

# Record of Conversation

Tuesday, February 09, 2016 2:00 PM

---

<b>Interview:</b>	Mark Schmidt
<b>Phone:</b>	██████████
<b>Location:</b>	Telephone Conversation

---

## Narrative:

The following is a summary of conversation with Mr Mark Schmidt, who was the pilot of Blue Hawaiian, N11VQ.

Mr Schmidt said that after a inspection by a Air Tour Operator's professional organization last year, Blue Hawaiian Helicopters (BHH) take extra care and effort to ensure no bags or items are stored under the seats. The passengers are only allowed to bring a water bottle and camera, no bags or other bulky items.

He said that the 'upper microwave' that he referred to in his statement was a set of radio towers by Makaha Point. At this location he was heading north off of the coast and smelled fuel odor. He was not too concerned because the smell of fuel is a pretty common occurrence, but thought the passengers might ask him about the smell. This was about 4 minutes before the loss of engine power.

The wind was light, almost calm, and northerly in direction.

Mr Schmidt stated that he had not remembered a coughing spasm before the loss of engine power until one of the passengers had mentioned it. He said that the helicopter air conditioning tends to dry out his throat, combined with the amount of talking required during the tour sometimes makes him cough. He did not have a cold or upper respiratory problem, and he usually takes a drink of water to help clear his throat.

Mr Schmidt said that he heard the low rotor rpm alarm and knew he had lost his engine. He entered an autorotation and turned right about 30 degrees to intercept the beach. The off shore waves were huge and he didn't believe landing in the water would be survivable. He realized his momentum was going to place him into a rock field. He lost sight of his landing area, which was on his right side and being blocked by the passengers sitting on his right. During his descent he had gotten a high rotor warning. He made a flat right turn to align with the beach and his desired landing area, at which point he got a low rotor warning, about 100 feet he pitched the nose over, then about 10-15 feet above the beach he pulled in collective to cushion the landing. The helicopter landed hard, bounced and turned to the right, then came to rest. The woman passenger sitting to his immediate right had her legs straight out and head straight up during the landing. He shut the battery off and everyone evacuated the helicopter except the middle front passenger who was in a lot of pain. Since there was no sign of fire, he told the passenger to stay in the seat until help arrived. There was a doctor and an EMT there on the beach that assisted them first and it was about 45 minutes until the rescue helicopter arrived. The paramedic then moved the passenger from the helicopter.

During the landing Mr Schmidt said that he felt a pain in his back, bruised his right leg on the center console, and because of his seat stroking down, his chin hit the cyclic.

At the time of the loss of engine power he had the right side camera selected, since the scenery was on the right side of the helicopter. The cameras are normally recording continuously, and he as the pilot can select which camera is being recorded. However, he does know that when the recording system has a sudden loss of power, often the recording is lost.

Van S. McKenny IV  
Sr Aviation Accident Investigator  
Western Pacific Region