INTERVIEWER: No, you're good.

7 (Off record discussion)

8 INTERVIEWER: So you received the call about  
9 0130 Saturday morning, aircraft down. They gave you  
10 the approximate vicinity. And then go ahead and just  
11 kind of continue.

12 MR. WILLIS: Then they come back and they  
13 said it was possibility around the area of Camera 450  
14 in 134 area. I guess that's where they were pinging or  
15 something. They thought they were pinging the phone or  
16 something like that.

17 I was on truck two and we were in the area.  
18 Then we went up to INO (phonetic) and INO Baptist  
19 Church is where they were setting up command post. And  
20 we left there and where did we go.

21 Oh, they told us to go out towards Geneva  
22 County off 625. They was pinging there. It was  
23 possibly in a field. Another cell phone. And we went  
24 in that area and we searched through the fields and  
25 everything. There was nothing.

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1           After that, we went to -- I have to figure  
2 out where we went then. We went all over the place  
3 actually. Where is the other place we went? I'm  
4 trying to think.

5           Oh, I think after that we went to the wreck  
6 scene and they wanted to find out which way to lift it  
7 up. In that case at that time, someone had a video of  
8 when he was taking off.

9           So that's where we got the idea of how he  
10 went. So we was like he was going to be over here on  
11 the north side or whatever of 617 and 615-616 in the  
12 area.

13           So we left the wreck scene. And we were  
14 heading back to the command post where they set up at  
15 87. They moved the command post to 87 south and  
16 Highway 134 to the Big Cat right next door to the  
17 Petra.

18           When we got there, we got some biscuits and  
19 something to eat. And I guess someone had gotten a  
20 phone call that a neighbor on Route 615 had heard a  
21 boom that night. A loud boom.

22           So we went over that way. First, we went  
23 into one field and there were two other guys that were  
24 out in the field there. And they said they could smell  
25 the jet fuel. So at that time everybody went to that

1 location and we went inside the woods there for a  
2 little bit, me and these other guys that were with me.

3 We came back down because it was getting  
4 real thick. And we were like we'll just wait until a  
5 helicopter can get up and possibly see. We came back  
6 out and then we went up the road. And I guess they  
7 thought they had seen the helicopter down in like a  
8 pond.

9 Well, I went to a neighbor there. It was on  
10 the corner of 615 and 616 in a trailer. A lady was  
11 walking out and I said I'm going to go ask her if she's  
12 heard anything.

13 So I went and asked the lady. I said,  
14 "Ma'am, did you happen to hear a boom or anything?"

15 She said, "Yes, sir. I did. I actually saw  
16 him when he took off and flew. The next thing I knew I  
17 heard a big boom."

18 Why she didn't call I don't know. But I  
19 said "Okay. You heard it over here in the woods next  
20 door to your house."

21 She said, "Yes, sir."

22 I said, "Okay."

23 I told the guys, "I'm going to go down to  
24 the edge of the woods. I'm going to go sit back in the  
25 woods there and search the woods." And when I went

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1 down, the guy Jonathan Johnson was with me. And then  
2 we met the other guy Lee who was coming out of the  
3 woods out of the trail.

4 I said, "Come on. We're going to back here  
5 to the very back." So we went back and there was an  
6 abandoned trailer. We went on down the bottom and.

7 PARTICIPANT: Start all over.

8 MR. WILLIS: And then -- Do I have to?

9 INTERVIEWER: This is Special Agent Pat  
10 Hemen. He's from FAA Headquarters.

11 MR. WILLIS: So when we went down to the  
12 bottom there, I said, "Well, guys. We're just going to  
13 go down in these woods here and look."

14 And when we went in it was real thick woods  
15 and a swampy area. And as soon as we got in there, you  
16 could smell a strong odor of jet fuel. And I told the  
17 guys, "It's going to be in this location somewhere  
18 because it's really strong."

19 At that time, I tried to get on the radio  
20 and tell them "Hey, we got a strong smell of jet fuel  
21 and send people" or whatever which they couldn't hear  
22 me. We continued on in and we just kept looking and  
23 searching around and finally --

24 PARTICIPANT: You were how many other  
25 people?

1 MR. WILLIS: Me and the other two guys.

2 PARTICIPANT: Okay.

3 MR. WILLIS: It was just us three in the  
4 swampy area. And then one of the men was coming in  
5 behind us way back off, but he wasn't right there when  
6 we found it. So we just kept searching.

7 I went one way this way and the other two  
8 guys went across towards where they found the scene.  
9 When I was going back I couldn't smell any jet fuel  
10 anymore. So I was like it's going to be way back this  
11 way. At that time when I turned to the right going  
12 towards where they were, they said "We located it."

13 And it was right there on the end. We went  
14 in and we'd seen the bodies and everything there. At  
15 that time, I tried calling the radio. I couldn't get  
16 out. So I just yelled "Hey. We found it." Then  
17 everybody came down there.


18 We didn't touch anything. I said, "We just  
19 had seen everything there." And that was basically it.

20 When the troopers and all them got there,  
21 they did their thing. They roped it off. And we got  
22 out of sight and left. So that's basically what  
23 happened.

24 As I said, when we went in we smelled the  
25 jet fuel. And I was like "It's here." And we went in

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1 searching and that's where we found it.

2 INTERVIEWER: From the accident scene  
3 perspective, there wasn't anything that you saw that  
4 was --

5 MR. WILLIS: No, sir. I'd seen the video.  
6 Actually, I got the guy to send me the video because  
7 Haynes Life Flight wanted it. The people from Haynes  
8 wanted the video. So I sent it to them. I've got it  
9 on my phone if you all want that.

10 INTERVIEWER: Okay. Do you know which  
11 perspective was it? Was there somebody in the video  
12 taking another video of it? Can you show it to us?

13 MR. WILLIS: Yes, I can show it.

14 INTERVIEWER: Because this may be the other  
15 video. From what we understand there are two videos.

16 MR. WILLIS: Yes, there was somebody in this  
17 video or they were videoing. I think it was somebody  
18 from Enterprise Rescue because it --

19 PARTICIPANT: Is that that bald-headed guy  
20 standing off to the left?

21 MR. WILLIS: I think so. Here it is right  
22 here.

23 (Playing video)

24 MR. WILLIS: And that's what we were  
25 watching. We gave it to the Haynes people. And that's

1 what we'd seen. And we went up and then they circled  
2 around. Where we were at going to Geneva County he  
3 figured he might have gotten on sight and went the  
4 other way. (Inaudible)

5 INTERVIEWER: So what's your experience as  
6 far as helicopters on the scene? Do you have quite a  
7 bit experience with helicopters.

8 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir. I've dealt with them  
9 plenty of times in the fire department.

10 INTERVIEWER: I understand that you're not a  
11 weather guy. But when you're out searching for this  
12 aircraft what were the conditions?

13 MR. WILLIS: It was very, very foggy. Very  
14 bad.

15 INTERVIEWER: Could you see the tops of the  
16 trees?

17 MR. WILLIS: With a flashlight. The  
18 flashlight you could barely actually then. I mean it  
19 was very thick.

20 INTERVIEWER: So the fog had penetrated that  
21 area.

22 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir. It got really thick  
23 on us. And it was like it was moving in a lot thicker.  
24 It was really bad.

25 INTERVIEWER: When you all got the actual

1 wreckage finally, what were the conditions then?

2 MR. WILLIS: The fog had already lifted up.  
3 It had already ease away then. I don't think it was as  
4 foggy then because this was around I think 7:00 or so.

5 INTERVIEWER: In the Sunday morning.

6 MR. WILLIS: Yes.

7 INTERVIEWER: So that's when you found the  
8 wreckage was approximately 700.

9 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir. I believe so.

10 INTERVIEWER: So you didn't enter the woods  
11 at dark. You were in the woods in daylight.

12 MR. WILLIS: In daylight.

13 INTERVIEWER: When you guys were on the  
14 scene, did you guys take any pictures?

15 MR. WILLIS: No, sir.

16 INTERVIEWER: Nothing with your personal  
17 phones or?

18 MR. WILLIS: No, sir. I did not take any  
19 pictures. I didn't want to see --

20 INTERVIEWER: Did any of the other  
21 individuals take any pictures?

22 MR. WILLIS: No, sir. Not the guys that  
23 were with me. No, sir.

24 INTERVIEWER: Do you know of anybody that  
25 took any? I ask that question a little more pointedly

1 because what we're concerned about is obviously  
2 protecting the families of.

3 MR. WILLIS: I hadn't seen any. I honestly  
4 don't think anybody did really.

5 INTERVIEWER: Okay.

6 MR. WILLIS: Because by the time we yelled  
7 and said we were down there, everybody swarmed down  
8 there and troops and everybody were there. And I think  
9 they were pretty much making sure nobody was taking  
10 pictures or anything.

11 In my opinion, if somebody was trying to  
12 take pictures, it would be crazy to even try and do  
13 that because it was horrible as you all could see.

14 INTERVIEWER: I haven't seen it.

15 MR. WILLIS: Oh, you all haven't seen it.

16 INTERVIEWER: Well, myself. You may have.  
17 Clay has.

18 MR. PERKINS: I was there.

19 INTERVIEWER: And we've been involved in  
20 that before. So maybe not this accident.

21 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir.

22 INTERVIEWER: But when you sit there and you  
23 think about family and protecting those images if they  
24 ever get to social media or whatever. There's the  
25 story about the young girl that was in that highway

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1 patrol accident and she's now forever embedded in  
2 social media because people were taking pictures.

3 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir.

4 INTERVIEWER: You all have to tell me about  
5 that one.

6 MR. WILLIS: It didn't even cross my mind  
7 about taking pictures. My phone was in my pocket and I  
8 had bunker pants on, muddy from all the way up because  
9 it's swamp.

10 INTERVIEWER: Who were the other volunteer  
11 fire departments? I saw Goodman folks and.

12 MR. WILLIS: Yes, there was Goodman. There  
13 was Battons, New Brockton, Elba.

14 INTERVIEWER: Are these names or?

15 INTERVIEWER: Yes. Those are departments.


16 MR. WILLIS: Different departments.

17 INTERVIEWER: Oh, different departments.  
18 That's what I was thinking, different departments.

19 MR. WILLIS: Goodman, Battons, Elba, New  
20 Brockton. I don't know if TriCom was there or not.  
21 There were several other agencies that were coming, you  
22 know, bringing (Inaudible) and rangers and all. I  
23 think Gant Rescue was bringing a ranger. I don't know  
24 if OP ever showed up or not. That's about the main  
25 ones and the troops and the deputies of Geneva County

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1 and Coffee County, Enterprise PD and New Brockton PD,  
2 Elba PD. There were several people.

3 INTERVIEWER: Who of those did you see any  
4 of them go directly to the site?

5 MR. WILLIS: Whoa?

6 INTERVIEWER: Did all of them? Somebody  
7 from everybody?

8 MR. WILLIS: Yes, just about. It seemed  
9 like everybody come down.

10 INTERVIEWER: Okay. Do you know  
11 specifically who any of those people were?

12 MR. WILLIS: That came to the site?

13 INTERVIEWER: Yes. Who were they?

14 MR. WILLIS: My captain was there for Elba  
15 Fire Department.


16 INTERVIEWER: Who was he?

17 MR. WILLIS: Dennis Manny (phonetic).  
18 Johnny Manny with Elba Fire. Greg Lee (phonetic) which  
19 is a fire chief in New Brockton, he was there. Let's  
20 see. Who else? New Brockton police, Robert Segal was  
21 there. A reserve guy Angel which was the patient's  
22 best friend. He was there.

23 Jimmy Lee Boudeau with Elba police was there  
24 on the scene. J.J. Framer which was Elba fire and  
25 Haynes ambulance was there and all the Haynes guys were

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1 there. Let's see. Who else that I can remember that  
2 was on the scene. I think that's about all I can  
3 remember and then the troops.

4 INTERVIEWER: So the weather conditions from  
5 you saw on the video compared to what it was when you  
6 came upon the scene it had lessened.

7 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir.

8 INTERVIEWER: But when you started your  
9 search at 1:30 it was?

10 MR. WILLIS: Very foggy.

11 INTERVIEWER: Okay.

12 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir.

13 INTERVIEWER: All these people that you just  
14 answered Sam's question about.

15 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir.

16 INTERVIEWER: Or the names that you brought  
17 out, all of these people were in some sort of  
18 search/rescue/medical profession type thing.

19 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir.

20 INTERVIEWER: You mentioned the best friend  
21 of the -- I'm assuming you're talking about the patient  
22 aboard the aircraft.

23 MR. WILLIS: The patient, yes sir.

24 INTERVIEWER: And this person was employed  
25 by who?

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1 MR. WILLIS: He is a reserve police officer  
2 with New Brockton.

3 INTERVIEWER: I see.

4 MR. WILLIS: So he was out with the other  
5 officer of New Brockton helping and trying to search.

6 INTERVIEWER: I see. Was he aware at the  
7 time that the young man that was aboard the aircraft  
8 was his friend.

9 MR. WILLIS: I think so. I believe he might  
10 have been at the accident itself, the car accident.

11 INTERVIEWER: I see.

12 MR. WILLIS: I believe. He knew that it was  
13 him. These people have names. They actually didn't  
14 get -- Because by this time the troopers that got there  
15 was roping it off. So they were backwards. He didn't  
16 see the bodies or anything.

17 They might have seen the one where I was at  
18 because I stayed there until they got it roped off  
19 which was the flight medic there at the ground. He was  
20 a little ways back from --

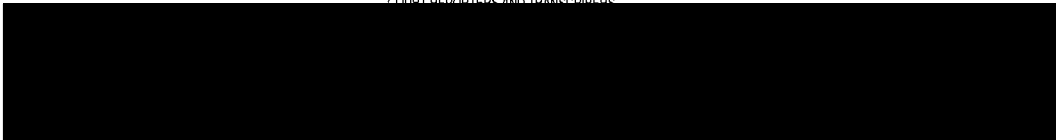
21 INTERVIEWER: Yes, actually Mr. Snipes  
22 (phonetic).

23 MR. WILLIS: Yes, Jason Snipes.

24 INTERVIEWER: And he was forward of the  
25 pilot.

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1 INTERVIEWER: He was forward of the pilot.

2 INTERVIEWER: Yes, he was -- If you're  
3 standing --

4 MR. WILLIS: He was on the right.

5 INTERVIEWER: -- looking forward, he would  
6 have been -- He was really --

7 MR. WILLIS: To the right. That's where we  
8 came in at.

9 INTERVIEWER: Right.

10 MR. WILLIS: When we found him. And then to  
11 the right we found the [REDACTED] flight nurse  
12 apparently. And there was one that was right there  
13 where the wreckage was at by the tree. It was pretty  
14 rough, pretty gruesome there.

15 INTERVIEWER: And does your department  
16 provide counseling and assistance for you and others?

17 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir. For the most part,  
18 yes, sir.

19 INTERVIEWER: And not stating that that's  
20 something you need to do, but it's always nice to  
21 handle it now rather than later.

22 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir. My church prayed for  
23 me today and those guys. I guess it always bothers,  
24 but it's part of it. That's what we get in this  
25 profession.

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1 INTERVIEWER: Yes.

2 MR. WILLIS: But sometimes there are just  
3 things that will bother you.

4 INTERVIEWER: We really appreciate your  
5 conversation here and most importantly we appreciate  
6 what you do for a living and your profession.

7 MR. WILLIS: Thank you.

8 INTERVIEWER: We all do what we do for our  
9 careers and what we consider a paycheck. Ultimately,  
10 it's a passion that we have. And we appreciate you for  
11 that most definitely.

12 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir. Thank you.

13 MR. HEMPEN: I'm sorry for coming in late.  
14 So you started the search at 1:30.

15 MR. WILLIS: I believe so. I believe it was  
16 around that time when we were paged out.

17 MR. HEMPEN: And I'm sure they already  
18 asked, but how did this start? Who called who?

19 MR. WILLIS: Our Elba dispatch, our  
20 dispatcher of Elba PD dispatched us and said they had a  
21 downed aircraft that they were unable to locate or had  
22 any contact. And they said something about the last  
23 contact they had was around 5:18 p.m. County Road 509.  
24 And then it came back possibly 450.

25 INTERVIEWER: Elba Dispatch is your normal

1 dispatcher.

2 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir. That's correct.

3 INTERVIEWER: And I guess they're like the  
4 911 receivers.

5 INTERVIEWER: Yes, Enterprise has their own  
6 dispatch. Elba does everything else.

7 MR. HEMPEN: Okay. And then do you know  
8 where Elba got this information?

9 MR. WILLIS: No, sir. I do not.

10 MR. HEMPEN: You don't know who made that  
11 911 call.

12 MR. WILLIS: No, sir.

13 INTERVIEWER: Now Elba is in your  
14 jurisdiction, isn't it?

15 MR. KNOWLES: Well, Elba has their own  
16 police department, but yes. It is in Coffee County and  
17 they do dispatch for us.

18 INTERVIEWER: We can get that information.

19 MR. HEMPEN: So you were just on duty.

20 MR. WILLIS: I'm a volunteer fireman.

21 MR. HEMPEN: You are volunteer.

22 INTERVIEWER: This will be an Easter you  
23 won't forget.

24 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir. That's correct.

25 INTERVIEWER: It never gets easier, you

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1 know, but it's very important.

2 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir. It wasn't a very  
3 good Friday. That's for sure. Friday afternoon my  
4 buddy who is in Coffee County, a deputy, was in a car  
5 wreck. So he was lifted.

6 INTERVIEWER: But were you the one that the  
7 owner said "Hey, I heard the loud bang"? I mean when  
8 you all were driving up and down the road, the owner I  
9 understand asked someone what's going on. And someone  
10 said, "Hey, we're looking for" --

11 MR. WILLIS: I don't quite know who is the  
12 owner. I know some of the other guys when we first  
13 came up. Someone had gotten a phone call and they  
14 heard that the neighbor said that they are the  
15 landowner and neighbor said that they heard a boom that  
16 night. When we first came up the hill there, there was  
17 an open field to the left. And there were two guys out  
18 there.

19 I saw a flashlight. So I actually took off  
20 running that way because I thought that possibly might  
21 have been them. But I came to find out it was some  
22 other volunteer guys that were searching. And they  
23 said they could smell it, jet fuel.

24 At that time everybody got there and then we  
25 started going through the woods there, searching.

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1 There were two guys and me. We went in. There were  
2 ways we could go and it was like we were going to come  
3 back out and wait until a helicopter came up.

4 MR. HEMPEN: So my last follow-up question  
5 is why search that area. What prompted you to search  
6 that area?

7 MR. WILLIS: Because I think the neighbor  
8 somewhere in that location right there is the one that  
9 said.

10 MR. HEMPEN: Someone said there's an overdue  
11 aircraft. I mean that's all the hospital knows. So  
12 they call Elba dispatch and said, "We've got an overdue  
13 aircraft."

14 MR. WILLIS: I don't know.

15 MR. HEMPEN: I'm just curious why that area  
16 was searched. What prompted that?

17 MR. WILLIS: They -- First of all when we  
18 were out, we went to County Road 450. I guess they  
19 were pinging the cell phone. So they said the last  
20 location they thought was in that area.

21 Then we left there and we went right up the  
22 street to INO Baptist Church. That's where we set up  
23 command post.

24 At that time, we left there and I think we  
25 went to --

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1 MR. HEMPEN: Well, that's good. You've  
2 answered the question. The cell phone ping.

3 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir. That's what they  
4 were trying to do. And then at one time we got all the  
5 way down 625 in a big field where they said it was  
6 pinging, too, one cell phone or two cell phones. I  
7 can't remember.

8 INTERVIEWER: Was this law enforcement?  
9 Y'all are able to get cell phones like that.

10 MR. KNOWLES: I don't know how that was  
11 happening.

12 MR. WILLIS: Honestly I don't know. I know  
13 Haynes Life Flight crew people or the bosses, they were  
14 up there in dispatch with Elba PD. There were several  
15 people up there. I don't know if they got contacted.  
16 Or somebody got a hold of Verizon and they were trying  
17 to ping the phone is what we were told.

18 INTERVIEWER: So someone got a hold of  
19 Verizon.

20 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir. And then we searched  
21 that field and got nothing. And then we talked with  
22 the Haynes guys and they said, "Let's go to the  
23 Retsing."

24 So that's where we went to see and that's  
25 when we found the guy who was there with us and had the

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1 video of when the aircraft took off and which way the  
2 aircraft was sitting when they landed it and which way  
3 it took off. We could see it.

4 At that time, we were like it's going to  
5 over near Retsing (phonetic) which the whole time I was  
6 trying to tell them. I was like "Look. It's going to  
7 be probably close to the Retsing as fogging as it was."

8 MR. HEMPEN: That's good. You answered the  
9 question. That's great. Thank you.

10 INTERVIEWER: Does anyone have anything  
11 else?

12 INTERVIEWER: Where they have the Coffee  
13 County command center I guess at the end of the  
14 wreckage. That would be probably the southwest  
15 portion. You guys came in from a different way though,  
16 right?

17 MR. WILLIS: From command post.

18 MR. KNOWLES: Where the house is at how did  
19 you all get to it? Y'all walked in from another way,  
20 didn't you?

21 MR. WILLIS: Oh, we walked in. Do you know  
22 where the intersection of 616 and 615 is? There's a  
23 trailer sitting right here.

24 INTERVIEWER: Yes, sir. I know.

25 MR. WILLIS: I went in and there's an open

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1 field. There's a driveway that goes all the way back  
2 to the house back there. I went down the edge of the  
3 field beside the tree lines and went all the way back.

4 And back behind that trailer in that field  
5 there's an abandoned trailer there. So I went way  
6 behind it and that's when I went down the bottom. And  
7 you can actually go right to it that way. So that's  
8 the way I went in.

9 INTERVIEWER: That's how Richard and them  
10 went in yesterday I think. Isn't that the way you took  
11 them?

12 MR. KNOWLES: I think they went that field  
13 road that circled around to the --

14 MR. WILLIS: And the first field we went to  
15 they actually did smell it. And I'm sure because the  
16 wind was possibly blowing the jet fuel that way. If  
17 you went into the right you went to it that way. But  
18 it's a little further in.

19 INTERVIEWER: All right. Sam's got your  
20 information. So if there's anything that you can think  
21 of after a day or two just give him a contact and then  
22 he'll contact us.

23 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir.

24 INTERVIEWER: And just give us that  
25 information. But we appreciate your time and.

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1 INTERVIEWER: Thank you.

2 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir.

3 MR. KNOWLES: If you would be so kind as to  
4 ask number two to come in [REDACTED]

5 MR. WILLIS: Okay.

6 INTERVIEWER: Those are the two guys that  
7 actually found it before you.

8 MR. WILLIS: Yes, sir. They were a little  
9 bit ahead of me.

10 INTERVIEWER: Thank you.

11 MR. WILLIS: Thank you.

12 MR. KNOWLES: No, thank you.

13 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter was  
14 concluded.)

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[REDACTED]

C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Fatal Helicopter Accident  
March 26, 2016, Coffee County  
Accident No. ERA16FA140  
Interview of Alan Willis

DATE: March 2016

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 25 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

-----:
   
IN RE: :
   
:
   
THE FATAL HELICOPTER :
   
ACCIDENT THAT OCCURRED NEAR : NTSB Accident No.
   
COFFEE COUNTY ON MARCH 26, : ERA16FA140
   
2016 :
   
:
   
-----:

INTERVIEW OF: STEPHEN TREY LANGHAM

March 2016

Hampton Inn Enterprise
   
[REDACTED]
   
Enterprise, Alabama 36330

BEFORE

PAT HEMPEN, FAA
   
CLAY PERKINS, Alabama/Northwest Florida Flight
   
Standards District Office, FAA
   
SCOTT TYRRELL, FAA Rotorcraft Standards Staff

This transcript was produced from audio
   
provided by the National Transportation Safety Board.

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1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 MR. TYRRELL: With me I have Pat Hampen from  
3 FAA Headquarters and then also Clay Perkins with the  
4 North Alabama Flight Standards District Office. And  
5 what was your name again, sir?

6 MR. LANGHAM: Stephen, S-T-E-P-H-E-N, Trey,  
7 T-R-E-Y, Langham, L-A-N-G-H-A-M.

8 MR. TYRRELL: And what is your office then?  
9 Who do you work with?

10 MR. LANGHAM: I'm sorry.

11 MR. TYRRELL: Who do you work for?

12 MR. LANGHAM: Alabama Law Enforcement  
13 Agency.

14 MR. TYRRELL: And do I have good contact  
15 information for you as far as a cell phone if we need  
16 to?

17 MR. LANGHAM: Yes, [REDACTED].

18 MR. TYRRELL: All right. And how are you  
19 associated with this accident?

20 MR. LANGHAM: I was the person for  
21 investigating the vehicle crash where the life flight  
22 came and landed. And then I was part of the search  
23 team or whatever. Me and two other guys are the ones  
24 that actually found the aircraft down in the woods.

25 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. As far as on the

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[REDACTED]

1 vehicle accident scene, can you talk a little bit about  
2 the crew? I guess they did an engine running on-load,  
3 right? So the aircraft never shut down.

4 MR. LANGHAM: Yes. They did. They circled  
5 several times on their descent. I think the pilot was  
6 having problems seeing because the fog started moving  
7 in pretty rapidly. And they finally got him down. And  
8 the engine, they kept the helicopter running the entire  
9 time.

10 I spoke with the pilot and the initial  
11 patient. I just asked the pilot where he would go and  
12 he said Baptist South was the only place he could go  
13 because of the weather. And that was the extent of our  
14 conversation.

15 MR. TYRRELL: Did the pilot have his flight  
16 helmet on?

17 MR. LANGHAM: Yes.

18 MR. TYRRELL: All right. And did you notice  
19 if he had any night vision goggles mounted on the front  
20 of the helmet above his forehead?

21 MR. LANGHAM: I couldn't tell you. I don't  
22 really know. I wasn't really -- I was just trying to  
23 concentrate on hearing him over the noise of the rotor  
24 blades and all.

25 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. So did he have the

1 aircraft door open to talk to you?

2 MR. LANGHAM: Yes. Well, I walked up. He  
3 actually -- Now I'm assuming this was the pilot. He  
4 was in a fly suit and had a helmet on. There might  
5 have been other ones dressed like that. I'm not sure.

6 MR. TYRRELL: Was he outside of the  
7 aircraft?

8 MR. LANGHAM: Yes, outside the aircraft.

9 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Let's see. So you were  
10 there at the scene when the aircraft lifted off,  
11 correct?

12 MR. LANGHAM: Yes.

13 MR. TYRRELL: And did you take a video  
14 during the liftoff?

15 MR. LANGHAM: No, I didn't have any video of  
16 the aircraft. I was concentrating more on the actual  
17 vehicle crash scene. And I mean I remember when they  
18 started to take off I heard the rotors trim out and  
19 start to create lift. And heard them take off.

20 And I mean I heard them as they started  
21 their ascent off. But I was back doing my job. So I  
22 wasn't paying a whole lot of attention to what they  
23 were doing. But everything sounded normal.

24 Now the only thing that and I told somebody  
25 this. I don't remember the timing of how long after



1 they left, but I did hear some type of a pop. It  
2 sounded like a gun shot. Now it didn't sound like a  
3 rifle or anything. It sounded like a small caliber  
4 pistol, maybe a nine millimeter.

5 And it kind of startled me because I was  
6 sitting in my car. But it sounded close by. I don't  
7 think it was anything to do with that. But it was  
8 unusual.

9 And I know we'd gotten a gun. Somebody got  
10 a gun out of the car that wrecked. And what I was  
11 concerned with was I thought -- A fire truck was  
12 pulling up beside me when I heard it. And I wondered  
13 if maybe somebody dropped a bullet.

14 One of the deputies told me that they  
15 unloaded the gun. The sister of the guy who wrecked  
16 unloaded the gun. And I was worried that she might  
17 have dropped a bullet and the fire truck ran over it or  
18 a rock hit the pounder and caused it to explode. But I  
19 wasn't real sure.

20 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

21 MR. LANGHAM: I mean it could or could not  
22 have something to do with it. I don't know.

23 MR. PERKINS: Could he still hear the  
24 helicopter in flight while this occurred.

25 MR. TYRRELL: When you heard that loud noise

1 how long after the helicopter had departed do you  
2 approximate that?

3 MR. LANGHAM: Yes, that's what I'm saying.  
4 I don't remember. It couldn't have been too long  
5 because for the most part I was done with my  
6 investigation. I was sitting in my car finishing up  
7 typing up the report and all when it happened. And by  
8 the time the helicopter took off I was pretty done. I  
9 probably only stayed at the scene another ten minutes.  
10 So it couldn't have been very long.

11 Now I'm thinking -- just my own judgment --  
12 but they probably crashed within 60 to 90 seconds of  
13 takeoff. So I don't know. That would have had to have  
14 been pretty sudden afterwards.

15 MR. TYRRELL: And what would you  
16 characterize the weather conditions at that time of  
17 takeoff?

18 MR. LANGHAM: Well, when they were circling  
19 and making their approach I actually looked at one of  
20 the deputies. I said, "You've got to be shitting me.  
21 They're flying in this weather."

22 I mean it really surprised me because I've  
23 been denied aircraft before in better weather. And it  
24 was drizzling rain most of the time. At the time we  
25 didn't have any fog on the ground. It was still clear

1 visibly on the ground. But I don't know what it was up  
2 in the air.

3 I was surprised they were flying personally.  
4 But I'm not a pilot. So I don't know what sanctioned  
5 and what's not.

6 MR. TYRRELL: But you do have some  
7 experience with EMS helicopters and being denied  
8 services due to weather. So that's important.

9 MR. LANGHAM: Yes, and with our state  
10 aircraft being Section SQ and stuff like that.

11 MR. TYRRELL: What was your position and  
12 were you inside a vehicle on the takeoff of the  
13 aircraft?

14 MR. LANGHAM: I was. I was sitting inside  
15 my car with my windows down.

16 MR. TYRRELL: And could you see the aircraft  
17 fly away then?

18 MR. LANGHAM: I saw it come over. The crash  
19 was on the north side of 606 and the helicopter set  
20 down on the south side in a little field beside a  
21 house. And when they took off I saw it cross over the  
22 road. Then it was out of my sight after I saw it cross  
23 over the road. I heard it for a little distance  
24 further.

25 There were so many fire trucks and vehicles

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1 out there running with the diesel engines that I  
2 couldn't hear much after that.

3 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. When the aircraft took  
4 off, did you see it lift off and did it enter any type  
5 of overcast or weather?

6 MR. LANGHAM: Where I'm sitting in my  
7 vehicle I mean I have limited sight as far as up in the  
8 air because of the roof of my car. So I don't know. I  
9 didn't see it disappear into fog or anything if that's  
10 what you're asking.

11 MR. TYRRELL: And then when the aircraft was  
12 approaching and doing the recons or circling to land,  
13 what was your location there?


14 MR. LANGHAM: I was directly under it pretty  
15 much. I mean I was in the middle of them. When they  
16 were circling the scene looking for a place to land I  
17 guess or trying to get a visual of the ground I  
18 remember somebody telling me that the pilot was  
19 radioing down to them saying he couldn't see us through  
20 the fog.

21 So he had to keep getting lower and lower.  
22 And finally they were able to guide him down in that  
23 field. I didn't hear him say that. That's just one of  
24 the firefighters told me or I heard them say it.

25 But I was inside. When he was making his

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1 circle around, I was inside his circle where he was  
2 flying around. And I could see him. I would say I  
3 could see him probably -- I figured he was probably  
4 around 150 feet, maybe 200 feet, at one point. And I  
5 could see him fine other than the rainfall.

6 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And then in reference  
7 when he was doing his orbit, was he using a searchlight  
8 from the aircraft at all?

9 MR. LANGHAM: He did. As a matter of fact,  
10 there was more than one searchlight. Maybe not more  
11 than one searchlight, but when he was doing his landing  
12 I believe there were three really bright white lights  
13 shining down. And he was moving them to make sure he  
14 wasn't going to hit any lines or tree limbs or anything  
15 like that when he was landing.

16 MR. TYRRELL: And going back to the comment  
17 that you had made from the other individual that said  
18 that he couldn't see the landing site due to the fog.  
19 Do you know who that individual was?

20 MR. LANGHAM: I don't. I don't typically  
21 work in this county. So if it was in my normally  
22 assigned county, I know a lot of the guys. But up  
23 here, I don't know many of them. And I don't remember  
24 exactly who I heard that from.

25 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

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1 MR. LANGHAM: I just remember hearing it.

2 MR. KNOWLES: Do you know what agency they  
3 worked for? Was it a fire department or a rescue squad  
4 or?

5 MR. LANGHAM: I believe it was more  
6 volunteers, so a fire department. If it was somebody  
7 with the county, it was either (Inaudible) or  
8 (Inaudible).

9 MR. KNOWLES: Okay. I'll talk with those  
10 two.

11 MR. LANGHAM: I believe it was a  
12 firefighter.

13 MR. KNOWLES: Okay.

14 MR. TYRRELL: But they were in radio contact  
15 with the helicopter at that time.

16 MR. LANGHAM: Yes. And I didn't have mine  
17 on scan. If I'd have had mine on scan, I could have  
18 listened to it. I could have heard the communication  
19 between the two of them, but I didn't.

20 MR. KNOWLES: So that communication was made  
21 over the fire department radio and not on a southern  
22 link.

23 MR. LANGHAM: Well, I don't know. I assume  
24 it was. I mean most places I hear them talk over  
25 mutual A channel over the radio. I don't know if it

1 was done over that or if it was done over -- I just  
2 assumed that they did it over the mutual A channel.  
3 That's typically how we communicated with the aircraft  
4 in the past.

5 MR. KNOWLES: Right. So you're saying like  
6 StateNet or Nellie or something like that.

7 MR. LANGHAM: Right.

8 MR. KNOWLES: Okay.

9 MR. TYRRELL: All right, Stephen. Is there  
10 anything else that you might have?

11 MR. LANGHAM: No. I don't. I'm as curious  
12 as you guys though. I've seen two helicopter crashes  
13 and this was probably the most violent one that I've  
14 seen where the fuselage was just completely destroyed.  
15 And it looked like -- I noticed the ground where there  
16 was that crater where the impact took place. It was  
17 almost like they fell straight out of the sky.

18 I mean I had a concern at the beginning when  
19 they loaded the patient. I notice the patient went  
20 right up by the pilot. And I was worried that the  
21 patient could like kick the (Inaudible) or something  
22 like that. But some of the guys told me that there's  
23 no way he could actually do that. They have it blocked  
24 off.

25 MR. TYRRELL: Yes, there's a guard in

1 between the patient and the pilot. When you're  
2 actually on the accident scene, did you see anybody  
3 taking any pictures with personal Smart phones or what  
4 have you, Stephen?

5 MR. LANGHAM: There were some. But I can  
6 just about guarantee you that one of the volunteer  
7 firefighters recorded the helicopter landing and taking  
8 off. I mean somebody -- Any time a helicopter comes  
9 around somebody is videotaping.

10 MR. TYRRELL: And I guess what we're really  
11 concerned with is on the accident scene of the  
12 helicopter.

13 MR. LANGHAM: Okay. I do remember someone.  
14 I don't know if they were videotaping. But I remember  
15 somebody having a phone out taking some pictures. If I  
16 had thought about it, I would have turned my videotape  
17 recorder on. But I wasn't at the time. I was more  
18 concerned about trying to make sure everybody stayed  
19 away from the wreckage.


20 MR. TYRRELL: So you had a Scorpion camera  
21 or whatever on your uniform then.

22 MR. LANGHAM: Yeah, I've got one of those  
23 little body cameras.

24 MR. TYRRELL: All right. If you can recall  
25 who that was at the helicopter accident scene, we would

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1 really appreciate that information. We'll keep that  
2 direct communication between us. But what we're  
3 concerned with is that these images could possibly hit  
4 the internet and for protection of the family.

5 MR. LANGHAM: Oh yeah.

6 MR. TYRRELL: We would appreciate that  
7 information.

8 MR. LANGHAM: Okay.

9 MR. TYRRELL: All right.

10 MR. LANGHAM: Sure. I think it was going to  
11 be the guy -- If I remember correctly, it was one of  
12 the Haynes employees. I think they might have been  
13 wearing a Haynes shirt. There were several of them  
14 down there. But I'll try to figure out who exactly it  
15 was.

16 I do have another --

17 MR. TYRRELL: And what time was this then  
18 possibly?

19 MR. LANGHAM: I'm sorry.

20 MR. TYRRELL: What time would this have  
21 been, Stephen?

22 MR. LANGHAM: I got about halfway -- I'm the  
23 one who put the initial tape up immediately around the  
24 crash site. And I got about halfway around it. So I  
25 radioed in that we'd found the crash and it was

1 probably within about four minutes after that is when I  
2 saw the guy taking pictures.

3           And one of the other troopers that had  
4 gotten down there too started ordering everybody to  
5 leave and get out of there. We didn't want it to turn  
6 into some type of a picture show and all that. Nobody  
7 needs to see that stuff if they're not directly  
8 involved.

9           MR. PERKINS: Trooper Langford.

10          MR. LANGHAM: Yes.

11          MR. PERKINS: This is Clay Perkins. The  
12 person that was taking the pictures, was that by chance  
13 Mr. Power?

14          MR. LANGHAM: Mr. Power. I don't know who  
15 that is.

16          MR. PERKINS: He's a Haynes employee.

17          MR. LANGHAM: I believe he was kind of a  
18 tall guy.


19          MR. PERKINS: I don't know the man, sir.  
20 I've never met him. But we had a couple of your  
21 cohorts had a little problem with him trying to pass  
22 himself off as an FAA inspector trying to get on the  
23 scene yesterday.

24          MR. LANGHAM: No kidding.

25          MR. PERKINS: That's what they told me. I

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1 talked to Tracy Nelson.

2 MR. LANGHAM: Yeah, he's our captain.

3 MR. PERKINS: He was telling me that.

4 MR. LANGHAM: I'll be danged. I could tell  
5 you a picture of him. I don't know him by name. I  
6 don't remember.

7 MR. PERKINS: All right, sir.

8 MR. LANGHAM: I've never met him before.


9 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Hey, Stephen,  
10 appreciate all the effort on this accident. And I  
11 don't know as far as your previous experience with  
12 something of this magnitude, but there are services  
13 available to talk to counselors or whatever. And I  
14 just encourage that. It's easier to handle something  
15 small rather than later on down the road.

16 MR. LANGHAM: Okay. Sure. The mother of  
17 the initial patient, I called her back earlier. She  
18 had left a message for me to call her. She wanted to -  
19 - She was wondering when she might be able to get her  
20 son's belongings that were on him like his wallet. And  
21 she was also wondering when the body would be released  
22 and who it would be released to.

23 MR. TYRRELL: And that would be an issue of  
24 the coroner at this point in time. And you can work  
25 with that agency. Unfortunately, it's out of our hands

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1 and we don't typically get into those issue. There are  
2 offices within the NTSB for victims to work with as  
3 well and they can assist on that.

4 MR. LANGHAM: I think I just need to refer  
5 her to the coroner's office.

6 MR. TYRRELL: Yes, sir.

7 MR. LANGHAM: Okay. All right.

8 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

9 MR. LANGHAM: I'll let her know.

10 MR. TYRRELL: All right. Thank you very  
11 much.

12 MR. LANGHAM: Thank you.

13 MR. PERKINS: Trooper, good job.

14 MR. TYRRELL: Off the record.

15 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter was  
16 concluded.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Fatal Helicopter Accident  
March 26, 2016, Coffee County  
Accident No. ERA16FA140  
Interview of Stephen Langham

DATE: March 2016

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 17 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

-----:
   
IN RE: :
   
:
   
THE FATAL HELICOPTER :
   
ACCIDENT THAT OCCURRED NEAR : NTSB Accident No.
   
COFFEE COUNTY ON MARCH 26, : ERA16FA140
   
2016 :
   
:
   
-----:

INTERVIEW OF: JONATHAN JOHNSON

March 2016

Hampton Inn Enterprise
   
[REDACTED]
   
Enterprise, Alabama 36330

BEFORE

SAM REDMON, Coffee County Sheriff's Office
   
PAT HEMPEN, FAA
   
CLAY PERKINS, Alabama/Northwest Florida Flight
   
Standards District Office, FAA
   
SCOTT TYRRELL, FAA Rotorcraft Standards Staff

This transcript was produced from audio provided by the National Transportation Safety Board.

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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

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MR. TYRRELL: I'm Scott Tyrrell, FAA Rotorcraft Standard Staff. I'm more on the aircraft certification. We have this fine gentleman here, Pat Hempen from FAA Headquarters, Office of Accident Investigation. And we have Clay over there. What's your last name again?

MR. PERKINS: Perkins.

MR. TYRRELL: Clay Perkins. He is with the Flight Standard District Office out of --

MR. PERKINS: Birmingham. Alabama/Northwest Florida.

MR. TYRRELL: Alabama and Northwest Florida. And then of course we have Officer Sam Redmon from Cook County or Coffee County. I grew up in Illinois. They had a Cook County.

And your name is, sir?

MR. JOHNSON: Jonathan Johnson.

MR. TYRRELL: Jonathan Johnson. And who are you with then?

MR. JOHNSON: New Brockton Fire Department.

MR. TYRRELL: Can you restate that please?

MR. JOHNSON: New Brockton Fire Department.

MR. TYRRELL: New Brockton.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

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1 MR. TYRRELL: B-R-O-C-K?

2 MR. JOHNSON: T-O-N.

3 MR. TYRRELL: T-O-N, okay. And what's your  
4 position there?

5 MR. JOHNSON: Assistant chief.

6 MR. TYRRELL: Assistant chief. And how long  
7 have you been with them?

8 MR. JOHNSON: About six years. Since I was  
9 18.

10 MR. TYRRELL: So you're 24 now.

11 MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

12 MR. TYRRELL: So you've got the Haynes up  
13 there. You have quite a bit of experience with them  
14 then.

15 MR. JOHNSON: I work plenty of wrecks with  
16 them with that crew.

17 MR. TYRRELL: All right.

18 MR. JOHNSON: This was bad.

19 MR. TYRRELL: How many scene accidents have  
20 you done with them then?

21 MR. JOHNSON: I worked three with them.

22 MR. TYRRELL: Three, okay. What are other  
23 operator do you have in the area then?

24 MR. JOHNSON: It was Flat Iron that we'd  
25 see. But they came in and they've got a new general.



1 And he kind of locked that up so they wouldn't be doing  
2 anything for civilians unless it was a necessity.

3 That's when the (Inaudible)

4 MR. TYRRELL: And where is Flat Iron?

5 MR. JOHNSON: Fort Ricard.

6 MR. TYRRELL: And as far as your experience  
7 with this accident, where did you come in at? You  
8 weren't actually at the automobile accident scene,  
9 correct?

10 MR. JOHNSON: No, sir.

11 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

12 MR. JOHNSON: We got paged out to it. I  
13 actually called. I listened to the radio at my house.  
14 And I called a guy from Elba because they were on the  
15 backside of my land. When it first went out, it was  
16 kind of at 518 and 87. So I was listening to them talk  
17 on the radio.


18 I called and it was like 1:30 a.m. And I  
19 said, "Is there anything I can do to help?" I didn't  
20 even know what was going on. I just knew they were  
21 searching for something.

22 And he said, "We're setting up a central  
23 command at some church. If you want to help they're  
24 there."

25 And I said, "Okay." At that time is when

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1 patched dispatch to help.

2           We were going to our private road 1610 and  
3 they turned us around and we went Geneva County Line  
4 where the cell phone was pinging at. So we didn't  
5 actually get to where the wreck happened until around  
6 5:30 a.m.-5:45 a.m. And somebody called it in.

7           MR. TYRRELL: So you actually went to the  
8 aircraft accident scene at 5:30-5:45 a.m.

9           MR. JOHNSON: Somewhere along in there. It  
10 was right before daybreak. We were still having to use  
11 flashlights and all.

12           MR. TYRRELL: Okay. How did you know that  
13 was the crash site?

14           MR. JOHNSON: We didn't. I mean they just -  
15 - somebody called and said they had heard a large boom  
16 around 1:00 a.m.

17           MR. TYRRELL: No one directed you other than  
18 your dispatch the coordinates.


19           MR. JOHNSON: I never even received -- We  
20 were just doing whatever they told us to do, command.

21           MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

22           MR. JOHNSON: So they were telling us what  
23 country road to go to and that's where we would go and  
24 start looking. Whenever we came to the first field off  
25 of 615 -- I believe that's what that road number is --

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1 we smelled jet fuel then. But then the wind blew it.

2 So when we came in, they found that tree  
3 that they thought was knocked down. I'm not sure. I  
4 went in right there, me and the other guy from the fire  
5 department.

6 When we got to the thicket down there,  
7 that's when we started smelling it stronger and  
8 stronger. And then we both saw it the same time. When  
9 we got there, there was nothing we could have done.

10 MR. TYRRELL: And it's still dark.

11 MR. JOHNSON: It was light by then.

12 MR. TYRRELL: What time?

13 MR. JOHNSON: It was about 7:00 a.m.

14 MR. TYRRELL: About 7:00 a.m., okay. And  
15 who was the gentleman that you were with at the time?

16 MR. JOHNSON: His name is Lee Bloodsworth.

17 MR. TYRRELL: Lee Bloodsworth.

18 MR. JOHNSON: It's B-L-O-O-D-S-W-O-R-T-H.

19 MR. TYRRELL: So when you guys arrived on  
20 the scene you could identify four people in approximate  
21 area.

22 MR. JOHNSON: I only saw one. Everything  
23 blended in and I was -- I was trying to get somebody  
24 else in there with us.

25 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

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1 MR. JOHNSON: I mean obviously there was no  
2 -- You can look. I mean I looked around and I didn't  
3 want to move around too much. That's when I saw that  
4 first body. I stood right there and that's when he  
5 started yelling and he walked around and found I don't  
6 know who that was.

7 And he stood there and we both started  
8 yelling. And they come in on top of us from both sides.

9 MR. TYRRELL: So you're approximately at the  
10 tree, the large tree with the engine and transmission  
11 around it.

12 MR. JOHNSON: He was there.

13 MR. TYRRELL: That was the other guy. Where  
14 was your location?

15 MR. JOHNSON: I was at the body that was  
16 laying face down [REDACTED]

17 MR. TYRRELL: Who would that have been?

18 MR. JOHNSON: I think it was the flight  
19 medic.

20 MR. TYRRELL: Yes.

21 MR. JOHNSON: I just knew that from his  
22 haircut. That's all.

23 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Yes, that's Mr.  
24 Snipes.

25 MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

1 MR. TYRRELL: While you're at the accident  
2 scene, were there any people taking any pictures or  
3 anything like that?

4 MR. JOHNSON: No.

5 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. There has been some  
6 discussion that there was some possible photography  
7 that was taken at the initial response to the scene.  
8 And we want to make sure that stuff maintains close  
9 scrutiny on it.

10 Ultimately we need to protect the  
11 individuals and their families from the standpoint due  
12 to the horrific scene at the accident site. We just  
13 ask that if you have any pictures, surrender them and  
14 no questions asked and all that stuff.

15 MR. JOHNSON: I didn't even have a radio or  
16 a phone. I had a flashlight.

17 MR. TYRRELL: So you said you had previous  
18 experience with Haynes. When you actually got called  
19 out roughly about 1:30 a.m., what was the weather  
20 condition at that time?

21 MR. JOHNSON: It was sprinkling a little  
22 bit. I mean it wasn't bad. And it picked up a little  
23 bit when we were in the field at the county line. But  
24 it just slacked off and it was mostly just dense fog.  
25 That was more or less what we had to run our window

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1 shield wipers and all. It was horrible out there.

2 MR. TYRRELL: From a fireman's perspective,  
3 do you take into consideration if you were to request  
4 dispatch on a helicopter for a scene call on weather?

5 MR. JOHNSON: I wouldn't if it's like cloudy  
6 or something like that unless it's a necessity and  
7 they're about to die.

8 MR. TYRRELL: So you would take that into  
9 consideration. You just would call it out and let them  
10 make that decision of whether or not they could get  
11 there.

12 MR. JOHNSON: Normally, it would be the EMS  
13 that made that call if they think they need it. Now we  
14 can put them on standby and then we let them take that.

15 MR. TYRRELL: So dense fog at approximately  
16 1:30 a.m. and sprinkling. It did pick up as far as  
17 rain goes.

18 MR. JOHNSON: Just a little. It never got  
19 like a steady pour. It would sprinkle for a minute and  
20 then it would rain. And it just stopped. And it  
21 wasn't even maybe 25 minutes.

22 MR. TYRRELL: Anything else that you guys  
23 can think of?

24 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: So you just took that  
25 road. You didn't have any conversation. You didn't

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1 have anyone say, "Hey, it's over there." You just got  
2 from dispatch "Go down this road."

3 MR. JOHNSON: When they dispatched us, we  
4 called their command and asked them where we needed to  
5 go. And that's what they told us.

6 MR. TYRRELL: And this would be the Elba  
7 dispatch.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Because we had a ranger and  
9 they were calling search field. And that's where they  
10 asked us to bring him.

11 MR. TYRRELL: This is a little bit of a  
12 tangent, but where is the Elba dispatch? Where are  
13 they located?

14 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: In Elba.

15 MR. TYRRELL: In Elba.

16 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: The City of Elba.

17 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

18 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: It's about 20 minutes  
19 from here.

20 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Great. I don't have  
21 anything else. Appreciate your time. Thank you.

22 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: The other thing just  
23 from the standpoint of counseling and that type of  
24 thing, I'm sure that your department has that available  
25 to you. I understand that what you saw there was

1 pretty gruesome. Don't know what that does as far as  
2 for you as an individual. But don't feel that there's  
3 any issues or concerns if you request some counseling.

4 MR. JOHNSON: Okay.

5 MR. TYRRELL: Off the record.

6 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter was  
7 concluded.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Fatal Helicopter Accident  
March 26, 2016, Coffee County  
Accident No. ERA16FA140  
Interview of Jonathan Johnson

DATE: March 2016

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 12 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

----- :  
 IN RE: :  
 :  
 THE FATAL HELICOPTER :  
 ACCIDENT THAT OCCURRED NEAR : NTSB Accident No.  
 COFFEE COUNTY ON MARCH 26, : ERA16FA140  
 2016 :  
 :  
 ----- :

INTERVIEW OF: JASON SASSER

Monday,  
March 28, 2016

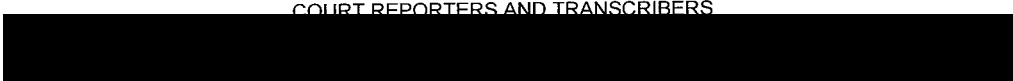
Enterprise Rescue Squad Inc.  
████████████████████  
Enterprise, Alabama 36330

BEFORE

SAM REDMON, Coffee County Sheriff's Office

This transcript was produced from audio  
provided by the National Transportation Safety Board.

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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

1  
2 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: This is Investigator  
3 Redmon. It is March 28, 2016. It's 7:19 p.m. Central  
4 Time. My name is Investigator Sam Redmon. And you  
5 are?

6 MR. SASSER: Jason Sasser.

7 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Jason, who on the  
8 night of the auto accident were you working for?

9 MR. SASSER: Goodman Volunteer Fire  
10 Department.

11 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: And is your position  
12 there?

13 MR. SASSER: I'm just a firefighter.

14 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. You're a  
15 firefighter with Goodman. And what is your phone  
16 number?

17 MR. SASSER: [REDACTED]

18 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: [REDACTED]

19 MR. SASSER: Yes.

20 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

21 MR. SASSER: [REDACTED]

22 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: [REDACTED] All right. And  
23 tell me -- Let's just start at the beginning. Did you  
24 respond to the auto accident?

25 MR. SASSER: Actually, I was hanging out

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[REDACTED]

1 with some friends and my dad called me. He was like  
2 "We have an auto accident on 606." So I went to it.  
3 And I was there probably no later than -- in 30  
4 minutes.

5 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: About what time did  
6 you get there? Do you remember?

7 MR. SASSER: It was probably about 11:20  
8 p.m.

9 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: 11:20 p.m.

10 MR. SASSER: And they already had him out of  
11 the vehicle and in the back of the ambulance. And I  
12 got there about the time the helicopter was landing.

13 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: So about 11:20 p.m.  
14 you got there. Zach was already out of the car. And  
15 the helicopter was about to land.

16 MR. SASSER: Yes, they were about to touch  
17 ground when I walked up.

18 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. Go ahead.

19 MR. SASSER: And then my dad was like walk  
20 over to the helicopter with me. So I took my hat off  
21 and walked up to the helicopter with him and was asking  
22 the pilot if they needed anything or we needed to help  
23 them get anything out of the helicopter.

24 And they were like "No, we've got it under  
25 control."

1                   INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Well, let me ask you  
2 this. When you say you were talking to the pilot, how  
3 do you know he was the pilot?

4                   MR. SASSER: Not the pilot. I mean like the  
5 nurse and the paramedic who got of the vehicle.

6                   INVESTIGATOR REDMON: So they actually got  
7 out of the helicopter.

8                   MR. SASSER: Yes.

9                   INVESTIGATOR REDMON: The people you talked  
10 to.

11                  MR. SASSER: Yes.

12                  INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

13                  MR. SASSER: We were talking with them and  
14 we asked them if they needed help.

15                  And they were like "No, we got it under  
16 control."

17                  When we got back to the ambulance where they  
18 were at, I asked my dad which I thought he was in  
19 command at the time, "Is there anything I can do? Do  
20 y'all need me anymore" because I was hanging out with  
21 some friends. I left sitting up in the vehicle.

22                  So I went back with them. Well, then my  
23 stepmom text me about -- I think it was like 1:50  
24 something and said, "Hey, call me. It's an emergency."

25                  I called and it was like "The helicopter

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1 went down. Do you want me to put it out everywhere?"

2 Asked if I need to come.

3 I was like "Yes." So I met them at the fire  
4 department and from the fire department we went to INO  
5 Baptist Church where we started looking -- INO Baptist  
6 Church, they told us where to go. We went to Damascus  
7 area and I ended up finding all the dirt roads in the  
8 Damascus area and we couldn't see anything.

9 My mom called me about I would say 2:30 a.m.  
10 and she was like -- She's been like real congested and  
11 all. You couldn't really understand her on the phone.  
12 She said, "Something happened behind the house.  
13 Something crashed."

14 Then I couldn't understand her. So I texted  
15 her. I was like "Mom, what did you say? I couldn't  
16 understand you."

17 She was like "Something crashed behind the  
18 house about 12:00 midnight."

19 I said, "Okay. We need to start looking  
20 there."

21 She said, "Yes."

22 That's when we got back over to the Petro or  
23 the Big Cat where they were doing the command at. And  
24 they were like "You all need to go check 603 to 615 and  
25 go all the way down." We'll checked the 603 and was

1 checking all the roads and all that, fields and all.

2 We turned onto 615 which is the dirt road I  
3 live on actually. And we met the guy behind the house  
4 and we met him on the dirt road. He was like "Man, I  
5 heard something crash behind my house around 12:00  
6 midnight."

7 So we started checking the fields beside his  
8 house. And we got down to the very corner and you  
9 could smell like fuel. We didn't know if it was like  
10 us wanting to smell it or if it was actually the fuel  
11 from the helicopter.

12 We started looking in the woods. Got as far  
13 as we could in the woods and it was still dark. It was  
14 probably about 4:30 a.m.-5:00 a.m. Well, we started  
15 looking harder and harder.

16 And then I got out of the woods and I went  
17 back up to the guy's house where it happened at and I  
18 saw a couple other guys. I was like "I'm going to go  
19 with y'all." So we started following them.

20 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Do you know who they  
21 were?

22 MR. SASSER: I think one of them was Alan  
23 Willis, Jonathan Johnson and then there was a guy from  
24 Elba named AJ. I don't remember the other one.

25 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

1 MR. SASSER: I was following them. We had  
2 the thermal cameras and all. And I know I went in from  
3 a different spot they went in and we all met up. Well,  
4 at one point, I remember I was on my hands and knees  
5 crawling to the swamp trying to get to wherever this  
6 helicopter was. We could smell it. We were getting  
7 deeper and deeper in and we kept smelling it stronger  
8 and stronger.

9 Well, finally we were talking to them and I  
10 was -- We heard him saying "We found it. We found it."  
11 We found it. And we got hold of the command and all  
12 and told them we found it. And that's when all the  
13 state troopers and all came down. "Where are you all  
14 at?" They started screaming.

15 And all we could say was "We're down here.  
16 We're down here." And they kept coming to us. And  
17 then I was actually one of the ones that actually found  
18 it. I was like the fourth one. I was like the fourth  
19 one there.

20 It kind of shocked me. I mean I never  
21 thought this would happen. I never thought I'd be the  
22 one to actually find this and be dealing with something  
23 like this.

24 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: What did you see on  
25 the scene?



1 MR. SASSER: Are you talking about the scene  
2 of the helicopter?

3 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Yes.

4 MR. SASSER: I mean it was like mindblowing.  
5 The helicopter was just like hit a tree and into a  
6 million pieces. I couldn't wrap my mind around it at  
7 the time. I was like it's here. I know it's here, but  
8 I can't wrap my mind around it.

9 And I actually saw the guy Zach. [REDACTED]  
10 [REDACTED] And I knew that it  
11 was him because I actually was around him a couple of  
12 times and I knew it was him [REDACTED]

13 [REDACTED]  
14 So I was there's one of them. I knew that  
15 was one of the passengers. And the other guys found  
16 some other passengers. And the Haynes guy got there  
17 and actually identified them and all.

18 And I couldn't handle it anymore being down  
19 there. So I had to walk back up to the house.

20 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Sure.

21 MR. SASSER: I was talking to my dad about  
22 it for a little while.

23 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. Did you take  
24 any pictures or anything at the helicopter?

25 MR. SASSER: Are you talking about when --

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[REDACTED]

1 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: When you found it.

2 MR. SASSER: No, sir.

3 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: What time about did  
4 you find it?

5 MR. SASSER: It was about 7:00 a.m.

6 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

7 MR. SASSER: I think I actually looked at my  
8 phone and it was like 7:02 a.m.

9 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. What were the -  
10 - From the car wreck from what you remember, tell me  
11 about the -- Were you there when the helicopter left?

12 MR. SASSER: I was there like when I was  
13 leaving. Like I was getting in the truck as it was  
14 taking off.

15 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. So you said you  
16 got there around 11:20-ish. What time would you say  
17 the helicopter took off about?

18 MR. SASSER: I would say it landed about  
19 11:17-ish and -- I mean I didn't have my phone out and  
20 it's just estimated time.

21 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Sure.

22 MR. SASSER: And I would say it was probably  
23 on the ground no more than 10 minutes, 10-15 minutes,  
24 something like that.

25 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: That's how long the

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1 helicopter was sitting on the ground.

2 MR. SASSER: Yes, sir.

3 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

4 MR. SASSER: I mean they were in the back of  
5 the truck trying to help the medics out.

6 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: And what was the  
7 weather -- Oh, you said you were there when the  
8 helicopter arrived.

9 MR. SASSER: Yes.

10 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: And did you stay until  
11 it left?

12 MR. SASSER: I was leaving as it was taking  
13 off.

14 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: What was the weather  
15 like while you all were there?

16 MR. SASSER: I was actually walking down  
17 from my dirt road and like it was clear from the wreck  
18 all the way back. There was no fog in sight. But just  
19 like everybody else saying "You don't know how high it  
20 was up. The fog was." I mean it was not foggy on the  
21 roadside. You could see everything like it was bright  
22 as day. There was no fog in the area.

23 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Right. And it wasn't  
24 foggy on the ground.

25 MR. SASSER: Yes.

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1           INVESTIGATOR REDMON: But could you look up  
2 and see? Was it foggy? Was it misty I mean?

3           MR. SASSER: Like far off it was like misty  
4 and like a little fog up higher.

5           INVESTIGATOR REDMON: What about when the  
6 helicopter took off?

7           MR. SASSER: All I know is I looked back and  
8 I saw it about to take off in the air. And I got in  
9 the truck and I heard it take off. When I heard it  
10 take off, we had already started the truck and we were  
11 leaving. So it really kind of muffled out the sound of  
12 the helicopter when it was taking off.

13          INVESTIGATOR REDMON: But did you watch it  
14 leave?

15          MR. SASSER: Yes, we watched it for just a  
16 very little bit. And it went out of vision.

17          INVESTIGATOR REDMON: When it took off,  
18 would you say that you could see it until the trees  
19 blocked it from view? Or did it take off and ascend  
20 into any kind of fog or anything like that?

21          MR. SASSER: I think it ascended into fog  
22 because it went into a opening and it was into the fog.  
23 I think that's the reason we lost vision of it.

24          INVESTIGATOR REDMON: But you could see the  
25 lights. You just couldn't see the helicopter.

1 MR. SASSER: Yes, we couldn't see the  
2 actual. We could see the lights flicker. My mom said  
3 she heard it. She was maybe like 400 yards from the  
4 actual crash site. She said she heard it. She heard  
5 it take off and come over the house. When she heard it  
6 come over the house, it went silent. And then she  
7 heard a crash.

8 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: And where does she  
9 live?

10 MR. SASSER: She lives right in the  
11 intersection [REDACTED]

12 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: In the trailer or the  
13 little house, the brown house.

14 MR. SASSER: The trailer.

15 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: On the right side if  
16 you're [REDACTED] on the right, the last trailer?

17 MR. SASSER: Like if you're coming off of  
18 [REDACTED] coming down it's the one on the right on the  
19 little curve to the left.

20 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: [REDACTED]?

21 MR. SASSER: Yes.

22 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. And so you get  
23 to the stop sign. Whereabout does she live [REDACTED] [REDACTED]?  
24 What's her address? Do you know?

25 MR. SASSER: [REDACTED]

1                   INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. [REDACTED], that  
2 area is New Brockton.

3                   MR. SASSER: Yes.

4                   INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

5                   MR. SASSER: Yes, she said she heard it take  
6 off and she said she wished she would have walked  
7 outside. But she said she heard it take off and she  
8 heard it come towards the house and it just sounded  
9 like it either shut off or something happened to the  
10 helicopter. And then she heard a big crash sound.

11                   INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. And that's when  
12 she texted you.

13                   MR. SASSER: Yes.

14                   INVESTIGATOR REDMON: All right. That's all  
15 I needed. It's now 7:29 p.m. and this will conclude  
16 this interview. The same persons present. Off the  
17 record.

18                   (Whereupon, at 7:29 p.m., the above-entitled  
19 matter was concluded.)

20

21

22

23

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Fatal Helicopter Accident  
March 26, 2016, Coffee County  
Accident No. ERA16FA140  
Interview of Jason Sasser

DATE: 03-28-16

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 14 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

-----:
   
IN RE: :
   
:
   
THE FATAL HELICOPTER :
   
ACCIDENT THAT OCCURRED NEAR : NTSB Accident No.
   
COFFEE COUNTY ON MARCH 26, : ERA16FA140
   
2016 :
   
:
   
-----:

INTERVIEW OF: CHASE HENDRIX

Tuesday,
   
March 29, 2016

Coffee County EMS
   
[Redacted]
   
Elba, Alabama 36323

BEFORE

SAM REDMON, Coffee County Sheriff's Office

This transcript was produced from audio
   
provided by the National Transportation Safety Board.

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1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: This is Investigator  
3 Sam Redmon. It's March 29, 2016. It's 1:35 p.m.  
4 Central Time. We're over here in Elba at the Coffee  
5 County EMS Building. I'm speaking with Chase Hendrix.

6 Chase, on I believe the night of the 25th,  
7 Enterprise Rescue was called out to a vehicle wreck.  
8 Is that correct?

9 MR. HENDRIX: Yes, sir. We were called out  
10 to a one vehicle rollover with entrapment, unknown  
11 injuries. The initial reports were patient may be  
12 unconscious.

13 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. And did you go  
14 ahead when y'all left the station and call Life Flight  
15 and have them on standby or?

16 MR. HENDRIX: We had just passed the airport  
17 on County Route 606 when I made the decision to go  
18 ahead and call Haynes Life Flight.

19 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

20 MR. HENDRIX: Haynes has got a auto launch  
21 criteria and a wreck with entrapment is in that  
22 category. At the time I also had two ambulances that  
23 were in Birmingham or one that was on the way to  
24 Birmingham and one that was leaving to go to  
25 Birmingham. So I was the only ambulance in that

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1 coverage area.

2 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Sure.

3 MR. HENDRIX: So I knew I didn't have any  
4 resources. And I knew that the wreck had the potential  
5 for a critical patient.

6 Once I arrived on the scene and saw the  
7 scene and saw how far the car was off the roadway, saw  
8 the patient, I knew that he had critical injuries and  
9 was going to require transport to a trauma center.

10 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

11 MR. HENDRIX: At that time, I went ahead and  
12 told Goodman that I wasn't cancelling the aircraft and  
13 they needed to set me up an LZ. And they also needed  
14 to proceed with extrication.

15 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. How did they  
16 handle all that?

17 MR. HENDRIX: At the time, they couldn't get  
18 their extrication gear to operation. They couldn't get  
19 it to run. No one really took command from Goodman.  
20 They did an excellent job, but no one really took  
21 command.

22 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Sure.

23 MR. HENDRIX: I was taking command and I was  
24 in charge of the patient. So I took command. I  
25 started barking orders. After the scene, I went back

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1 and apologized to everybody.

2 But they had some people trying to  
3 extricate. I ended up having to go in the vehicle to  
4 extricate the guy. His leg was hung in between the  
5 dash and the windshield of the vehicle. The windshield  
6 was on the roof. He was face down on the roof.

7 Some bystanders when I got there said that  
8 he just gained consciousness upon my arrival.

9 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

10 MR. HENDRIX: He didn't remember anything of  
11 the incident other than he said he swerved to miss a  
12 deer.

13 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Do you remember what  
14 time about it was that you made the first call to  
15 Haynes give or take?

16 MR. HENDRIX: I don't. Enterprise dispatch  
17 will have my log times.

18 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

19 MR. HENDRIX: Of what time I went in route.  
20 I believe I went in route somewhere around 2323. So I  
21 would say I made the phone call somewhere around 2328.  
22 I mean I could probably go back in my call list and  
23 look.

24 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: That's fine. So you  
25 made it on your cell phone.

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1 MR. HENDRIX: Yes, sir. I made it on my  
2 cell phone and.

3 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Call Haynes direct.

4 MR. HENDRIX: Yes, sir.

5 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: On a direct line or  
6 something.

7 MR. HENDRIX: Haynes dispatch.

8 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

9 MR. HENDRIX: Haynes Life Flight dispatch.  
10 I made that call directly to them.

11 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

12 MR. HENDRIX: Our procedures in Enterprise  
13 is you can call dispatch and they'll dispatch a  
14 helicopter or you can call them directly.

15 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

16 MR. HENDRIX: Since I wasn't on the scene I  
17 knew that Haynes is a quicker response time to our area  
18 than Wiregrass (Phonetic) Life Flight. And if you call  
19 dispatch you have to get Wiregrass Life Flight. It's  
20 the number one on the list.

21 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

22 MR. HENDRIX: So our SOP, SOG and  
23 Enterprise, it's up to the medic whether he calls the  
24 service or he calls dispatch. And I made the call to  
25 go ahead and call the service direct.

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1                   INVESTIGATOR REDMON: So you called them.  
2 You responded and y'all did your thing at the car. Do  
3 you remember about what time the helicopter landed?

4                   MR. HENDRIX: I called dispatch, Haynes  
5 dispatch. I'll get to that in a minute. But the exact  
6 time that they were on the scene was 2353. I won't  
7 ever forget the time.

8                   INVESTIGATOR REDMON: 2353.

9                   MR. HENDRIX: 2353 is the time they sat  
10 down.

11                  INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Sat down, okay.

12                  MR. HENDRIX: And they were sitting in the  
13 field. They circled overhead for two or three minutes  
14 because we were having trouble with communications.  
15 Our StateNet and our ambulance, Goodman doesn't have  
16 StateNet in their radios.


17                  But for some reason, StateNet wasn't picking  
18 up good in between their helicopter and my ambulance.  
19 So Goodman was having trouble directing to where they  
20 wanted him to land. So he circled above us for  
21 probably two to three minutes.

22                  INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

23                  MR. HENDRIX: At the time he went and sat  
24 down, I told him I needed the flight crew in the back  
25 of my truck. They got in. And they were probably -- I

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1 don't know -- I'd say 60 to 70 yards off of the roadway  
2 where the helicopter landed. I've got a picture on my  
3 phone how far from the road they were.

4 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

5 MR. HENDRIX: They came to the truck.

6 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: They, you mean the --

7 MR. HENDRIX: As in Stacy, the flight nurse  
8 and Jason, the flight medic.

9 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

10 MR. HENDRIX: They came to my ambulance. We  
11 went through some assessment of the patient. I put the  
12 patient in the trauma center. They both agreed that  
13 the patient was critical. I won't go into details of  
14 injuries of the patient.

15 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: That's fine.

16 MR. HENDRIX: But they both agreed that the  
17 patient needed a helicopter and needed to go to a  
18 trauma center. We had to do some things in the truck  
19 to stabilize the patient before we could put him on the  
20 helicopter.

21 Once we got those tasks finished, we went  
22 ahead and proceeded to the helicopter. Stacy went back  
23 to the helicopter in front of us to get it ready. And  
24 Jason stayed with us until we got him out of the truck.

25 It was through fields. So it was pretty

1 rough terrain. There were probably 10 or 12 people  
2 that had a hold of the stretcher. We went up to the  
3 helicopter and Jason and I had the feet of the guy or  
4 the backboard of the feet side.

5 And he said, "Are you ready?"

6 I said, "Yeah." We counted three and  
7 everybody lifted and slid him in. And when we slid him  
8 in we had traction splint on his right leg. And it  
9 wasn't allow the stretcher to all the way in. So I had  
10 to get up and slide his legs over, slide the traction  
11 splint over, the whole leg and traction splint over so  
12 that it would fit into the nose of the aircraft.

13 He still wouldn't go in far enough for Jason  
14 to be able to sit in the far lefthand seat which is  
15 normally his seat. That's if you're sitting in the  
16 aircraft, the far left seat.

17 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

18 MR. HENDRIX: So Jason -- So we latched it  
19 where it was because it locked in multiple positions.  
20 We locked it where it was at. He said, "I'll just ride  
21 in the middle seat." So Jason was riding in the middle  
22 seat of the aircraft and Stacy was riding on the far  
23 right seat.

24 I shook both their hands and said, "Thank  
25 you" and that I appreciated it.

1           And they said, "Hey, you did a good job. We  
2 appreciate y'all."

3           And we joked back and forth because I told  
4 them, "Don't tell Kirk and Ross I didn't have an IV  
5 before you got here. They'll give me trouble."

6           And they said, "No. You didn't have much to  
7 work with. They wouldn't give you trouble."

8           And I said, "I appreciate y'all coming.  
9 Y'all be safe." As I turned to walk off, Stacy said,  
10 "You get your signature." She said, "Hold up, Chase."

11           I said, "Yeah, what's up?"

12           She said, "Do you get your signature?" And  
13 she was leaning out of the aircraft.

14           I said, "I already got Jason to sign it. He  
15 signed it for all the aircraft."

16           She said, "Oh okay."


17           I said, "You all be safe." And Jason shut  
18 the doors of the aircraft

19           And I turned around and I walked back to the  
20 road. Then I got to the road and I took a few pictures  
21 of the aircraft sitting in the field. There were  
22 several videos taken. I believe my partner videoed it.  
23 I don't know exactly. But I believe he videoed it. I  
24 believe several Goodman firefighters people videoed it.

25           Then he sat there for a minute. And it was

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1 hot loaded the whole time. The rotors never stopped  
2 turning.

3 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Yeah.

4 MR. HENDRIX: He throttled up, sat there for  
5 a few seconds, lift it straight up above the trees,  
6 above the power lines. And he headed due north-  
7 northeast, slightly northeast.

8 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

9 MR. HENDRIX: I watched him as I always do.  
10 I watched the helicopter until I couldn't see it  
11 anymore. And he got to a point in the trees that all I  
12 could see was the red and green lights on the tail  
13 rotor.

14 And I heard a noise change in the rotors.  
15 I've been on hundreds of scenes where helicopters have  
16 been landed. There's always some kind of change in the  
17 rotor. I never thought anything of it. And I thought  
18 he may have just changed the pitch of the blades to get  
19 more lift or speeding up or something. I never thought  
20 anything of it.

21 The only way that I can describe the sound I  
22 guess that I heard was like if you're weedeating and  
23 you hit a thick piece of grass. And the weedeater kind  
24 of bogs down or speeds up or whatever. That's what it  
25 sounded like.

1 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Yes.

2 MR. HENDRIX: And never heard anything after  
3 that. Just I mean I heard the engine still running and  
4 the helicopter still going. That's all I heard.

5 Of course, I would have thought we would  
6 have heard the crash. But we had three fire trucks I  
7 think, an ambulance, four or five police cars. The  
8 wrecker was pulling the car out of the ditch at the  
9 time or flipping it over or something.

10 We did hear noise. And it may have been the  
11 helicopter that crashed that we heard. But we all  
12 heard the chains popping and the car and metal  
13 crunching that we always hear on a car wreck for them  
14 pulling a car up on a wrecker.

15 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Yes.

16 MR. HENDRIX: And we all associated it with  
17 that wrecker.

18 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

19 MR. HENDRIX: Now it may have been the  
20 helicopter. But I don't know. There is so much scene  
21 noise that it's something we'll never know.

22 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Yes.

23 MR. HENDRIX: So then I'll go into this a  
24 little bit. So then the helicopter took off. I don't  
25 think I told you that time. They lifted off at 0017.

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1 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

2 MR. HENDRIX: And at that time it was logged  
3 within dispatch. I got back to the station. We called  
4 in service at 0125. We stayed on scene another 12  
5 minutes.

6 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: 0125?

7 MR. HENDRIX: 0025, excuse me.

8 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

9 MR. HENDRIX: We stayed on scene another 12  
10 minutes I believe. So we got back to the station and  
11 my ambulance was a wreck. We got everything restocked  
12 on the truck, got my truck back in service, and I went  
13 inside to call Haynes dispatch because I placed the  
14 patient in the trauma center. I had to call and give  
15 them my times.


16 I called Haynes. I called dispatch at  
17 Enterprise first and got my times. And then I called  
18 dispatch Haynes and got their on-scene time because I  
19 had their departure time. I got their on-scene time.

20 That's when the dispatcher said, "Chase,  
21 have you had any contact with Haynes Life Flight 2?"

22 And I said, "No, ma'am. I haven't had  
23 contact with them since they lifted off. I told them  
24 'Be safe.' And that's the last contact I had with  
25 them."

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1           She said, "Chase, we've lost contact with  
2 Haynes Life Flight 2. We haven't been able to make  
3 radio contact. We haven't been able to make GPS  
4 contact."

5           And I said, "What was your last known  
6 location?"

7           And she said, "According to our GPS, Haynes  
8 Life Flight 2 never left your scene."

9           And I said, "Okay. I'm going to go ahead  
10 and notify the sheriff's department and I'll get people  
11 out looking. I'm going to look back."

12           And she said, "I'll call you back."

13           After looking back in my log, I talked to  
14 1,000 people that night it seems like. But Ross Terrel  
15 (phonetic) I happen to be very good friends with Ross  
16 and Kirk both.

17           And Ross called me. He said, "Life Flight 2  
18 is down. It's got to be down. I need help."

19           I said, "I know, buddy. Whatever you need."

20           And he said, "How do I get to the crash  
21 site? Or how to do I get to the site where the MVC  
22 happened?"

23           And I told him. He said, "Chase, I don't  
24 know the people to get. I don't know how to get the  
25 people on route. Can you handle that?"

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1 I said, "I'll do everything I can, Ross."

2 At that time, he said "Give me the number of  
3 fire." I gave him the number of fire. And he said,  
4 "I'm going to try and get a helicopter up."

5 I said, "Okay." I hung up the phone from  
6 him and their dispatch called me back. I didn't have  
7 time to call dispatch in between. Their dispatch  
8 called me back and said, "Can you get a ground search  
9 initiated?"

10 I said, "I just got off the phone with Ross.  
11 Consider it done."

12 Hung up from them. I called dispatch at  
13 Enterprise. I said, "Look. Haynes dispatch I just got  
14 off the phone with them. Their aircraft has fallen.  
15 Their aircraft is down. I need you to dispatch Goodman  
16 Fire, Batton Fire, Coffee County Sheriff Department and  
17 any police officers that you can spare.

18 I'm going to make contact with New Brockton  
19 Fire. And I'll have the sheriff's department make the  
20 contact for the Elba PD to dispatch Elba Fire."

21 So I hung up from here. She dispatched  
22 Goodman. I think she told them all just to contact her  
23 for the 1018.

24 From there, I called Greg Lee from New  
25 Brockton Fire. I called Greg Lee, the New Brockton

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1 Fire Chief. I said, "Chief, Life Flight 2 is down.  
2 We've got to find them."

3 And he said, "I'll page it out."

4 I said, "I know they're out of our coverage  
5 area." I told him where the crash site was and told  
6 him the area that I thought that the helicopter would  
7 be in.

8 Then I get back on the phone with Haynes  
9 Life Flight dispatch. I said, "Look. I need to know  
10 the exact location that you're showing."

11 And he said -- This time they put me on live  
12 with their supervisor, their dispatch supervisor. I  
13 called. He said, "Hold on. I'm going to patch you  
14 through to ATCC and we'll do a three way call."

15 So he paged me through and she, the  
16 dispatcher or the supervisor of ATCC is on the line.  
17 I'm on the line. And the supervisor with Haynes  
18 dispatch was on the line.

19 And they said, "Chase, we're showing the  
20 last scene." She gave me the coordinates. 837.7 I  
21 think west and 311.7 were the coordinates she gave me.  
22 I can't remember off of the top of my head.

23 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: That's alright.

24 MR. HENDRIX: But I think those were the  
25 coordinates.

1           And I said, "Can you tell them that? I can  
2 look it up, but can you tell what those coordinates  
3 are?"

4           And she said, "It's showing almost directly  
5 across from County Route 616 on County Route 606."

6           I said, "That's going to be the lane he's  
7 on. That's my wreck."

8           She said, "That's what we're showing."

9           I said, "How often does your GPS check the  
10 helicopter? How far of a time expand is there in  
11 between each ping?"

12           She said, "Two minutes."

13           I said, "So you're telling me he never make  
14 a second ping."

15           She said, "No, he never made a second ping."

16           I hung up the phone. I called Ross. Ross  
17 flies with them. He knows everything about the  
18 aircraft. I said, "Ross, how many miles do you fly in  
19 two minutes?"

20           He said, "Four to five at the max."

21           I said, "Your helicopter's going four to  
22 five miles. It's going to be within four to five miles  
23 of the wreck site north-northeast."

24           He said, "Can you draw me a map, Chase?"

25           So I said, "I've already got that done."

1 I've got you a map drawn. I'm sending it to you now.  
2 I'm sending it to Greg Lee. I'm sending it to Jonathan  
3 Farmer. This is going to be where the crash site is."

4 And I drew him that map on our dry erase map  
5 in the station. That's the MVC. That's the LZ. That's  
6 County Route 615. And that's the direction he flew.  
7 And if I'm not mistaken, right there is where they  
8 found the crash site.

9 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Yes, that's about  
10 right. Okay.

11 MR. HENDRIX: So then I think they hit some  
12 other leads where they pinged cell phones and stuff  
13 like that. I wasn't involved in that side of the  
14 search. I don't know. That all was over here.

15 I think Drew Parker was in command over  
16 here. You may want to talk to him on command stuff.

17 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Does he work here of  
18 Elba?

19 MR. HENDRIX: No, he's Elba Fire.

20 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

21 MR. HENDRIX: The Fire Chief. I think he  
22 was command. They're the ones that set up the command  
23 post at the Petro or the Big Cat, whatever you want to  
24 call it.

25 Then I called Ross. They hit some cell



1 phones pings where they were cell phone pings I guess.  
2 And then they ended up back at the initial site of the  
3 MVC and went to where I showed them on the map. That's  
4 where they found it after they left.

5 But as soon as I got off from Enterprise, I  
6 went home. I got my Ranger and I went and met them and  
7 helped continue to look for the wreckage.

8 But the time I got there I think they found  
9 the wreckage about 20 minutes after I got there. And I  
10 never saw the wreckage. My guys from New Brockton  
11 stopped me from seeing the wreckage. They said, "You  
12 don't need to see it, Chase. Turn around and go back."  
13 And they all grabbed me and turned me around. And we  
14 went out of the woods.

15 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

16 MR. HENDRIX: That's pretty much it start to  
17 finish. If you've got any more questions.

18 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: I guess the only thing  
19 I do want to ask as far as the weather. That's been a  
20 topic.

21 MR. HENDRIX: I can show you a picture.  
22 Everybody says that there was weather. If it was foggy  
23 that night, I don't know how they got that picture.

24 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

25 MR. HENDRIX: As far as ground fog, there

1 wasn't any on the scene. As far as rain, there was a  
2 slight drizzle when we got on the scene. It was so  
3 fine that I didn't have a rain jacket on and I wasn't  
4 wet after it was all over with.

5 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Right.

6 MR. HENDRIX: The pilot, the crew, if they  
7 mentioned anything about weather, I never heard them.  
8 Some others may have. We were busy. All the flight  
9 crew and I pretty much talked about was the patient.

10 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Right.

11 MR. HENDRIX: As far as the weather on the  
12 scene, there was a fog down eye level or visibility  
13 level. There may have been above the trees. I don't  
14 know.

15 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Sure.

16 MR. HENDRIX: But I can still see the  
17 helicopter after he was over the trees. I could still  
18 see his tail rotor and green and reds. So I don't know  
19 how far he was, but I could still see him after he  
20 lifted off.

21 And he was high enough when he came over us.  
22 He flew out of directly top of us. We were standing  
23 the roadway like we always do. And he didn't dust us  
24 or anything. So he was up pretty good. He was well  
25 above the trees.

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1 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: And that was on his  
2 takeoff.

3 MR. HENDRIX: That was on his takeoff.

4 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

5 MR. HENDRIX: Now he wasn't on -- I mean he  
6 wasn't at altitude by any means.

7 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Right.

8 MR. HENDRIX: But he was high enough to get  
9 over the trees.

10 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

11 MR. HENDRIX: Now as far as fog goes, it may  
12 have been spotty. But I don't recall seeing it.

13 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Yes. Did the weather  
14 get better or worse while y'all were there? About stay  
15 the same?

16 MR. HENDRIX: I didn't notice any change in  
17 the weather. Of course, I had a lot going on also.

18 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Yes.

19 MR. HENDRIX: But you know as far as the  
20 weather goes, I've heard people saying "Why would they  
21 even call a helicopter if the weather is bad?" Well,  
22 to answer that question, it's not my call if that pilot  
23 and the crew takes the call.

24 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: And you are correct.

25 MR. HENDRIX: That's their choice. They

1 search the weather and Haynes' policy and I think every  
2 other policy out there is three to go, one to say no.  
3 And all three crew members felt confident that they  
4 could do the flight and they could do the flight  
5 safely. That's why they did the flight.

6 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. I had something  
7 else. Oh, while you were at the helicopter, did Chad  
8 have on night vision goggles? Do you know or?

9 MR. HENDRIX: Neither of the crew members  
10 had their NVGs on because they had just got back in the  
11 helicopter. The pilot still had his NVGs on.

12 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Were they over his  
13 eyes still when you were up there?

14 MR. HENDRIX: Yes. As far as I know, the  
15 pilot never took his NVGs off.

16 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

17 MR. HENDRIX: He had them flipped down when  
18 we were sitting on the ground.

19 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

20 MR. HENDRIX: When I went to the aircraft, I  
21 want to say Stacy may have again put hers on. Jason  
22 was the last one in the helicopter. So when I walked  
23 off, he didn't have his on yet.

24 I want to say Stacy took hers off when she  
25 was asking me if I needed a signature. But to tell you

1 honestly I don't know.

2 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

3 MR. HENDRIX: I can't tell you 100 percent.

4 But I know 100 percent the pilot had his on.

5 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: When Stacy -- You said  
6 she took hers off. Was it flip them up or remove them  
7 from the helmet?

8 MR. HENDRIX: I don't know. That's what I'm  
9 saying. I don't know if she took them off when she was  
10 talking to me or not.

11 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

12 MR. HENDRIX: I don't recall if she had them  
13 on or not.

14 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

15 MR. HENDRIX: I don't remember her having  
16 them on, but I can't say 100 percent.

17 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Sure. And other than  
18 that, you didn't see anything out of the ordinary.

19 MR. HENDRIX: No.

20 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Did you hear anything  
21 out of the ordinary?

22 MR. HENDRIX: The only thing I heard was the  
23 rotors changing.

24 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: The rotors which is  
25 not really out of the ordinary.

1 MR. HENDRIX: It's not out of the ordinary.  
2 I mean they change everything they take off.

3 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Yes.

4 MR. HENDRIX: It was a different sound. The  
5 rotors made a different sound than I had heard before.  
6 But I didn't think anything of it.

7 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Yes.

8 MR. HENDRIX: I mean it was a normal  
9 helicopter landing and a normal takeoff. And I've been  
10 on a hundred, two hundred, I don't know how many calls  
11 I've been on the past five years where a helicopter has  
12 been landed. It was an normal as any helicopter  
13 landing and taking off as I've ever been involved in.

14 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

15 MR. HENDRIX: You know at any point if they  
16 felt unsafe or felt the weather had gotten bad, there's  
17 no doubt in my mind that they would have said they're  
18 going by ground.

19 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Right.

20 MR. HENDRIX: But they thought they could  
21 make it. I mean apparently the weather wasn't as bad  
22 as they thought it was or thought it was or there may  
23 not have been weather.

24 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: It may not have been.

25 MR. HENDRIX: Nobody knows.

1 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: No, nobody is going to  
2 know. And we're not pilots. So we don't know either.

3 MR. HENDRIX: Maybe the fog did set on in  
4 because it did later that night.

5 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Right.

6 MR. HENDRIX: Maybe it was set on in and was  
7 only at 100-200 feet and just hadn't made it us yet.

8 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Yes.

9 MR. HENDRIX: I don't know. God has a plan  
10 behind all this somewhere and none of us know what it  
11 is. He'll show us in His time.

12 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Chase, the only other  
13 thing I have is your phone number. I didn't ask you  
14 that from the beginning.

15 MR. HENDRIX: [REDACTED]

16 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: And will you text me  
17 the picture you showed me and the map that you drew  
18 out? That's my cell phone number. You can hang onto  
19 that card if you need me for anything else.

20 This is Investigator Redmon. It's 2:01 p.m.  
21 This will conclude this interview.

22 (Whereupon, at 2:01 p.m., the above-entitled  
23 matter was concluded.)

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Fatal Helicopter Accident  
March 26, 2016, Coffee County  
Accident No. ERA16FA140  
Interview of Chase Hendrix

DATE: 03-29-16

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 25 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



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IN RE: :
   
:
   
THE FATAL HELICOPTER :
   
ACCIDENT THAT OCCURRED NEAR : NTSB Accident No.
   
COFFEE COUNTY ON MARCH 26, : ERA16FA140
   
2016 :
   
:
   
-----:

INTERVIEW OF: LEE BLOODSWORTH

March 2016

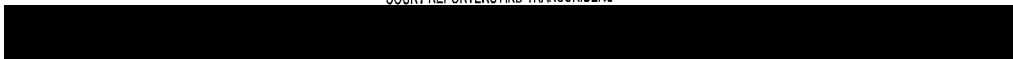
Hampton Inn Enterprise
   
[REDACTED]
   
Enterprise, Alabama 36330

BEFORE

SAM REDMON, Coffee County Sheriff's Office
   
PAT HEMPEN, FAA
   
CLAY PERKINS, Alabama/Northwest Florida Flight
   
Standards District Office, FAA
   
SCOTT TYRRELL, FAA Rotorcraft Standards Staff

This transcript was produced from audio
   
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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

1  
2 MR. TYRRELL: First of all, Scott Tyrrell  
3 with FAA Rotorcraft Standards Staff and more on the  
4 aircraft certification. We have Pat Hempen from the  
5 Office of Accident Investigation from FAA. We have  
6 Clay Perkins, the Alabama/Northwest -- You know him?

7 MR. PERKINS: No, you do.

8 MR. TYRRELL: And we have Sam, our resident  
9 expert from Coffee County. Appreciate your time here  
10 today. And who are you with? What's your --

11 MR. BLOODSWORTH: New Brockton Volunteer  
12 Fire Department.

13 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. How long have you been  
14 with them?

15 MR. BLOODSWORTH: I'm been back with them  
16 seven or eight months.

17 MR. TYRRELL: Seven or eight months. But  
18 you had previous.

19 MR. BLOODSWORTH: Previous, I was with them  
20 previous about for seven years.


21 MR. TYRRELL: Seven years. And what's your  
22 position there?

23 MR. BLOODSWORTH: Training captain.

24 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And can you talk about  
25 the time line from this accident and your involvement?

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1 MR. BLOODSWORTH: See. I got a call I don't  
2 know roughly 2:30 a.m. I got a phone call. And  
3 Jonathan asked me. He said, "You coming to the  
4 station?"

5 "What we got?"

6 And he explained to me what it was. And I  
7 told him I'd be there in a few minutes. I got up there  
8 and we got ready and they said we were going down 625  
9 down to the fields and all.

10 We got down there and went through some of  
11 the fields and all. Didn't see nothing. We stayed out  
12 there for I don't know. It's probably 4:30-ish.

13 And we decided then to go to the command  
14 center up there close to the Petro. We went up there  
15 and somebody said they got a phone call that some  
16 resident on 615 had heard a boom or crash about 1:00  
17 a.m. or somewhere around there.

18 We went down there and looked. We gathered  
19 up and went down there. There is one field before you  
20 get to the resident's house. We went through that  
21 field and I walked down to the creek. I didn't see  
22 nothing.

23 So I came back out and I went to the  
24 resident's house. I stayed there a few minutes. And  
25 then one of the guys that was a ranger with (Inaudible)

1 he was talking to the resident there.

2 He came back. He told my fire chief "Let's  
3 go up the road a little bit." We got up the road and  
4 there were two more firefighters up there. They found  
5 what appeared to them a top of pine tree had been  
6 broken and was laying in the roadway.

7 We stopped there and we got up on the hill  
8 where that tree was. Jonathan went down the hill for a  
9 little bit. And he hollered. He said he found it.

10 So I went. We got going down the hill and I  
11 told him, "Jonathan, that's a pond. That ain't it."


12 So we went down the hill for a little piece  
13 and down to the pond. We got to looking around. I  
14 told Jonathan, "I'm going up the hill and it looks like  
15 a clearing back up there."

16 So we went back up the hill and got the  
17 clearing. It was an open field. And we got to that  
18 field and we walked down and there was a field and I'd  
19 seen another little road cuts back. And at that time,  
20 that's when I called my fire chief and asked them if  
21 they could come up there to that field. And they could  
22 ride that field. I told them it's a pretty good sized  
23 area.

24 So they came up there and I went down a  
25 little roadway. It came behind the pond. I didn't

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1 know that. But I came back up and that time Willis had  
2 gotten up with us. So we decided we were going down  
3 around the field to the trailer. And Willis and  
4 Jonathan, they went down towards to the trailer and  
5 went down one side behind the trailer. And I went down  
6 the edge of the wood line. I just followed it all the  
7 way down to the bottom corner.

8 I got down to the bottom corner and there's  
9 a little entryway that goes into the woods down there.  
10 And I waited for them right there. And they come  
11 around and I told them, "I smell fuel. It's strong."

12 So we went in there and we went in -- I  
13 don't know -- maybe 20 yards. And Willis had cut off  
14 in one direction. And Jonathan stayed with me. We  
15 went in and went for a little ways. I lost the smell  
16 of it. So we turned and we went down a little piece.  
17 And couldn't smell anything there.

18 Me and Jonathan were talking and I said,  
19 "Let's turn and go back to where we knew we smelled  
20 it." And when we turned we walked a little bit,  
21 probably 20 or 30 yards from us. I told him, "Is that  
22 something white in there, Jonathan?"

23 He said, "I don't see no white. I see  
24 orange." At that time, we went over there and there it  
25 was.

1 MR. TYRRELL: The top of the pine tree, did  
2 you actually see where that was in the roadway?

3 MR. BLOODSWORTH: You could tell like it was  
4 probably dead. I don't know. I don't know if the wind  
5 may have blown it or the bottom of copter may have  
6 caught it or something. But it was laying sort of  
7 crossways of the road a little bit. It was all busted  
8 up.

9 MR. TYRRELL: Did you guys throw it back in  
10 the ditch?

11 MR. BLOODSWORTH: I don't know what they  
12 did. I didn't mess with it. I got out of the Ranger  
13 and I came up to the top of the bank up there.

14 MR. REDMON: Was the tree on the county  
15 road?

16 MR. BLOODSWORTH: Yes.

17 MR. REDMON: I know which one. It's been  
18 driven over 50 times. Just before you get to the T  
19 intersection.

20 MR. TYRRELL: Right. I just want to make  
21 sure that we didn't have another tree strike.

22 MR. PERKINS: Actually until he said it, I  
23 was trying to remember what tree was this.

24 MR. TYRRELL: Let's see. So when you got  
25 called out about 2:30 a.m. what was the weather like at

1 that time?

2 MR. BLOODSWORTH: It was misty, rain, foggy.  
3 Pretty dense fog at the time.

4 MR. TYRRELL: And when you arrived at the  
5 accident scene, was there anything in particular that  
6 you can tell? Obviously, you smelled jet fuel and that  
7 type of thing.

8 MR. BLOODSWORTH: No. When we got down  
9 there and we started smelling it, that's actually the  
10 first time I've ever really smelled anything like that.  
11 I knew it wasn't right. Something wasn't right. And  
12 Jonathan told me that's what it was, the jet fuel. I  
13 didn't really know, but I knew it wasn't right to be  
14 down there.

15 MR. TYRRELL: And do you have quite a bit of  
16 experience with EMS helicopters that do scene work for  
17 you?

18 MR. BLOODSWORTH: I've loaded a couple of  
19 patients in them.

20 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: So you have actually  
21 flown in an EMS helicopter.

22 MR. BLOODSWORTH: I haven't flown in one.

23 MR. TYRRELL: Very good. Any experience  
24 with this operator then at all?

25 MR. BLOODSWORTH: No.

1 MR. TYRRELL: And when you guys arrived on  
2 the scene, did you see anybody take any photography or?

3 MR. BLOODSWORTH: Not that I'm aware of. Of  
4 course, I wasn't really watching anybody. That was the  
5 first time I'd ever been in something like that. So I  
6 was kind of focused on what the scene was.

7 MR. TYRRELL: And how many victims did you  
8 identify?

9 MR. BLOODSWORTH: I saw two.

10 MR. TYRRELL: Two.

11 MR. BLOODSWORTH: When I first got there.

12 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Would you know which  
13 ones they were then?

14 MR. BLOODSWORTH: I don't.

15 MR. TYRRELL: All right. And the issue with  
16 the photography what we don't want is due to the  
17 horrific scene at the accident site. We don't want  
18 these images to get out on the social media for the  
19 family members to have to see forever and ever because  
20 you can't scrub the media. We don't have that magic  
21 eraser there.

22 If you have any photos or if you know of  
23 anybody, just ask them just go ahead and -- Do we want  
24 to have them come back through you or?

25 MR. REDMON: That's fine. That would be the

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1 easiest way. I can get them to you.

2 MR. BLOODSWORTH: No questions asked. Just  
3 it's better to -- Unfortunately there's a digital that  
4 burns on this and you may think they'll never know it's  
5 me. And there's been some accident scenes out there  
6 that ended up haunting the families for years.

7 MR. PERKINS: One question. Were you and  
8 the assistant chief together like just standing there  
9 together when y'all walked in on this? Or were you all  
10 separated?

11 MR. BLOODSWORTH: We were together.

12 MR. PERKINS: You were together. So y'all  
13 walked in from the -- I guess -- north side.

14 MR. BLOODSWORTH: It would be the north  
15 side.

16 MR. PERKINS: Yes.

17 MR. TYRRELL: So you came up on essentially  
18 the nose of the aircraft.

19 MR. BLOODSWORTH: Right.

20 MR. HEMPEN: What time of day did you  
21 actually come upon the wreckage? Was it daylight?

22 MR. BLOODSWORTH: It was already daylight,  
23 yes.

24 MR. PERKINS: Good daylight or just getting  
25 there?

1 MR. BLOODSWORTH: It was pretty good  
2 daylight.

3 MR. PERKINS: Okay.

4 MR. BLOODSWORTH: I'm going to say seven-  
5 ish.

6 MR. TYRRELL: Did you have a fire department  
7 radio or?

8 MR. BLOODSWORTH: I had my fire department  
9 radio.

10 MR. TYRRELL: So all those transmissions  
11 would be recorded then, right?

12 MR. REDMON: If there was -- Did you all  
13 call that out?

14 MR. BLOODSWORTH: Well, when I first found  
15 it, I tried to call and I tried to call. But the chief  
16 said he couldn't hear me. So I guess I didn't get out.

17 MR. REDMON: They probably weren't hitting  
18 repeater.

19 MR. TYRRELL: Is that kind of a natural?

20 MR. REDMON: Yes.

21 MR. TYRRELL: All right. I know that the  
22 four of us here appreciate your participation in this  
23 event. And we also appreciate what you do for a  
24 profession. And we thank you for that tremendously.

25 If there's anything that you can think of

1 later that you want to share, don't question as far as  
2 the importance of it because it may be just something  
3 small that just adds to the accident perspective. Just  
4 call up Sam and just say, "Hey, get this information to  
5 these guys." And we'll go from there.

6 This is a safety investigation. So we're  
7 not looking for blame or anything like that. That's  
8 important to understand that what we're here for is to  
9 prevent future accidents.

10 MR. BLOODSWORTH: I don't know how far they  
11 come out, the perimeter, with that caution tape. But I  
12 know when I was walking out I guess it had been kind of  
13 southeast I guess it would be roughly I reckon. I know  
14 I've seen little pieces. There was one piece that  
15 looked like some kind of little chip maybe.

16 MR. TYRRELL: Like paint chips?

17 MR. BLOODSWORTH: No, it looked like a --

18 MR. TYRRELL: Oh, electronics.

19 MR. BLOODSWORTH: Yes.

20 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

21 MR. BLOODSWORTH: It was about 30 yards from

22 --

23 MR. TYRRELL: What time did you leave the  
24 scene then?

25 MR. BLOODSWORTH: When we found it, we

1 stayed there maybe ten minutes.

2 MR. TYRRELL: Coffee County, they've got  
3 more flags. They've done a very good job marking the  
4 scene and stuff. So there will some things that we  
5 just don't find because that ground is so damned --  
6 It's like a sponge.

7 MR. PERKINS: It is.

8 MR. HEMPEN: So you say you were on that  
9 scene about ten minutes and then you left.

10 MR. BLOODSWORTH: Roughly 10 minutes.

11 MR. HEMPEN: Okay.

12 MR. BLOODSWORTH: And I came back up the  
13 hill. I just didn't want to stay there too much  
14 longer.

15 MR. PERKINS: I understand.

16 MR. HEMPEN: Well, you showed a lot of  
17 courage going down there in the first place. That was  
18 good.

19 MR. TYRRELL: And as we told the other  
20 individuals, I'm certain that your department has  
21 counseling available. I'm not here to judge, but I  
22 understand that it's easier to handle some things when  
23 they're small and some of these images get embedded in  
24 your mind and it's easier to just have that  
25 professional help there to kind of work through that.

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1 All right.

2 MR. BLOODSWORTH: I know I laid down last  
3 night. It was on my mind pretty heavy and then when  
4 the image popped in my head this morning. I sat up in  
5 bed just like that. I sat up and I went into the  
6 kitchen and fixed my coffee. I looked at the time and  
7 the time on the clock said 7:00 a.m. Just like that.

8 MR. TYRRELL: So go and seek those services  
9 and we'll make sure that we recommend that through Sam  
10 and Coffee County.

11 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: And if you want to  
12 talk to anybody we've got a chaplain as one of our  
13 reserves. So he's available all the time if you want  
14 to talk to somebody or if you know somebody, he can.

15 MR. TYRRELL: I would recommend it because  
16 if you're getting those mental imprints it's better to  
17 do earlier. And if you're having those issues, the  
18 young man that came in before you I think he needs some  
19 discussion. And then the other guy before he knows the  
20 Haynes guys, too, as well.

21 MR. BLOODSWORTH: See, I knew the patient.

22 MR. TYRRELL: Oh, you did. Sorry for that.

23 MR. BLOODSWORTH: We had a motorcycle wreck  
24 here a few weeks ago and we had to call Haynes to come  
25 down for him. And I was told that the nurse that was

1 on board was the same nurse that came down for him.

2 I'm not sure, but that's what I was told.

3 MR. TYRRELL: Well, it's a pretty small base  
4 up there. So it's pretty strong. And the medical crew  
5 members, they do their shifts a little bit different  
6 than the pilots do.

7 All right. Thank you, Lee, very much and I  
8 wish you well.

9 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Here is my card and  
10 cell phone number if you need anything. Just give me a  
11 call.

12 MR. BLOODSWORTH: Appreciate it.

13 MR. TYRRELL: Off the record.

14 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter was  
15 concluded.)

16

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C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Fatal Helicopter Accident  
March 26, 2016, Coffee County  
Accident No. ERA16FA140  
Interview of Lee Bloodsworth

DATE: March 2016

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 15 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



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IN RE: :
   
:
   
THE FATAL HELICOPTER :
   
ACCIDENT THAT OCCURRED NEAR : NTSB Accident No.
   
COFFEE COUNTY ON MARCH 26, : ERA16FA140
   
2016 :
   
:
   
-----:

INTERVIEW OF: BRIAN SASSER

Monday,
   
March 28, 2016

Enterprise Rescue Squad Inc.
   
[REDACTED]
   
Enterprise, Alabama 36330

BEFORE

SAM REDMON, Coffee County Sheriff's Office

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701



P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

1  
2 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: This is Sam Redmon.  
3 It's March 28, 2016. It's 9:07 p.m. Central Time.  
4 Present is myself, Brian Sasser and you're with  
5 Goodman.

6 MR. SASSER: Yes, sir.

7 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. What is your  
8 position at Goodman?

9 MR. SASSER: I'm the Assistant Chief.

10 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. And the other  
11 night you responded to an auto accident on County Road  
12 606. Is that correct?

13 MR. SASSER: Correct.

14 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: And what was your role  
15 as the assistant chief at that accident?

16 MR. SASSER: I was the incident commander.

17 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. So you were  
18 essentially in command of the fire department and  
19 responders there at the scene.

20 MR. SASSER: Correct.

21 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: All right. And do you  
22 frequently work with helicopters and aviation, life  
23 flight and rescue stuff? How often would you say you  
24 do that?

25 MR. SASSER: This is the second time that

1 I've ever done it.

2 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. Was Haynes also  
3 the first time?

4 MR. SASSER: Yes, it was Haynes the first  
5 time.

6 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: So you dealt with  
7 Haynes on at least two occasions. All right. And  
8 during another interview it was brought out that the  
9 helicopter was talking to someone on the ground and  
10 later on we found out that it was you. Is that  
11 correct?

12 MR. SASSER: Correct.

13 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: And can you tell us  
14 basically how that it came to be that you started  
15 talking to the helicopter and what that conversation  
16 was?

17 MR. SASSER: Yes. Chase Hendrix, the medic,  
18 that was on the Enterprise Rescue was in the back  
19 working with the patient. And he asked me to get on  
20 their radio, on StateNet, and coordinate with the  
21 helicopter.

22 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: How did you know to go  
23 to StateNet?

24 MR. SASSER: Because he told me how to do  
25 this.

1 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Chase?

2 MR. SASSER: Chase did.

3 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. All right. So  
4 Chase told you to go to StateNet to communicate with  
5 the helicopter.

6 MR. SASSER: Right.

7 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: And you were able to  
8 make contact with them.

9 MR. SASSER: I spoke to him I'm thinking it  
10 was twice.

11 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

12 MR. SASSER: It was about the landing zone.  
13 He was asking where the landing zone was. And I told  
14 him behind the fire trucks that were in the middle of  
15 the road. And he could not see the fire trucks or he  
16 said on his radio he couldn't understand me. Then I  
17 come to find out he was telling me it was -- I can't  
18 remember how he said it -- a good transaction,  
19 whatever, however he said it.

20 Then we got where he said he could not hear  
21 or see the lights. We put somebody in the field that  
22 he landed in with a flashlight. And he asked, "Was  
23 that us flashing the flashlights at him?"

24 And I told him, "Yes."

25 And he said, "Good copy" and landed the

1 helicopter.

2 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Could you see the  
3 helicopter while you were talking to him?

4 MR. SASSER: Yes.

5 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: How high would you say  
6 he was roughly in altitude when you were talking to him  
7 on the radio?

8 MR. SASSER: I would say he was a good 100  
9 feet, 150 feet.

10 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

11 MR. SASSER: He was still pretty high.

12 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: And what was he doing  
13 while you were talking to him?

14 MR. SASSER: Like hovering.

15 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: He was hovering.

16 MR. SASSER: He was hovering over the road.

17 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. And after --  
18 Was he saying he was having a hard time seeing the  
19 emergency lights on the scene?

20 MR. SASSER: Yes, sir.


21 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: But you could see the  
22 helicopter.

23 MR. SASSER: But I could see the helicopter.

24 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: You could make out the  
25 image of the helicopter.

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1 MR. SASSER: Right.

2 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: All right. And then  
3 you were able to get someone to the LZ and direct him  
4 to that location.

5 MR. SASSER: Correct.

6 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: And that worked out  
7 successfully.

8 MR. SASSER: He landed the helicopter.

9 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. About how long  
10 would you say the helicopter was on scene from landing  
11 to takeoff?

12 MR. SASSER: I would say a good 45 minutes.

13 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Forty-five minutes.  
14 Okay. And what was the cause of the delay there? What  
15 took him so long on the ground?

16 MR. SASSER: They were working with the --  
17 We had just gotten the patient out of the car. It took  
18 longer than we wanted. We had extrication problems,  
19 two problems. And it took longer than we wanted it to  
20 to get the patient out of the car.

21 So they had just gotten him to the back of  
22 the ambulance. And when the nurse and the medic came  
23 they worked with the patient I guess to stable him or  
24 whatever to fly him.

25 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

1 MR. SASSER: It took a long time in the back  
2 of the ambulance.

3 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: And then when they  
4 took off, can you describe there how they left the  
5 area?

6 MR. SASSER: They picked straight up from  
7 where they landed and come straight across the wreck  
8 scene which that would be north. Then we lost vision I  
9 would say 30 seconds after they lifted off.

10 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay.

11 MR. SASSER: It was just they were gone.

12 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Did you notice  
13 anything unusual? From your experience, did you notice  
14 anything unusual about the takeoff?

15 MR. SASSER: No.

16 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Did anything look out  
17 of the way? Any odd sounds or anything like that?

18 MR. SASSER: No, we didn't.

19 INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Describe the weather  
20 that night why y'all were there and did it change or  
21 did it basically stay the same?

22 MR. SASSER: It changed a lot. I mean when  
23 we arrived on the scene it was a mist and rain. Then  
24 as we were working it kept getting foggier and foggier.  
25 It was just coming in from high to low.

1           As they were lifting off, it was I wouldn't  
2 say a heavy fog. But it was mixed with the rain and  
3 kind of pretty thick. And when he picked up, he  
4 cleared the trees. And when he flew over the road  
5 which wasn't very far from his landing zone we lost all  
6 visual.

7           INVESTIGATOR REDMON: So when you say you  
8 lost visual, you couldn't see him for the fog or  
9 couldn't see him for the trees.

10          MR. SASSER: I would say the fog.

11          INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Okay. So he ascended  
12 in the fog.

13          MR. SASSER: Correct. He was high enough to  
14 get over the trees and just the fog kind of -- You  
15 couldn't make out it was a helicopter. You still had  
16 his beacon red light for just a second.

17          INVESTIGATOR REDMON: Right.

18          MR. SASSER: And then it was gone.

19          INVESTIGATOR REDMON: All right. Well,  
20 that's good. That's all I needed like I said an idea  
21 of what happened that night. This is Sam Redmon. It's  
22 9:12 p.m. and this will conclude this interview.

23                 (Whereupon, at 9:12 p.m., the above-entitled  
24 matter was concluded.)

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Fatal Helicopter Accident  
March 26, 2016, Coffee County  
Accident No. ERA16FA140  
Interview of Brian Sasser

DATE: 03-28-16

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 14 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



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