

K & S Helicopters, Inc. d/b/a Paradise Helicopters
Kalo, HI
June 8, 2022
ANC22FA041

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

WASHINGTON, D.C.

SURVIVAL FACTORS SPECIALIST'S FACTUAL REPORT

ATTACHMENT 2

Passenger conversations

Pages 6

Passengers are identified based on their seating position in the helicopter as shown in figure 1. The FAA's local inspectors had initial conversations with passengers. They spoke to passengers 2 and 4 together, and passengers 3 and 5 together. Follow up conversation with passengers 3 and 5 were also conducted by the FAA. Passengers 3 and 5 also provided written statements to the FAA. All documents were provided to the NTSB. Follow up conversations with the pilot, passengers 2 and 4 were conducted by the NTSB remotely. Passenger 1 was unable to be interviewed due to her injuries. Summaries from these sources of information shared by the passengers are provided below.

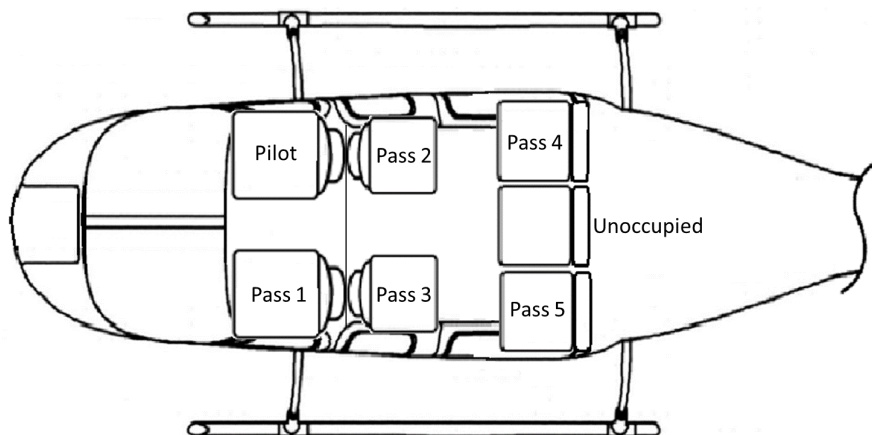


Figure 1. Diagram showing the seat position locations of N402SH.

Passenger 2

Passenger 2 was a 48-year-old male traveling with his two daughters (passengers 1 and 4) on the day of the flight. He stated they arrived about 1615 for a 1700 sunset flight. When they arrived they checked in and were weighed. He and his family were waiting for the other passengers to arrive before being briefed.

Passenger 2 reported receiving a safety brief and route overview which lasted approximately 10-15 min. They were briefed on getting into and out of the helicopter, life vests and how to don it in a water landing, door operation, seatbelt operation and headphone usage. They were provided a map/overview of the route. After this briefing, the pilot landed and came to talk with the passengers. The pilot described his experience with over 3000 hours in the helicopter type. He expressed his happiness to see passengers 3 and 5 had returned for their tour. Passenger 2 was aware that there was some sort of fuel issue at the airport from a previous day.

The passengers received life vests and then were led onto the tarmac. They were again instructed on how to get into and out of the helicopter. Then they were given an opportunity to take pictures in front of the helicopter.

The pilot and Paradise Helicopter staff then seated everyone in their designated seat location and ensured they were buckled in. Take off occurred about 1700, everything was punctual and on time.

After approximately 30 minutes, while cruising south of South Point, the pilot was pointing out some collapsed lava tubes on the right side of the helicopter. Passenger 2 noted the helicopter felt suddenly upside down, rolling towards the pilot side. He described the feeling as if they had hit something, however he does not think they actually hit anything. The roll was almost like a "barrel roll," then it flipped right side up. He knew it was something catastrophic.

Passenger 2 did not recall hearing any mayday call. He said it seemed like the helicopter had lost the entire tail piece. He noted the time from onset to crashing was quick. He was attempting to say the Lord's Prayer and was not able to complete it. He noted the helicopter was about 1500 feet or higher at the time of the accident. He also said it was not a level spin descent, but rather the helicopter was tilted on its axis. It happened so fast. During the descent passenger 2 described the motion as spinning with a slight tilt to the helicopter "like they were nose down 10-20 degrees but the spin kept that plane so the nose would be pointed down, then up, then down again as it went around."

The left side of the helicopter hit the ground. After the helicopter stopped moving, they all started asking each other if they were alright. The right cabin door had opened during the accident. Passengers 3 and 5 were able to get out of the helicopter first, followed by passenger 4. Passenger 2 then climbed out and aided passenger 4 in getting away from the helicopter. Passenger 2 had no issues opening his buckle nor did his flotation device impede his evacuation.

Passengers 2 and 3 went back to the helicopter to try and get passenger 1 out. She was conscious and screaming in pain. It appeared her head was caught between the seatback and the rock below. Her feet appeared to be tucked under her and the fuselage below her seat. They lifted wreckage off her feet so they could move her which also freed her head. The damaged cockpit structure prevented them from getting her out through the windscreen or out the pilot side. They worked on getting her out through the cabin instead. Passenger 2 found a seat belt cutter and used it to cut webbing material. He also removed sheet metal. He was able to pull her

rearwards into the cabin area and lift her up to passenger 3 who held her until passenger 2 was able to get out and help carry her away from the wreckage.

Passenger 2 noted that the pilot was still in his seat and there was no cockpit structure around him. The pilot had to be extracted and carried by passengers 2 and 3 because he could not get out and away by himself. The pilot felt like "dead weight" because he was limp. They carried him away from the helicopter but only about half the distance they had taken passenger 1 because of his weight and the pilot's pain overwhelming him. The pilot did not lose consciousness but was in shock. He would not respond to commands, and was repeating himself, apologizing, and asking if everyone was out of the helicopter. The pilot was complaining of pain in his back, shoulder, arm, and ribs.

After getting everyone away from the helicopter passengers 2 and 3 looked for a first aid kit, fire extinguisher, and a flare gun. They were able to locate the fire extinguisher and first aid kit, although he felt like the first aid kit was "severely lacking."

Passenger 5 had her phone and called 911. The call was dropped a couple times. The first helicopter on scene was a Paradise helicopter about 30 minutes later. Passenger 2 believes there were two Paradise helicopters that came out, a Hughes 500 and a Bell 407. The Hughes 500 arrived first and then departed after the 407 arrived. He believes both arrived before either of the fire department helicopters showed up. They were all lifted out of the crash site on helicopters and out to a staging area to awaiting where there were ambulances, fire engines and rescue personnel.

Passenger 3 was using the fire extinguisher on the engine until the pilot instructed him to stop and save it. Passenger 2 noted there was no indication of engine stoppage, and it could be heard throughout the sequence.

Passenger 2 self-reported minor cuts, abrasions, and bruises.

Passengers 3 and 5

Passenger 3 stated their flight was originally scheduled for Monday from 1100-1300. They had attended the safety brief and were provided a route overview. However, the flight was rescheduled to Wednesday due to a fuel valve issue, possibly due to some sediment in the fuel.

On the day of the accident the passengers received a safety brief and route overview. They were taught how to wear the life vests. The passengers noted they did

not feel rushed. They did ask if the helicopter being flown on Wednesday was the same that was broken on Monday. The impression they were provided is that it was the same helicopter.

On the day of the accident, the helicopter arrived at the airport after another tour and the pilot did a quick switch out. Passenger 3 saw the pilot conduct a walk around, and then come over to brief the passengers. The pilot seemed personable, and nothing unusual was noted in his demeanor.

The air tour started with the helicopter flying south. While they were at cruise altitude, passenger 3 noted that the helicopter started a sideways spin and the pilot initially regained control. Passenger 5 said she saw something fly off the helicopter but could not describe it. She believed it looked white.

The helicopter continued to spin while falling onto the lava field. Both passengers mentioned the helicopter felt like it was leaning a bit or rolling as it spun. Neither passenger could see the pilot. Neither passenger recalled hearing any unusual sounds or alarms. Neither passenger saw any birds and both passengers stated that the helicopter was operated clear of the clouds. The passengers were able to see the ground the entire flight.

After the accident, passenger 3 noted that passenger 1 was trapped and unconscious. He assumed she had been killed since her head was trapped between the fuselage and the ground. Both passengers 3 and 5 were conscious throughout the sequence and they helped other passengers get out and clear of the helicopter.

Passenger 3 assisted passenger 2 in freeing passenger 1 from the wreckage. They had to lift some of the wreckage to pull her free. After that, he moved her to safety. Of note, his shoes had been lost during the sequence and he was walking on lava rock carrying her to safety without foot protection which resulted in lacerations to his feet.

Passenger 5 then began to provide first aid to passenger 1, eventually applying a tourniquet to her leg to stop the bleeding.

Passenger 3 returned to the helicopter and noted it was smoking. He grabbed the fire extinguisher to put out any fires. At this point he rescued the pilot who was also still trapped. Once the pilot was recovered, the passengers noted that he seemed to have had a head injury as he was being repetitive in his speech. After 911 was called it took about 20 minutes for help to arrive.

Passengers self-reported injuries are:

Passenger 3: Laceration to head and feet.

Passenger 5: Two fractured vertebrae.

Passenger 4

Passenger 4 was a 19-year-old female traveling with her father (passenger 2) and sister (passenger 1) on the flight. The day of the flight, Paradise helicopters picked them up from their resort, in a vehicle, and transported them to the airport. Paradise had each of them step onto a scale to gather weights. After the other passengers had arrived, they were taken into the safety briefing room by a Paradise employee. They introduced themselves to the other passengers (3 and 5) who were originally scheduled for a previous day's flight, however it had to be cancelled due to maintenance issues.

During the briefing, the passengers were told how to get into and exit the helicopter, and how to use the headphones. She estimated the briefing took about 15 minutes. Towards the end of that briefing they saw the pilot land the helicopter they would be flying in.

The pilot came in and was glad to see passengers 3 and 5 return after their cancelled flight. He explained there had been fueling issues and that was the cause of the cancellation. The pilot then pulled out a map and showed the route he planned on taking. The passengers were then taken to the patio and life vests were put around their waists, before proceeding out to the helicopter.

They took photos out by the helicopter, and then were placed into the helicopter based on their weight. They buckled their seatbelts and put on their headphones.

Passenger 4 described the take off as normal, with conversation between the pilot and passengers. After about 30 minutes of flight, they were almost to the southernmost point when out of nowhere the helicopter turned upside down 180-degrees. It felt like the pilot was able to get it stable for a second then they started "plummeting/ spinning to earth." The descent was quick, with passenger 4 estimating it taking 15 seconds.

Once they had impacted the ground, passenger 3 quickly got out of the helicopter and helped passenger 4 and 5 out. Passenger 2 had unbuckled himself but was standing in the helicopter attempting to help passenger 1. Passenger 1 was trapped in the helicopter with her seatbelt still around her. Passengers 2 and 3 attempted to lift the helicopter off passenger 1. Passenger 2 was able to locate a

seatbelt cutter amongst the debris and cut the restraints. He then lifted passenger 1 out of the helicopter and passed her to passenger 3. Once outside of the helicopter passengers 2 and 3 carried passenger 1 away in case the helicopter caught fire.

After they were away passenger 4 and 5 started calling 911, while passengers 2 and 3 helped the pilot out of the helicopter. They saw smoking from the helicopter and passenger 3 found a fire extinguisher and sprayed on the fuselage. Passenger 4 estimates that it took 30 minutes from the time they called 911 till they arrived.

Passenger 4 self-reported she sustained minor cuts, abrasions and bruises with low back muscle strain.