



## RECORD OF CONVERSATION

**Timothy N. Sorensen**  
**Aviation Accident Investigator**  
**Central Region**

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**Date: January 6, 2013**  
**Person Contacted: Tim Clark**  
**NTSB Accident Number: CEN13FA122 – Clear Lake, IA**

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### **Narrative:**

Mr. Clark reported that he initially heard the helicopter while he was walking his dog. He was located about two blocks southwest of the grain elevator in Ventura at the time. The helicopter appeared to be a little higher than the grain elevator and traveling west. The landing light was on and he was able to see the bottom of the helicopter as it approached and eventually passed his location.

Mr. Clark stated that as the helicopter reached a point approximately north of his location, it slowed down and turned to proceed north. He noted that it appeared to be a gentle turn and did not concern him at the time. He looked away, following the dog for about 15 or 20 steps, and then heard a “pop.” Mr. Clark observed the helicopter descend straight down and the resulting postimpact fire. He went inside and called 911. He noted that the landing light was not visible from his vantage point after the helicopter turned, but that he was able to see it again as the helicopter descended toward the ground.

Mr. Clark recalled that there was a mist or haze, which was apparent in the helicopter landing light. He added that there was moisture in the air and that he had pulled his hood up while he was out with the dog. There was not any significant amount of wind at the time.

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**Date: January 9, 2013**  
**Person Contacted: Terrance Prochaska**  
**NTSB Accident Number: CEN13FA122 – Clear Lake, IA**

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### **Narrative:**

Mr. Prochaska reported that he had flown back from Marshalltown to Mason City about 6:00 ~ 6:30 that evening. He noted that during the flight the airplane had started to pick up some rime ice when he flew through a cloud. After landing, he remained in the hangar and washed the airplane. About 9:00 ~ 9:30 pm, when he went out to start his truck, he noted that the pavement was slick and there was a glaze of ice on the headlights. He recalled that one of his friends joked that they would have to “file IFR” to drive home.

Mr. Prochaska stated that about that time he heard the Mercy Air helicopter. He observed it fly overhead about 300 feet above ground level with the landing light on. He initially thought that it might land there at the Mason City airport; however, it continued westbound at a relatively fast speed.

Mr. Prochaska noted that a Beechjet departed from runway 36 about 15 minutes before the helicopter flew over. He was listening to the departing airplane on the radio and noted that the lights were still visible as the pilot reported climbing through 2,300 feet. He recalled that the approach lights to runway 36 were on at the time the helicopter flew over. He had thought that maybe the helicopter pilot had activated the pilot controlled lighting at the airport; although, he noted that maybe they were still on from when the Beechjet departed.

Mr. Prochaska reported that he put his truck into four wheel drive when leaving the airport due to the road conditions. He commented that the road was sheer ice and that his truck was sliding all over the place eastbound on Highway 18 toward Mason City. He recalled using the windshield wipers and that there was a mist or very light rain at the time. Mr. Prochaska noted that he was employed as a Mason City police officer.

----- End of entries -----



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**Date: January 8, 2013**  
**Person Contacted: Mark Holt**  
**NTSB Accident Number: CEN13FA122 – Clear Lake, IA**

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### **Narrative:**

Mr. Holt reported that he had flown back from Marshalltown, arriving in Mason City about 6:00pm. He noted that they picked up some ice whenever they flew through a cloud. He recalled the weather conditions as 800 ~ 1,000 feet overcast, with light drizzle and light snow. He noted that a Beechjet departed Mason City eastbound about 7:30pm. At that time, the Mason City weather was about 1,200 feet overcast with 5 miles visibility.

Mr. Holt stated that when he was leaving the airport, the helicopter flew by about 300 feet above ground level. At that time, the visibility seemed to be about 3 to 5 miles and the ceiling appeared to have dropped.

Mr. Holt noted that his Jeep had about one-quarter inch of ice on it when he went to leave the airport and that there was a freezing drizzle at that time. He reportedly used four-wheel drive to get out of the airport and was sliding on the road while driving into Mason City. Mr. Holt works with the local CERT team and received a call about the accident shortly afterward.

----- End of entries -----



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**Date: January 9, 2013**  
**Person Contacted: Steve Lehner**  
**NTSB Accident Number: CEN13FA122 – Clear Lake, IA**

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### **Narrative:**

Mr. Lehner reported that he was at the Mason City airport on the night of the accident. He observed the Mercy Air helicopter fly over about the time that a Beechjet had departed. He recalled that the current weather observation was about 1,200 feet overcast with 5 miles visibility. However, based on watching the Beechjet depart, he thought that the ceiling might have been higher.

Mr. Lehner noted that the helicopter appeared to have been flying lower than normal. He estimated the altitude at 300 feet to 400 feet above ground level. The nose of the helicopter was pitched down slightly and it was flying at an average speed. The landing light was on at the time. He noted that the landing light was not normally on when he observed it in the past.

Mr. Lehner stated that his truck had a coating of ice. He described the ice as “speckled” in that it was not a uniform coating. When driving out of the airport, he had a short encounter with freezing rain and when he turned left onto Highway 18, his truck slid sideways.

----- End of entries -----



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**Date: January 9, 2013**  
**Person Contacted: Kevin Borrill**  
**NTSB Accident Number: CEN13FA122 – Clear Lake, IA**

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### **Narrative:**

Officer Borrill reported that he was on duty with the Clear Lake police department the night of the accident. He noted that he was on patrol in downtown Clear Lake, in the vicinity of 4<sup>th</sup> Street and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue looking north, when he initially saw the helicopter. It appeared to be north of Highway 18 in the vicinity of the football field at that time.

Officer Borrill stated that he initially thought it was an airplane but then realized it was a helicopter. It was traveling westbound and seemed to be a little low, with the nose pitched down slight lower than the tail. The landing light was on. About 4 or 5 minutes later he heard the call regarding the accident. He proceeded to the scene; however, EMS had already arrived. He subsequently provided traffic control.

Officer Borrill noted that it was misting at that time. He recalled needing the windshield wipers intermittently to keep it clear. The roads were slippery and he maintained a 50 ~ 55 mph speed for safety while responding. He added that about that time the police department started receiving reports of cars in ditches due to slippery roads.

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**Date: January 9, 2013**  
**Person Contacted: Gordy Dye**  
**NTSB Accident Number: CEN13FA122 – Clear Lake, IA**

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### **Narrative:**

Mr. Dye reported that he was on ambulance duty with the Clear Lake fire department the night of the accident. He noted that they were the first EMS crew on-scene. He recalled observing the helicopter as it flew passed the fire station. It appeared to be a little lower than usual, but not low enough to cause him any concern. He added that it sounded “perfectly fine” and that it appeared to be following Highway 18.

Mr. Dye stated that about 5 minutes after observing the helicopter, they received the accident call. They responded from the Clear Lake fire station. It was not snowing at that time and the roads in Clear Lake were dry. However, en route to the scene, dispatch advised that initial responders had reported slippery road conditions. The roads did become icy and slippery as they neared Ventura. Mr. Dye commented that there was no precipitation at the scene and he recalled being able to see some starts, as well.

Mr. Dye stated that he had also been a flight paramedic with the medical center for about thirteen years. (The prior two years were with MedTrans, and before that the operator was Air Methods.) He explained that they were paid by the hospital; although, he understands that there is some reimbursement to the hospital by MedTrans. The pilots are employed by MedTrans. Flight paramedics are on duty for 24 hours and then usually off for 2 or 3 days. He added that they normally fly 25 to 30 flights per month on average; however, they are not always evenly spaced. Sometimes there are two or three flight on a shift, and other times there are none. He stated that he has never experienced any safety issues as part of the flight program, and that the medical crews receive annual helicopter and night vision goggle training.

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**Date: January 9, 2013**  
**Person Contacted: Daryl Heinemann**  
**NTSB Accident Number: CEN13FA122 – Clear Lake, IA**

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### Narrative:

Mr. Heinemann reported that he heard the helicopter while working in garage. He noted that he was accustomed to hearing helicopters in the area and that this one seemed to be on a normal flight path. However, the helicopter did not seem to leave the area. The pitch of the sound from the helicopter changed as if it was turning. He then heard a “thump” and everything went quiet.

Mr. Heinemann noted that he was a firefighter with the Ventura fire department. He recalled initially thinking that the helicopter might have been responding to an accident just over the county line since he had not gotten a call from the fire department.

Mr. Heinemann stated that the windshield of his truck, which had been parked in the driveway, was completely covered with ice. He ran the wipers and washer fluid but could not clear the ice without scraping it off. He decided to take another car that had been parked in the garage.

Mr. Heinemann reported that the roads were a little slick. He noted that he was on the third truck out of the fire station and while they were waiting to cross Highway 18 at Balsam Avenue, a Clear Lake police car, which was also responding to the accident, slid through the intersection. They subsequently called dispatch to advise following units to be alert for slick roads. Mr. Heinemann recalled that there was a haze in the air, which was visible when looking toward a street light. He noted that it was not foggy, nor was there any precipitation at that time.

----- End of entries -----



## RECORD OF CONVERSATION

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**Date: January 10, 2013**  
**Person Contacted: Mike Meester**  
**NTSB Accident Number: CEN13FA122 – Clear Lake, IA**

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### **Narrative:**

Mr. Meester reported that he heard the helicopter fly over his house about 9:00pm the evening of the accident and that it sounded louder than usual. He noted that he lived on the north side of Clear Lake, about 2-1/2 blocks north of Highway 18. He stated that several minutes after hearing the helicopter his pager went off and he responded to the Clear Lake fire station.

Mr. Meester recalled that the weather was hazy and foggy, and that the roads were slippery. There was no snow or rain at the time. He commented that the dew in the air seemed to be condensing and freezing on the roads.

----- End of entries -----





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**Date: January 8, 2013**  
**Person Contacted: Charles Taylor**  
**NTSB Accident Number: CEN13FA122 – Clear Lake, IA**

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### **Narrative:**

Mr. Taylor reported that he had just gone to bed when he heard the helicopter. He subsequently observed an orange glow and fireball from his bedroom window. His home was located about one mile southeast of the accident site.

Mr. Taylor stated that he served with the Ventura fire department. He immediately got dressed and responded to the fire station.

Mr. Taylor noted that there was a thin film of ice on his vehicle windshield. He had been in the house for a couple of hours prior to that, but he was not aware of any precipitation. No precipitation was encountered during his response to the fire station, or from there to the accident site. The roads were slippery, though.

----- End of entries -----



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**Date: January 9, 2013**  
**Person Contacted: Todd Menenga**  
**NTSB Accident Number: CEN13FA122 – Clear Lake, IA**

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### **Narrative:**

Mr. Menenga reported that is employed by the Iowa Department of Transportation and is also a volunteer with the Clear Lake Fire Department. He stated that his supervisor contacted him about 8:53pm and asked him to treat the combined stretch of Interstate 35/Highway 18 because the roadway was getting icy. He noted that the mist in the air appeared to be freezing on the pavement.

Mr. Menenga noted that he observed the helicopter about 9:00pm as he was driving on Highway 18 from his home in Clear Lake toward Mason City. The helicopter was flying low with the landing light on the roadway, noting that it appeared to be just a little higher than a local grain elevator. He recalled thinking that it might have been a search and rescue (SAR) flight, as the operator had always offered to provide assistance with SAR activity. He subsequently received a call from the fire department regarding the accident after driving about another 5 miles.

Mr. Menenga stated the there was a very light drizzle (at most) at the time. He ran the windshield wipers only periodically. It was hazy with no rain or snow.

----- End of entries -----



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**Date: January 10, 2013**  
**Person Contacted: Janet Alger**  
**NTSB Accident Number: CEN13FA122 – Clear Lake, IA**

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### **Narrative:**

Ms. Alger reported that she arrived home about 8:45pm. She resided about one-half mile north of Highway 18 in Clear Lake. She described the weather conditions at that time as misty, with no rain or snow. There was moisture on the car windshield, but no ice. She noted that there was a “glaze” on roads and that the pavement was a little slippery, but not icy.

Ms. Alger stated that her kitchen window faced toward the west. She heard a sound that she initially thought was a snow plow on the street in front of her house. She reported that she looked out of the window about 8:55pm and saw the lights of the helicopter. She noted that it was flying westbound, “really low.” She recalled thinking at the time that it might be an airplane; however, she subsequently heard about accident and realized that it must have been the helicopter. She noted that the Mercy Air helicopter had flown near her house in the past.

----- End of entries -----



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**Date: January 10, 2013**  
**Person Contacted: Kurt Harle**  
**NTSB Accident Number: CEN13FA122 – Clear Lake, IA**

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### **Narrative:**

Mr. Harle stated that he was at a church function that evening and that he left about 8:30pm. He was located about 3-1/2 miles from the accident site, on Highway 18 at the golf course. He noted that there was moisture in the air and that he needed to run the windshield wipers during his drive home. He added that there was a thin film of ice on the windshield when he went out to his car. He described the roads as wet but not icy or slippery. Although, his son was out that night as well, and he recalled thinking that he hoped his son drove home slowly.

Mr. Harle reported that after arriving home, he heard the helicopter distinctly from inside the house. He did not see it. He added that he lived on the north shore of Clear Lake and that it was common to see and hear helicopters in the area.

----- End of entries -----