

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Office of Aviation Safety
Washington, D.C. 20594

November 10, 2020

Witness Statements

Factual Report
By Adam M. Gerhardt

1. EVENT DETAILS

Location: Pylesville, MD
Date: April 25, 2020
Aircraft: Hughes 369D
Registration: N9159F
Operator: Haverfield Aviation
NTSB Number: ERA20LA160

2. SUMMARY

On April 25, 2020, at 1240 eastern daylight time, a Hughes 369D helicopter, N9159F, was substantially damaged when it was involved in an accident near Pylesville, Maryland. The pilot was not injured. The helicopter was operated by Haverfield Aviation as a Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 133 rotorcraft external load operation.

3. DETAILS OF THIS REPORT

Several witness statements from ground personnel who witnessed the accident were provided by Haverfield Aviation. This report combines those statements and their contents have not been edited.

3.1. Witness Statements

3.1.1. Statement 1

Tyler Bernasconi
April 25, 2020

Haverfield team was in the process of unclipping and transferring top phase to middle phase with crane/ladder team, top phase was Unclipped by ladder team, crane came in and positioned to wire lip by ladder team once ladder was removed from str crane proceeded to move wire from top down to middle phase but was having problems getting past the middle arm helicopter hooked up wire lip to phase to help get past middle arm in the process the helicopter picked the wire enough to make the crane wire lip go limp for a spilt sec once that happened the helicopter lost power in the descend it

landed on its skids but due to the HEC line being attached to the wire lip on top phase still the rope flipped the helicopter on to its side and pulled him from the field to the str stopping on the mats haverfield personnel proceeded with haverfield accident protocol once I reached the accident pilot was pulled out of helicopter and doing alright from there emergency personnel showed up and took over

TBernasconi

3.1.2. Statement 2

Zack Drake
~~was wire undipping the top phase lowering~~
~~it down~~

Ladder landed on the Top phase Arm with 2 Lineman. Lineman unclipped Top Phase. Set The crane up so we could pull the Phase out around the Arms. The crane boomed up and Hooked to the wire. Lineman let off on the Hoist until the crane had the load. ~~the~~ Lineman were pulled off the str and brought to the ground. The crane operator brought the wire out and down until it was about 6 inches from clearing the Arm. Pilot Attached Lip to the Bottom of the Hec Line and Hooked to the wire to help pull the wire out another 6 inches. The crane was boomed all the way up. As the Hec started putting force on the line the Aircraft Flamed out and started falling to the ground. The Rope was still Attached to the wire. As the Hec got close to the ground the rope got tight and the Aircraft landed on the Pilot Side.

3.1.3. Statement 3

On 4-25-20 at approximately 12:30 am I Marc Crider was operating the crane at Structure #2989. Our task for the day was to unclip structure #2989 top + middle phase + transfer top phase to the middle arm. We had hung a ladder with two linemen on the middle arm to unclip the conductor, once that was completed they were then moved to the top arm to do the same. The top conductor was unclipped with a hoist. Once unclipped I positioned the crane boom where they transferred the load of the conductor to the wire lip on the crane hook. The crane had the load of the wire and the linemen were then HEC'D to the ground so the wire could be moved to the end of the arm. As I proceeded to winch off + boom back in order to get the wire around the arm, once the wire approached the end of the arm the crane beam reach its limits on booming back. I then started to retract my boom + winch up in hopes it would clear the arm. It looked as if the wire was around 1/2 a foot from going around the arm. We then communicated over the radio that we would utilize the helicopter to help the wire over the arm. Once the pilot was hooked up to the conductor, he proceeded to help the wire around the arm. Once the wire cleared the arm, I then started

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to winch down with the crane. As the wire cleared the arm I noticed the rope become slack. I looked out the left side of the crane + saw the helicopter shut down then hover auto to the ground. As he neared the ground the rope ran out of slack which turned the helicopter on its side.

3.1.4. Statement 4

Marc Paulin

At 12:45 PM I was in the
Bucket at str 2990 with
Hunter. we were about to
install a hoist on the middle
Phase when we heard the
Helicopter working at str
2989 get quite as we
turned to look Andrew
was performing a hover auto
and was about 50 feet in
the air. He got to about
3 feet from ground when the
long line got tight and started
to tip the aircraft over.
It tipped on its side and
was dragged to the str.
Andrew shut everything off
and ~~proceeded~~ proceeded to exit
the air craft.

3.1.5. Statement 5

4-25-20 Brice Barrett

Between 12:40 + 12:45 pm. crew as Reposition the to phase to the middle @ STR 2989. using the crane. During the Reposition the crane did not have enough boom back to clear the middle arm. The crane locked approximately 6 inches from clearing the middle arm so the crane could cable off to finish the Reposition to the middle. At that time I heard the pilot say on the radio he would use his long line + a wire lip to help pull the wire out to clear the arm. The pilot hooked himself to the wire + started pulling on the wire. Pilot got the wire to clear the arm + then crane slowly cabled down past the middle arm. At that time I heard the Helicopter engine stop. I looked up + watched come to the ground. Right before he hit the ground the long line made contact with the rotor + caused the Helicopter to Roll on its side + crash. I was standing on the crane deck when this happened. Once the Helicopter crashed I jumped off the crane + ran up to help get the pilot out. (I was first to arrive to him). The pilot stated to me he was alright was able to help himself out. At that time 911 was notified + Haverfield safety.

3.1.6. Statement 6

On April 25th 2020 around 1315 I witnessed the helicopter crash. 10 minutes before Andrew took off I had just finished fueling 20 gallons into his helicopter. I then was in the LZ while the crane was trying to pull the wire with a wire lip around the tower arm and lower it to the middle phase, but the wire got caught on a welded tap on top of the arm. Andrew than assisted in pulling on top phase with a wire lip to pick the wire up and over the weld and the end of the arm. Than the helicopter shut off and quickly headed towards the ground still attached to the HEC line and wire. Once blades stopped spinning I ran and grabbed our AED while others ran to Andrew with a fire extinguisher. Throttle fuel and battery were all off and nobody was injured.

Anthony Ferro 4/25/2020