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AS-ERA

**Date:** 10/24/2022

**Subject:** ERA23LA011, Correspondence with FAA Inspector Marquin Israel  
(Mr. Steve Mezyniesky's Pilot Statement)

The following excerpt is derived from an email received on 10/24/2022 from Mr. Israel. The information is directly copied from an email from Mr. Steve Mezyniesky's attorney, Fred Begy (in blue, below):

Dear Inspector Israel,

I was able to have a conversation with the pilot, Mr. Steven M. Mezynieski, on Sunday October 16, 2022 at Gulf Coast Medical Center in Fort Myers, Florida. Mr. Mezynieski was under on going medical treatment during our conversation and still in the Trauma ICU unit. He was clearly suffering pain from the various injuries and emotional trauma he received during the accident sequence.

This submission is in response to your request for me to obtain the pilot's statement about the approximate 30 minute accident flight. The character of the flights on October 8th were to provide voluntary assistance to the Fire District's and Fire Department of both Fort Myers, Florida and the Fire District of Useppa Island, Florida. Mr. Mezynieski enjoys a friendship with the aircraft's front seat passenger, Mr. Rob McGilloway, who was the Chief of the Useppa Island Fire District. Mr. Mezynieski, lives on Long Island, New York and also has a home on Useppa Island. Mr. Mezynieski flew his 2021 Bell 505 from New York to Florida to voluntarily assist the community following Hurricane Ian's devastation of the local community. Mr. Mezynieski had flown his Bell 505 approximately 63 hours in the 90 days preceding the accident. He also has approximately 917 hours as a helicopter pilot with 455 hours in type. While the pilot observed debris from Hurricane Ian most everywhere during flying in the area he did not observe or experience any flying debris during the flights on the day of the accident.

Earlier on the day of the accident the Useppa Island District Fire Chief Rob asked Mr. Mezynieski if he could pick up and fly a team of FEMA employees

(2) to various places so they could install Starlink satellite internet locations to improve communications among the responders and people in the community. Various flights were made and the FEMA employees successfully installed several satellite internets which were functioning. During these flights the weather was VFR and the winds were light and variable.

Following the installation of Starlink communications on Useppa Island Chief Rob asked the pilot to fly the two FEMA employees to the Sanibel Causeway Marina. The pilot, Steven Mezynieski, stated in order for that flight to be accepted he required prior clearance from the fire rescue operations center as to where a formal safe landing site would be. The fire command center on the mainland communicated with Useppa Island Fire Chief Rob. The landing zone was set up to be Fire Station #75 helipad in Fort Myers, FL. Pilot Steve Mezynieski also requested, received and reviewed aerial photos and coordinates of the LZ which were reviewed in preparation of his flight plan.

On the accident flight the pilot estimated the occupants weights as 180 for each FEMA employee, 10 pounds for a backpack carried by one FEMA employee, 190 pounds for Fire Chief Rob, 210 pounds for the pilot and according to the fuel totalizer approximately 300 pounds of fuel on board for the 25 minute flight.

Upon take off from Useppa Island Fire District's helipad the winds were light and variable. The flight to Fire Station 75 was conducted at an altitude of approximately 500 feet MSL. As the aircraft approached the LZ at Fire Station 75 a military Chinook helicopter was taking off from another landing zone and departing the area so the pilot flew past the intended LZ at an altitude of approximately 500 feet. After flying south of the landing zone and checking for any additional departing military helicopters the pilot then flew to the LZ where an orbit was conducted at altitude of 300 to 250 feet AGL. He noticed flags near the LZ and decided to make another orbit to align better with the light wind for landing. Power was added at about 150 feet AGL and a normal go around was initiated by the pilot. Suddenly there was a bump and dip in the tail which was immediately followed by a severe and massive vibration and shaking of the helicopter as the aircraft suddenly yawed to the left in an un-commanded maneuver. During this time frame the aircraft pitched-up and rolled violently. While the pilot attempted to get the aircraft straight and level the aircraft continued to pitch up and over as the pilot continuously fought to bring the aircraft and his passengers safely to the ground. Around the time of the impact the pilot believes the aircraft moved backwards as the main rotor may have contacted a light pole.

While the pilot has considerable experience in the Bell 505 he states he has never experienced any vibration or shaking as severe or as massive as was continuously experienced during the last phase of the accident flight.

The pilot had successfully completed an Upset Recovery Course at the Bell school in Texas during May 2022.

Please advise if you require any additional information from the pilot at this time. We will also be standing by tomorrow during your investigation of the aircraft should you need to obtain information from the pilot. Further, Mr. Mezynieski will make himself available for an interview should the FAA or NTSB want to interview him in the future. Please contact me if you would like for me to arrange for an interview with the pilot.

Mr. Mezynieski stands ready to assist as you may require. We await your further advises and requests or comments.

Regards,  
Fred Begy

