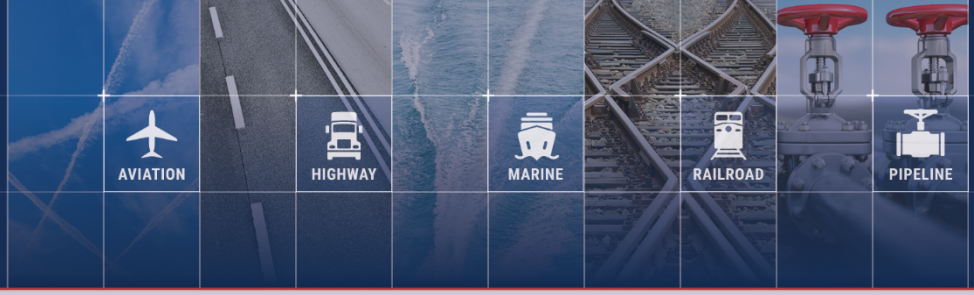

Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Dallas, Texas	**Accident Number:**	CEN26LA185
Date & Time:	May 12, 2026, 21:27 Local	**Registration:**	N652AE
Aircraft:	Bell 407	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Defining Event:	Low altitude operation/event	**Injuries:**	3 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 135: Air taxi & commuter - Non-scheduled - Air Medical (Discretionary)		

Analysis

After dropping a patient off, the air medical helicopter departed from the medical center helipad with the pilot and medical crew onboard in night visual meteorological conditions. Video footage depicted the helicopter drift backward as the helicopter lifted off and began a right turn. The climb, turn, and backward drift continued until the tail rotor impacted a helipad surveillance camera which ended the video footage. The pilot subsequently landed on the helipad with substantial damage to the tail rotor blades, tail rotor pitch change links, and left landing skid. The operator reported that there were no mechanical malfunctions or failures with the helicopter that would have precluded normal operations.

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 situational awareness and clearance from the helipad surveillance camera during liftoff.

Findings

Personnel issues	Aircraft control - Pilot
Aircraft	Directional control - Not attained/maintained
Personnel issues	Monitoring environment - Pilot

Factual Information

History of Flight

Maneuvering-hover	Low altitude operation/event (Defining event)

On May 12, 2026, about 2127 central daylight time, a Bell 407 helicopter, N652AE, was substantially damaged when it was involved in an accident near Dallas, Texas. The pilot and two-person medical crew were not injured. There was no patient onboard. The helicopter was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 135 discretionary air medical flight.

The crew had transported a patient to the Baylor University Medical Center Heliport (XA61). Night visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time. Before departing, the pilot attempted to contact the Dallas Love Field Airport (DAL) tower controller to request a Class B airspace clearance. When no response was received, the pilot lifted off into a hover in attempt to gain better radio reception. The pilot reported hearing a “loud crack” and felt a jolt in the pedals. he pilot landed the helicopter on the helipad and shutdown the engine.

Video surveillance footage depicted the helicopter lift off from the helipad and turn to the right. During the climb and the right turn, the helicopter drifted backward and eventually struck the building mounted camera. The video footage ended at that point. The helicopter sustained damage to the tail rotor blades and tail rotor pitch change links. The left landing skid collapsed consistent with a hard landing.

The pilot reported that there were no mechanical malfunctions or failures associated with the helicopter before the accident. The operator characterized the facility as a “typical” elevated helipad. They also noted that maintaining a 3- to 5-foot hover and visual reference to the helipad environment might have prevented the unintended lateral and backward drift of the helicopter.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	**Age:**	60,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	**Seat Occupied:**	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	**Restraint Used:**	4-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane; Helicopter	**Second Pilot Present:**	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	**Toxicology Performed:**	
Medical Certification:	Class 2 With waivers/limitations	**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	March 11, 2026
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	February 10, 2026
Flight Time:	6451 hours (Total, all aircraft), 885 hours (Total, this make and model), 4971 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 43 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 11 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 5 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Bell	**Registration:**	N652AE
Model/Series:	407	**Aircraft Category:**	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:	2000	**Amateur Built:**	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	**Serial Number:**	53412
Landing Gear Type:	Skid	**Seats:**	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	April 21, 2026 AAIP	**Certified Max Gross Wt.:**	5250 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	88 Hrs	**Engines:**	1 Turbo shaft
Airframe Total Time:	11091 Hrs as of last inspection	**Engine Manufacturer:**	Rolls-Royce
ELT:	C91A installed, not activated	**Engine Model/Series:**	M250-C47B/8
Registered Owner:	AIR EVAC EMS INC	**Rated Power:**	650 Horsepower
Operator:	AIR EVAC EMS INC	**Operating Certificate(s) Held:**	On-demand air taxi (135)
Operator Does Business As:	Air Evac EMS Inc	**Operator Designator Code:**	EVCA

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	**Condition of Light:**	Night
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KRBD,657 ft msl	**Distance from Accident Site:**	8 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	21:53 Local	**Direction from Accident Site:**	214°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	**Visibility**	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	**Visibility (RVR):**	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	3 knots / 0 knots	**Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:**	/
Wind Direction:	190°	**Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:**	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.06 inches Hg	**Temperature/Dew Point:**	22°C / 14°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Dallas, TX (XA61)	**Type of Flight Plan Filed:**	Company VFR
Destination:	Granbury, TX (GDJ)	**Type of Clearance:**	VFR
Departure Time:	21:27 Local	**Type of Airspace:**	Class B

Airport Information

Airport:	Baylor Univ. Medical Center Dallas XA61	**Runway Surface Type:**	
Airport Elevation:	551 ft msl	**Runway Surface Condition:**	Dry
Runway Used:		**IFR Approach:**	None
Runway Length/Width:		**VFR Approach/Landing:**	None

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	3 None	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Fire:**	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Explosion:**	None
Total Injuries:	3 None	**Latitude, Longitude:**	32.788331,-96.7801

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Sorensen, Timothy
Additional Participating Persons:	Andrew L. Anderson; FAA Flight Standards; Irving, TX
Original Publish Date:	October 16, 2026
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class 3
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=202981

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.