



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Silver City, New Mexico	Accident Number:	WPR21LA027
Date & Time:	October 26, 2020, 23:37 Local	Registration:	N530H
Aircraft:	AMERICAN EUROCOPTER AS350B3	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Collision during takeoff/land	Injuries:	1 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Positioning		

Analysis

The pilot reported that the purpose of the flight was to relocate the helicopter to a hangar at a nearby airport before a winter storm impacted the area. The pilot took off in moderate visual meteorological conditions and moderate rain; but as the helicopter neared the airport, the precipitation turned from rain to snow. The pilot turned final about 1 mile north of the airport when the precipitation increased, and the visibility reduced. The helicopter impacted terrain about 200 yards north of the runway surface in a mostly level attitude before it rolled onto its left side. The fuselage was substantially damaged. The pilot reported that there were no preaccident no mechanical failures or malfunctions with the helicopter that would have precluded normal operation.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:

The pilot’s failure to maintain sufficient altitude above terrain while operating in reduced visibility due to snow showers.

Findings

Personnel issues	Decision making/judgment - Pilot
Aircraft	Altitude - Not attained/maintained
Environmental issues	Snow - Effect on operation

Factual Information

History of Flight

Approach-VFR pattern final	Other weather encounter
Approach-VFR pattern final	Collision during takeoff/land (Defining event)

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Flight instructor	Age:	53, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	4-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Helicopter	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Helicopter; Instrument helicopter	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Class 2 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	July 13, 2020
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	May 16, 2020
Flight Time:	4200 hours (Total, all aircraft), 1956 hours (Total, this make and model), 4100 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 68 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 19 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	AMERICAN EUROCOPTER	Registration:	N530H
Model/Series:	AS350B3	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:	2008	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	4553
Landing Gear Type:	High skid	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	October 26, 2020 AAIP	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	5225 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	175 Hrs	Engines:	1 Turbo shaft
Airframe Total Time:	7706 Hrs at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	Turbomeca
ELT:	C126 installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	Arriel 2B1
Registered Owner:	AIR METHODS CORP	Rated Power:	847 Horsepower
Operator:	AIR METHODS CORP	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	On-demand air taxi (135)

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Night
Observation Facility, Elevation:	SVC,5446 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	8 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	23:37 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	160°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	7 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 1300 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	9 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	None / None
Wind Direction:	110°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	N/A / N/A
Altimeter Setting:	29.89 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	3°C / 3°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	Moderate - None - Rain		
Departure Point:	Silver City, NM (NM85)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	Company VFR
Destination:	Silver City, NM (94E)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	11:34 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	Whiskey Creek Airport 94E	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	6126 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Snow
Runway Used:	17	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	5400 ft / 50 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Straight-in

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:		Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Minor	Latitude, Longitude:	32.769381,-108.21173

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Link, Samantha
Additional Participating Persons:	Michael Petrofes; Federal Aviation Administration; Albuquerque, NM
Original Publish Date:	August 20, 2021
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class 4
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=102200

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The NTSB does not assign fault or blame for an accident or incident; rather, as specified by NTSB regulation, “accident/incident investigations are fact-finding proceedings with no formal issues and no adverse parties ... and are not conducted for the purpose of determining the rights or liabilities of any person” (Title 49 *Code of Federal Regulations* section 831.4). Assignment of fault or legal liability is not relevant to the NTSB’s statutory mission to improve transportation safety by investigating accidents and incidents and issuing safety recommendations. In addition, statutory language prohibits the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report (Title 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b)). A factual report that may be admissible under 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b) is available [here](#).