June 12, 2014

Scott Cannon
Cannon Aviation
[redacted]
Georgetown, TX 78628

Re: AS-350 B3 Anchorage, Alaska

Dear Mr. Cannon:

The following is a narrative from Lester Hathcox concerning the events concerning the AS-350 B3 in Anchorage Alaska on June 11, 2014.

Lester Hathcox Statement:

On June 11, 2014, at approximately 10:00 am Alaska time, I met with Mickey, the owner of the aircraft AStar (AS 350 B3) possible tail number N3506EV, and his brother Ricky.

I carefully reviewed the flight plan Mickey's brother Ricky had done. I made sure the legs of the flight plan could be accomplished and have enough fuel to reach the airport of intended landing and to fly for at least another 20 to 30 minutes. The flight plan was acceptable.

I went out to the aircraft and did a pre-flight inspection noting damage to the helicopter as follows: passenger rear side looked like someone had left a seat belt hanging out; passenger front door wrinkles in it; and several dents toward the nose of the passenger side.

I began to ask questions about the maintenance of the aircraft and discovered that it was 29 hours away from several inspections. I informed Mickey that if we took the trip back to Texas, we would have to stop for inspections to be done or possibly a ferry permit would have to be requested from the FAA.

Mickey, Ricky and I got in the helicopter and I attempted to start it. I followed the flight manual starting procedure: brake off, full forward position, emergency fuel full forward and guard in place, starter selector switch off, collective in the full down locked position, battery on, checked the throttle, rotated the throttle to flight VOL position then back to idle position for starting.

In compliance with the aircraft flight manual start checklist, all procedures were carefully followed however, the helicopter would not start and after 3 attempts the mechanic from Erickson was called to come over to the helicopter. I told Mickey that I thought something was wrong with the fadec system because the helicopter should have started.

When the mechanic came I told him that something was wrong with the fadec system. The mechanic checked the fadec switches, manual fadec switch and the override switch on the twist grip and on the console. He told us "Sometimes the fadec system hangs up and by moving the starter selector back and forth it will work." He further said to us "You can move the manual start switch to manual and start it that way." I responded to him by saying "No, that is not recommended by POH."

The mechanic left the fadec override switch in manual and the fadec position switch in manual. I, in accordance with the checklist, then moved both switches to the Auto position as per the checklist. Another start attempt was made but the aircraft did not start.

At that point, another Erickson's mechanic came to the aircraft and moved the throttle back and forth and said "Sometimes the throttle hangs up." I advised him "Don't move the throttle like that without the battery on; you can damage the throttle micro switch."

Then, the mechanic allegedly called a pilot who instructed him to tell me that he had to increase the throttle just a little bit to start. As per the pilot's instruction from the mechanic, I very slightly moved the throttle from the Idle position well below the VOL position and again attempted a start. The helicopter started to flight Idle and Mickey got his seat belt on.

I saw that the twist grip light was lit to ON and I moved the overhead start fedec switch from Start to Flight and closed the guard. I told Mickey as per checklist that the twist grip light must be OFF before flight but it did not extinguish.

As the Erickson pilot had said that they should slightly increase the throttle to get the light to go out as well, so I instructed Mickey to move the throttle very very slightly because the Light must be out before flight as per procedure. I watched as Mickey started to increase the throttle to make sure he did not pass VOL position and into the emergency override position.

So Mickey very gently eased the throttle up, well below the VOL position, while I paid complete attention to be sure that the throttle did not go to the VOL position. Immediately just as Mickey touched the throttle, the helicopter started to over speed and the engine over sped making no attempt for the fadec to control or capture it, and the aircraft started turning violently.

At which time, I immediately took control, pushed the left pedal and rolled the throttle to IDLE

shut off while the helicopter had turned at least 180 degrees. I completed the shut down procedure and confirmed everyone was uninjured.

Both Mickey and Ricky told me I did a good job getting the helicopter stopped and that I did nothing incorrect nor did I deviate from the POH start checklist. We all agreed that the fadec system failed or the turbine governor failed.

We then called Erickson mechanics to come and inspect the aircraft.

End Lester Hathcox Statement [redacted]

It is noteworthy that:

1. No Erickson pilot met us to do an acceptance test flight.
2. No information or briefing was provided as to problems or quirks about this aircraft from Erickson maintenance personnel.
3. As Lester audited the logbooks, many inspections were due with only 29 hours remaining which would not give us enough time to reach our intended destination which was known to Erickson.
4. No representative briefed us on helicopter squawks, recent maintenance work, and other anomalies.
5. Before the above occurred, Lester asked for the flight logbook, and the maintenance logbook, and a statement from the pilot and mechanic regarding the maintenance and flight history or discrepancies within the last 90 days. He was provided a 3-4 page metal logbook for flights and approximately 3-4 pages of the maintenance logbook, where Lester found the discrepancy showing that the helicopter had 29 hours remaining before the helicopter was supposed to go into maintenance. Several components had only 29 hours left in them as well such as the tail rotor dry shaft and parts of the engine. Lester asked if there were any other problems with the aircraft and was told that there was not any other problems.
6. All procedures as per Eurocopter AS 350 B3 were precisely followed.
7. It appears that there was a fadec failure or problem with the twist grip which had to have been previously known but not disclosed. Otherwise, the Erickson pilot would not have known to advise Lester to move throttle back and forth to start. Also the Erickson mechanic would not have known to tell him that the fadec system was known to hang up and that if he moved the start switch back and forth, it might start.
8. Erickson's failure to disclose this information placed Lester and the owner and his brother in a potentially very dangerous position and putting Lunsford Air at risk and which could have resulted in great bodily harm but for Lester's quick actions to recover control of the aircraft.

To clarify, Lester's role was simply to accompany the owner on the ferry flight and instruct the owner on flight of this aircraft. Lester has at least 25 years of experience with the AStar series of aricraft. Neither he nor Lunsford Air were involved in any way in pre-purchase inspection of aircraft, but solely performed a required pre-flight as per the manual.

Thank you for your time and attention on this matter and please feel free to contact me at any time with any questions.

Respectfully,

Scott W Lunsford
CEO/President

[redacted] Palm Coast, FL 32164 • [redacted]