

August 26th, 2020

Glen Phillips, Air Attack



Glen was about an hour into his Air Attack cycle when he ordered a Type 1 helicopter, the helibase sent him N314. Glen was working with him for the majority of 314's fuel cycle and 314 stated he was going to have to get fuel after one more bucket. After about 15 minutes, Glen stated his "clock in his head" was going off after not talking with 314 and possibly thought he went back to helibase for fuel. He requested Dispatch to check their status after he was unable to raise him on the radio. Dispatch told him that AFF was "RED" on the screen. Glen started to fly to the dipsite 314 had used for the past several days. He noticed the bucket first and then saw the black helicopter had crashed in the dipsite. He ordered the light helicopter to divert from their operational recon. The light was able to find the wreckage and found the pilot unresponsive. There were no radio calls or "MAYDAY" calls received.

Other notable comments:

- Air Attack told the National Guard to remove the body.
- The day was generally windy but no direct conversations with pilots about that dipsite being too windy or concerning.
- Crash is in the middle of the river. The fire had burned the north side of the slope, but not the south.

Daily Diary – Aviation

Bob Nichols, HMGB (T)

Aircraft – HB314 - Central Copters Inc.

5/23/20

- Mobilized from Umpqua SO, 0800-0900 concur travel, obtained rental vehicle, covid supplies, RO, food, water. Travelled to Hood River Airport, arrived at 1330.
- Was instructed that distance to fire was too great a distance for logistical support, get hotel, per diem for food, got hotel at BW Hood River for days that met gov rate, will have to find alt for non gov rate days (weekends).
- Tied in with HMGB McGrath, got briefing on aircraft, safety, airport etc.
- Called Columbia Dispatch and virtually checked in.
- McGrath let Helibase Mgr (T) (lance know I was here, arranged for a meet and greet)
- Introduced me to flight crew – Tom (pilot) Bob (fuel truck driver) Galen (crew chief)
- Flew 2 missions to Div Mike, left 2000, Hotel by 2015
- 0800-2015 with 30 min lunch

5/24/20

- Briefing 0830, plan for same numbers for load calcs today as yesterday 4,000/25C
- Air attack up at 1000, will plan for lots of use on T1's today, rumor is one of the 2 t1s will be demobed in the next few days.
- Crash Plan development in progress, forecast for windy conditions today, Scattered Tstorms at adjacent zones, Lance will remain helibase mg T for another couple days.
- 0700-

Major Events

- 1045 – PIC Tom gave me his load calc for the day, I checked it, he used 8 lbs per gallon of fuel. Checked that he used 25 deg at 4000 as instructed by base manager. I signed for Chris as he was in meetings in the Box.
- 1100 got call from box, first mission of day, didn't bother Tom for Hobbs, using the ending time from last night. Bucket work in Div Mike, Ground contact Meduin (T) same as yesterday. Spooled at 1110, 2 hrs 30 min fuel, pos AFF.
- 1314, landed for a hot fuel and return, same location, fire and ground contact will get hobbs at end of day or at next cycle shutdown. Lifted at 1329, 2 hrs 30 min fuel, pos AFF confirmed by Columbia.
- 1520- Requested for return, same place. Shut down AC for pilot break as it was the 2nd cycle. I need gasoline in my truck and ice so my food doesn't go bad. Chris was on the pad with 314, I went to store for gas/ice.
- 1610-1615 aircraft left for mission according to Chris.

Info below is transcribed from my notebook. The emergency nature of the incident precluded the use of the PC for documentation. This chronology also includes my recollections that fill in between the bullets of my hand written notes. I ran a chronology of events during the incident and wrote them down in real time to help track what happened and when they occurred.

- 1815, I was in my truck at pad 6 and got a phone call from Chris. He said something like quick, talk to Jeremy and see if he can raise 314 on their tracking system, the helibase and Air Attack cant reach him and he is not up on AFF. My notes say Columbia/Air attack cant raise them but I think it was Air Attack and the Box, not Columbia Dispatch that couldn't reach them.
- I was parked about 15 feet from the company trailer, got there in a few seconds, Jeremy was on the phone with Chris, I asked Jeremy if he could reach the AC, he said no. Jeremy said he and Bob were going to the box. I called Chris and said I would stay at the pad in case 314 was coming back to the pad (I was thinking in case he had some electronic issue and couldn't use the radios, I would remain).
- About 1818, Chris called me and said come to the box, 314 is in the river. I left and headed to the box, most of the helibase personnel were present except maybe George from zero whiskey hotel, I think OWH was out doing a Ops recon and then a look at the crash site to see if they could access the aircraft to assist in the rescue.
- Somewhere around here in the progression Columbia dispatch called out the "clear the radio for emergency traffic" notice.
- At 1830 Air Attack ? called helibase and reported the coordinates of the site, someone walked on them so all we got 45 10.195, they repeated and got 121 32.9196.
- My notes are somewhat confusing about the progression of the Lat/Long but next I wrote down 45 10.195 then 122 32.9196 then finally 45 1.195, 121 32 1916 with a time of 1850 for the revision.
- 1859 Madras MedEvac AC on scene.
- 1912 OWH arrived back at helibase.
- About 1940 Jeannie Belozier R6 RASM told the group assembled at the box that Tom didn't survive the crash.

2200 hrs I wrote down observations about Tom's demeanor during the morning while we were waiting for an assignment

- He appeared to be calm, relaxed but attentive and self assured.
- He was one of the rare pilots who projected confidence without arrogance. He was a nice person who would listen to you, friendly and outgoing. It was an honor to meet him, I wish I knew him longer than a day and a half.

Charlie Fabris, Helibase Manager (HEBM)	Lance Jorg, Helibase Manager Trainee
Sisykou Rappellers, Lead Rappeller	Mt Hood Engine Boss

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The helibase was struggling the days prior to the accident to staff the standard positions appropriately. On the 23rd and morning of the 24th, the helibase began to receive the support and fill open positions to run a more efficient helibase. The plan was for the helibase to take over the flight following from Columbia Dispatch on the 25th now that resources were available to handle the workload.

Helibase received a message from Air Attack to have a Type 1 helicopter over the fire for support throughout the entire day. N314 and the Skycrane N178AC had been switching cycles earlier on the 24th to address that request. Helibase overheard Air Attack ask Dispatch about the status of 314. Air Attack continues trying to raise 314 on the radio at 1810. Lance talks to dispatch about the status of 314 at 1812. Lance gets Charlie, helibase manager, and Chris, 314's Helicopter Manager, about 314 being "RED" on AFF at 1812. Charlie and Lance discuss the situation with Christy, the Mt. Hood Forest Aviation Officer. She states to make sure they run the information through the Chain of Command and Lance calls the Incident Management Team's Air Support Group Supervisor. Charlie calls Dispatch to ensure Dispatch is activating the Mishap Response Plan at 1819. Resources are being requested for a "helicopter down in the water." Light helicopter OMH diverts from recon mission to evaluate crash scene. They report aircraft down and pilot unresponsive to Air Attack. At 1854 the helicopter's support trucks are "secured." National Guard is on scene and confirms the pilot is deceased.

Other Comments;

- Having the Regional Aviation Safety Manager show up in the middle of the incident was "heaven sent."
- Both managers stated that they thought the ordering and response was streamlined and organized.
- Overall good communications in a hectic situation.
- Having the National Guard nearby and with NVGs was lucky.

August 26th, 2020

Jeremy Nichols, Mechanic

Brian Geary, DOM

I initiated the interview with Jeremy Nichols, the mechanic, after a lengthy delay. Jeremy stated that no aircraft issues had been reported by the pilot. Brian Geary, the DOM, joined the interview and informed me he was designated party to the investigation by the NTSB. I asked when the last major inspection was complete. Brian stated the last major inspection was the annual, Zone 1-4, and it was completed in February and the aircraft had since flown approximately 100 hours. At this time, I requested all aircraft paperwork from Brian to include flight logs, maintenance logs, status sheets, AD's, SB's with the compliance logs. Brian said he would give me what he gave the FAA. I asked Jeremy what his work schedule looked like while assigned to this fire. As Jeremy was about to answer, Brian interrupted and said he had to shut down the interview on the direction of the NTSB. After another delay, I went to resume the interview, but both Brian and Jeremy had left the area. Later that day I saw Jeremy pulling into the ICP where he was to recover the fuel truck to get it on the road going home. He was busy so I again requested the aircraft documentation and to resume the interview when he had time. He wrote down all the information that I requested and continued to recover the fuel truck. The next day, Aug 27th, Brian emailed me pictures of some documents, but the quality was so poor that I could not read most of them. I emailed Brian to request better quality documents and to include all AD's, SB's and compliance logs. I have not received any further documentation and no further interviews took place.

Other notable comments:

- Safecom filed for bucket issue on August 2nd.
- Chip light illuminated with associated strange odor. No sign of metal on detector and odor was determined to be dust on the caution capsule lamp that was hot. (Bob, Helicopter Manager (T))
- Pilot requested a longer line which showed up the next day at the hotel. (Chris, Helicopter Manager)
- Jeremy, the mechanic, had worked for Central Helicopters for 13 years with a 4 year absence somewhere in the middle. It does not appear that he has attended the Kaman maintenance course.

Chris McGrath, Helicopter Manager (HMGB) of N314	Bob Nichols, HMGB Trainee
Forestry Tech and Timber Prep	Forest Fish Program Manager
Umpqua National Forest	Umpqua National Forest

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Chris reported that Tom had been there for a few days prior and had been working in that location for multiple days and earlier that day for over 40 buckets of water to support the fire. The manager was called over to the box once the helibase manager was notified that 314 was "RED" on AFF. Chris called Bob, his manager trainee, to get with Jeremy, the mechanic, to have him pull up the company's flight tracking application. The application also showed that the helicopter had "Lost Contact." Approximately 10 minutes later, Chris is informed that the helicopter is in the water through the radio through Air Attack and later the pilot was confirmed deceased from National Guard.

Other Comments:

- N314 was hired under Call-When-Needed (CWN) contract on July 27, 2020.
- The pilot, Tom, was on day 5 of 12.
- Aircraft flew 9.8 hours over the weekend (August 22-23, 2020)
- Power check was needed 5184.0 hours. Manager felt poorly because he did not mention that Tom needed to perform a power check before he left for the fuel cycle when he crashed.
- Chris told Dean and I that he asked Jeremy on the morning of the 24th that he wanted a longer longline. The pilot was flying a 150-foot longline. The company shipped one to the hotel and it arrived the day after the accident.
- Both managers mentioned that the pilot was calm and cool and no issues with him or how he was performing.
- N314 had 2 Safecomms filed earlier this year-(1) accidental dropped bucket and longline and (2) Chip light.