

# Record of Conversation

Tuesday, April 29, 2014

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<b>Interview:</b>	Luke Bowman
<b>Phone:</b>	██████████
<b>Location:</b>	Telephone Conversation

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## Narrative:

Luke Bowman is the Utah Highway Patrol helicopter pilot who responded to and located the mishap USDA OH-6. Mr Bowman said that initially the coordinates that he was given ended being 5 or 7 miles from where the actual crash site was. When he eventually located the accident site he found the two crew members. He said it appeared that the helicopter had been in a canyon with steep walls. The helicopter had landed on a ledge and then rolled down hill about 50 yards. Mr Bowman turned off the ELT. While he was there he noted about 30 kts of wind.

The accident pilot told Mr Bowman that they were in a hover trying to get a visual on a cougar trap when the tail rotor came apart and the helicopter started spinning. The pilot cut the throttle to stop the spinning and autorotated from a high hover into the tight canyon. The accident pilot also stated that there was no engine overspeed indicated.

The USDA crew was using a fuel truck manned by a man named Corry ██████████

Van S. McKenny IV  
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# Record of Conversation

Wednesday, April 30, 2014  
11:30 AM

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<b>Interview:</b>	Chad Bigler
<b>Phone:</b>	██████████
<b>Location:</b>	Telephone Conversation

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## Narrative:

The following is a summary of conversation with Mr Chad Bigler, who was the pilot of the accident helicopter.

Mr Bigler stated that they were doing a wildlife survey of Big Horned sheep north of Lake Powell around the Escalante Plateau. He was established in a 50-60 foot hover in steep cliffy terrain, trying to get a visual on some wildlife tracks. He believes he experienced an engine power loss, the helicopter started spinning, he cut the throttle, observed the rotor rpm drop drastically, and lowered the collective to enter an high hovering autorotation. He autorotated the helicopter on to a ledge then the helicopter rolled off the ledge down a steep slope. The reason he thinks he had an engine power loss is because when he cut the throttle nothing changed.

His observer was Tom Hardy. They extracted them selves from the helicopter and attempted to call for rescue using their cell phones. Mr Bigler had lost his cell phone but activated his SPOT PLB. He stated that his supervisor, Mike Linell, would have known in 5 minutes that there had been an accident.

The other member of the survey team was Cory Vetere, who drove the fuel truck. They first got fuel from the fuel truck at Hanksville airport at 0930, and they were planning on getting fuel at (Sandy Ranch?) next. Their flight plan was to Cory, who acts as flight following. They check in with Cory every 15 min.

## 2nd Conversation: 13:30 Wednesday, May 21, 2014

Mr. Bigler contacted the NTSB IIC for an update on the progress of the investigation. He stated that he fueled the helicopter him self and topped it off (54.6 gal). He took a fuel sample from the fuel nozzle and the fuel appeared clear, before he fueled the helicopter. He flew for about 45 min before the accident, and estimated that there was 35 gal of fuel on board. Randal Jarman told him that about 30 gal of fuel had leaked from the helicopter during the wreckage recovery.

Mr. Bigler then discussed the events of the accident. He said that he heard a 'pop' or 'bang' that was followed by the left yaw of the helicopter and the right pedal went full forward. He lowered the collective and was able to regain some directional control (although an autorotation does require a lot of right pedal he said). The Nr gauge was below the green arc, and there was no split between the Nr and N2 (again normal for autorotation he said). After lowering the collective , he brought the throttle twist grip to ground idle. He heard unusual whining noises from behind him throughout the event.

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# Record of Conversation

Thursday, May 01, 2014  
8:32 AM

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<b>Interview:</b>	Cory Vetere
<b>Phone:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Location:</b>	Telephone Conversation

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## Narrative:

The following is a summary of conversation with Mr Cory Vetery, who is a District Field Specialist (trapper). He doesn't have any aircraft piloting experience but regularly acts as an observer in both helicopters and fixed wing operations.

Mr Vetery stated that the operation was to check on some cougar traps that had been set. Cougars had been raiding and killing local Big Horn Sheep. He tows the fueling trailer and met the helicopter at Hanksville. The helicopter had flown from Spanish Fork, to Price (fueled), then to Hanksville. At Hanksville the pilot fuelled the helicopter (topped off). When ever they fuel up the fuel tanks are topped off, and they don't go for more than 2 hours between fueling.

About 1.5 hours after the helicopter had left Hanksville, Mr Vetere had repositioned to Sandy Ranch, when he got a call on his mobile phone from the pilot. He could hear the pilot but the pilot could not hear Mr Vetere's responses. The pilot said that they had an accident, the helicopter was down, but he thought that they were ok. Mr Vetere eventually was able to get a call to the pilot confirming that he had received the call for help. At the same time the pilot had activated his SPOT device, and the State Office had been notified of the SPOT coordinates. At the same time Mr Vetere's supervisor, Mr Kevin Dustin - UT Southern District Supervisor, called to see what the situation was. With accident location coordinates relayed to Mr Vetere, he contacted a deputy sheriff friend of his (Dep Darrel Mecham, Chief of the Moab Station) to ask for assistance. Dep Mecham dispatched a helicopter to provide SAR. Mr Dustin arrived at Sandy Ranch about 1400. At that time the Utah Highway Patrol (UHP) had reported that they had located the downed helicopter. At 1500 Mr Vetere got word from Dep Mecham that the downed helicopter crew had been evacuated. At that point he returned (with the fueling trailer) to his residence in Green River, UT. Mr Dustin proceeded to Dixie Regional Medical Center in St George where Mr Tom Hardy (helicopter observer) had been transported to.

On Wednesday, April 30, Mr Vetere, Mr Dustin, and Mr Mike Linell (State Supervisor) visited Dixie Regional Medical Center, St George, to see Mr Hardy. They discussed the accident. Mr Hardy stated that the helicopter suddenly started spinning and the pilot (Chad Bigler) had to look for a place to set down. It happened very fast. Mr Vetere stated that Mr Hardy thought that there had been a tail rotor problem of some kind.

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# Record of Conversation

Thursday, May 01, 2014  
9:30 AM

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<b>Interview:</b>	Mike Linnell
<b>Phone:</b>	██████████
<b>Location:</b>	Telephone Conversation

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## Narrative:

The following is a summary of conversation with Mr Mike Linnell who is the State Director for USDA Wildlife Services for Utah.

Mr Linnell stated that the wildlife management work uses a combination of Federal and State resources and employees who work together. The accident helicopter was to have been looking for a big horned sheep that may have died or been killed by a mountain lion. Within this particular area the big horned sheep are subject of a protection program and if a mountain lion is found to prey on the sheep the mountain lion is trapped and removed. Mr Linnell said that the sheep in question had a radio collar, but the helicopter was to search for it using its last known position.

Mr Linnell's first notification that there had been an accident was that he received a cell phone call from the pilot. He was on the road at the time and cellular connection was inconsistent. At the same time the pilot had activated his SPOT PLB device. Someone in Colorado received the SPOT 911 call, who contacted Todd Fraiser of the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), who then contacted Mr Linnell's office. Mr Fraiser provided the GPS coordinates that were transmitted by the SPOT device. The SPOT device/system is supposed to send out email notifications to a list of people on the particular individual's SPOT account but Mr Linnell never did receive that kind of notification. Although he did verify that his contact info was included on the pilot's SPOT account. The two office staff that received the call from Mr Fraiser were Crystal Toupin (budget analyst) and Cindy Christianson (staff assistant). Mr Linnell ensured that the Highway Patrol and Sheriff were notified of the distress call. The initial coordinates provided to the Utah Highway Patrol were the last known sheep position coordinates, once they received the coordinates provided by the SPOT device those were provided to the UHP. The pilot was evacuated by the UHP helicopter and Tom Hardy was evacuated by a Lifeflight helicopter.

Later that afternoon Mr Linnell notified the ATOC - Aviation Training Operations Center (Lloyd Burraston). He stated that it would be himself or the ATOC who would be responsible for notifying the FAA and NTSB of an aviation mishap. He reviewed the mishap checklist and noted that NTSB and FAA notification were not listed as a required action. Mr Linnell stated that he would add those notifications to the checklist.

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# Record of Conversation

Wednesday, May 21, 2014  
12:06 PM

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<b>Interview:</b>	Randal Jarman
<b>Phone:</b>	██████████
<b>Location:</b>	Telephone Conversation

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## Narrative:

The following is a summary of conversation with Mr. Randal Jarman, who supervised the recovery of the helicopter.

Mr. Jarman stated that after the helicopter lifted the wreckage from the crash site and set it down on the trailer, that fuel was draining from the wreckage. The helicopter went back up to the accident site to pick up the recovery crew, and the pilot told him that fuel was leaking all over the trailer. By the time they returned to the trailer where the wreckage had been placed, all the fuel had drained out. They spent next few hours cleaning up fuel. He estimates that there may have been up to 30 gal of fuel onboard the helicopter wreckage when they moved it.

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