



Record of Conversation

Fabian Salazar
Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Investigator in Charge

NTSB Accident Number: WPR22LA125
Aircraft Registration & Make/Model: N950SG / Eurocopter AS332L1
Accident Location: Azusa, CA.
Accident Date: March 19, 2022
Person contacted: Kamal Ahmad, Crew Chief (CC)

In a telephone interview with the CC, he stated that they got a call about people trapped in a vehicle after an accident. He said they arrived and fire [LA County Fire Department] was already on scene. He confirmed that they were going to be used to transport a patient who had met trauma criteria.

He said they were looking for a place to land, and they originally were going to use a roadway that had ample blade clearance, but cars were coming from the south and filled up the area. He communicated with the officers on the ground who stated it would be difficult to clear them all. They agreed to look for an alternate spot.

The CC stated that Scotty (the PIC) recommended the turnout. The CC looked at the site and he thought that it didn't look out of the ordinary from any place they had landed at before. The CC called out a "stinger" [tree] and the PIC acknowledged it. He said that they did a few orbits to assess the landing area. The CC stated that the PIC said that he was going to stay close to the roadway in case they get into some brownout. The CC stated that he thought the PIC was ready for a brown out situation. The CC stated that they started the approach and were kind of coming in a sideways angle facing the south toward the tree. He said the dirt wasn't too bad and about 7 to 10 feet above the ground. He still had visibility and was in the process of clearing the rotors and the tail. He said that they called those out (rotors and tail clear). He looked out toward the ground and noticed that they were drifting forward. He said, "Scotty you're drifting forward, hold." He said that they were continuing to move so he said it again, "Scotty you're drifting forward, hold, I need you to hold right here." He said that they continued to drift, and he called out the tree at 12 O'clock. He said that it felt like they climbed a little bit, and that he could clearly see the blades moving toward the trees, then everything happened right after that.

He said that he was flung from the helicopter but yanked back by his tether. He ended up outside of the helicopter near the exhaust.

He said that his area of responsibility was the right side and the tail, and that the angle the PIC took in was a good angle because it put most of the tail over the roadway.



Record of Conversation

Fabian Salazar
Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Investigator in Charge

NTSB Accident Number: WPR22LA125
Aircraft Registration & Make/Model: N950SG / Eurocopter AS332L1
Accident Location: Azusa, CA.
Accident Date: March 19, 2022
Person contacted: Russell S. Helbin, Pilot in Command (PIC)

In a telephone interview with the PIC, he stated that the had just recovered the helicopter from a previous mission and were about to fuel the helicopter. They had plenty of fuel for the accident mission, so they didn't take on additional fuel.

They flew to Azusa canyon about mile marker 22 or 26. They circled the area and saw the County Fire had an engine and a squad on scene. He said that it was going to be a transfer of care and transport to the hospital.

He said that they were looking for a place to land nearby, "like they usually do." One area they wanted to land at quickly filled up with cars. They saw the turn out and he recalled that he had landed there before during the previous years.

They selected the turn out and knew that they would brownout due to the dirt in the turnout. They saw the road adjacent to the turn out and used it for a reference. They started the approach, and the PIC called out that he still had visual reference to the road. While about 5 feet above the ground, he heard one of the crew in the back call "hold." The crew chief didn't elaborate, he just said "hold." The PIC placed the helicopter into a hover. He lost all reference and announced that he, "lost visual." He then stated, "pulling up" or "climbing" (one of the two), with the intend of pulling straight up to get out of the dust. He stated that that was the last thing he remembered until he woke up in the cockpit.

The PIC stated that he was in the right pilot's seat, and on the controls. The second in command was in the left pilot's seat. He said that when he woke up in the cockpit, he was extremely confused because he wasn't where he was supposed to be. He was not in his seat. He was on top

of the second in command. He found out later that both brackets to his seat belt broke. He said that he was 6' 2" and weighed about 265 pounds. He did not recall if the operators manual had a weight limit for the seats.

When asked about the crew members he stated that there were three crewmembers in the back. The crew chief was Sgt Kamal Ahmad. He said that the available crew chiefs rotate into that duty, and Kamal just happened to be crew chief that day. When the PIC spoke with the crew chief after the accident, the crew chief agreed that he should have elaborated as to why he said hold. The PIC stated that the crew chief still had visual references and observed the helicopter still moving forward, and that was why he called hold.

The PIC recalled that the tree was about the 10 O'clock position from the helicopter.

When asked about their annual training and confined area landings, and brown outs landings, he stated that it's pretty much just OJT [on the job training], and that they do this stuff quite frequently because all of the rescues are in the Angeles mountains. He stated that they do communicate while landing so that the other pilot can take the controls if the pilot landing browns out.

Th epic stated that SGT Kamal had just returned from a period of having not flown due to a knee surgery and was a little rusty with his commands.

The PIC stated that they also discussed the option they had of landing to a known helispot about 1.5 miles down the road, and waiting for a ground ambulance to transport the patient to he helicopter.

The PIC stated that there were no mechanical failures or anomalies with the helicopter that would have precluded normal operations.

He stated that the lap belts really did a number on him and described heavy bruising on his lower body. He also stated that his head hit the upper console, and the helmet protected his head.



Record of Conversation

Fabian Salazar
Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Investigator in Charge

NTSB Accident Number: WPR22LA125
Aircraft Registration & Make/Model: N950SG / Eurocopter AS332L1
Accident Location: Azusa, CA.
Accident Date: March 19, 2022
Person contacted: Bryan Marr (Pilot)

In a telephone interview with the pilot, he stated that he remembered the beginning of the day. He stated that he was flying in the morning, and they were preparing for his upcoming check ride. He stated that he did some maneuvering flight, then flew an ILS into Long Beach Airport while under the hood and while IMC. They then switched seats and flew some passengers for a short flight around downtown LA. When they returned, Mr. Morris stated to the other pilot that he would stay in the left seat for the rest of the day. He stated that they were at the pad (helipad) and that is where he lost recollection of what else happened.

He stated that he did recall of being in brownout. While in the brownout, he could not see a thing. He said the words "dust" and "brown out" appear in his head. He also detected that they were moving forward. He didn't have visibility, but he felt they were going forward. He said the words "moving", "moving forward" and "hold" pop into his thoughts at that time. He said the entire helicopter did a massive jolt, as if the main rotor blades hit something. He said that his memory then doesn't start back until 30 hours later when he was in the hospital.