



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Howe, Idaho	Accident Number:	WPR22LA132
Date & Time:	March 22, 2022, 11:00 Local	Registration:	N44DQ
Aircraft:	ROBINSON HELICOPTER COMPANY R44 II	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Loss of control in flight	Injuries:	2 Minor, 1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot of the helicopter reported that, while flying in mountainous terrain, he decided to land on top of a ridge for a rest break. The pilot performed a circling reconnaissance of the area before he began his descent to his intended landing spot. During the descent, the pilot felt a wind gust from behind, then the rotor rpm began to decay, and the low rotor rpm light illuminated along with the aural warning horn. The pilot attempted to reestablish power without success as the helicopter continued to descend. To avoid going over the ridge, the pilot intentionally lowered the helicopter to the ground and rolled the helicopter onto its right side. The helicopter sustained substantial damage to the fuselage and tail boom. The pilot reported that there were no preaccident 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 adequate rotor rpm while descending with a gusting tailwind condition, which resulted in a loss of helicopter control.

Findings

Personnel issues	Aircraft control - Pilot
Aircraft	Descent/approach/glide path - Not attained/maintained
Environmental issues	Tailwind - Effect on equipment

Factual Information

History of Flight

Approach	Loss of control in flight (Defining event)
Landing	Hard landing

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	60, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	5-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Class 3 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	May 12, 2020
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	April 24, 2021
Flight Time:	1863 hours (Total, all aircraft), 600 hours (Total, this make and model), 1863 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft)		

Passenger Information

Certificate:		Age:	Female
Airplane Rating(s):		Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):		Restraint Used:	5-point
Instrument Rating(s):		Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):		Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:		Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:			

Passenger Information

Certificate:		Age:	Male
Airplane Rating(s):		Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):		Restraint Used:	Lap only
Instrument Rating(s):		Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):		Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:		Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:			

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	ROBINSON HELICOPTER COMPANY	Registration:	N44DQ
Model/Series:	R44 II	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:	2005	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	10821
Landing Gear Type:	Skid	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2500 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	IO 540-AE1A5
Registered Owner:	TUMBLEWEED LEASING CO INC	Rated Power:	
Operator:	On file	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KRXE,4858 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	54 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:		Direction from Accident Site:	107°
Lowest Cloud Condition:		Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast / 6000 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/ Terrain-Induced
Wind Direction:		Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/ Severe
Altimeter Setting:	30.4 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	1°C / -4°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Grace, ID (RXE)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Rexburg, ID (RXE)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	08:15 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	2 Minor	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:		Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 Minor, 1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	44.1042,-113.0019

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Rho, Paul
Additional Participating Persons:	Howard Dunn; FAA FSDO; Boise, ID
Original Publish Date:	November 3, 2022
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=104844

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant events in other modes of transportation—railroad, transit, highway, marine, pipeline, and commercial space. We determine the probable causes of the accidents and events we investigate, and issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future occurrences. In addition, we conduct transportation safety research studies and offer information and other assistance to family members and survivors for each accident or event we investigate. We also serve as the appellate authority for enforcement actions involving aviation and mariner certificates issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and US Coast Guard, and we adjudicate appeals of civil penalty actions taken by the FAA.

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](#).