



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	SALINAS, California	Accident Number:	LAX94LA342
Date & Time:	August 31, 1994, 07:30 Local	Registration:	N51852
Aircraft:	Texas Helicopter M74	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 137: Agricultural		

Analysis

THE PILOT SAID HE DEPARTED THE COMPANY BASE AND WENT TO A FIELD NEAR SALINAS WHERE HE SPRAYED THE CROPS WITH CHEMICALS FOR 1 1/2 HOURS. THE PILOT SAID HE 'RAN OUT OF GAS' WHILE PROCEEDING TO A NEARBY COMPANY TRUCK FOR ANOTHER LOAD OF CHEMICALS AND FUEL. THE HELICOPTER LANDED HARD AND THE MAIN ROTOR SEVERED THE TAIL BOOM.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: fuel exhaustion due to the pilot's inadequate preflight planning and in-flight fuel consumption monitoring.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER(TOTAL) - NONMECHANICAL
Phase of Operation: CRUISE

Findings

1. (C) FLUID,FUEL - EXHAUSTION
 2. (C) PREFLIGHT PLANNING/PREPARATION - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
 3. (C) FUEL CONSUMPTION CALCULATIONS - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
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Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING

Phase of Operation: DESCENT - EMERGENCY

Occurrence #3: HARD LANDING

Phase of Operation: LANDING - FLARE/TOUCHDOWN

Findings

4. FLARE - MISJUDGED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

On August 31, 1994, at 0730 Pacific daylight time, a Texas Helicopters M74, N51852, sustained damage during a hard landing from an autorotation after an engine failure near Salinas, California. The helicopter was owned and operated by Gomes Farm Air Service, Inc., of Castroville, California, and was engaged in aerial application operations. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time and no flight plan was filed. The helicopter sustained substantial damage. The commercial pilot, the sole occupant, was not injured. The flight originated at Castroville, California, on the morning of the accident at 0600.

According to the pilot's verbal statement to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspectors from the San Jose, California, Flight Standards District Office, he departed the company base and went to a field near Salinas where he sprayed the crops with chemicals. The pilot said he "ran out of gas" while proceeding to a nearby company truck for another load of chemicals and fuel. The helicopter landed hard and the main rotor severed the tail boom.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	31, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Center
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim	Last FAA Medical Exam:	November 3, 1993
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	2120 hours (Total, all aircraft), 1520 hours (Total, this make and model), 1750 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 90 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 30 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 4 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Texas Helicopter	Registration:	N51852
Model/Series:	M74 M74	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Restricted (Special)	Serial Number:	78-020
Landing Gear Type:	Skid	Seats:	1
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2450 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	LYCOMING
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	O-435
Registered Owner:	GOMES FARM AIR SERVICE, INC.	Rated Power:	200 Horsepower
Operator:	GOMES FARM AIR SERVICE, INC.	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	
Operator Does Business As:		Operator Designator Code:	LSJG

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	SNS ,84 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	8 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	07:00 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	110°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Unknown	Visibility	6 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast / 800 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	0°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	14°C / 12°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	CASTROVILLE , CA (54Q)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	06:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:		Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:		Runway Surface Condition:	
Runway Used:	0	IFR Approach:	
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	Forced landing

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	36.669586,-121.609191(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Rich, Jeff
Additional Participating Persons:	GARY DUPERTUIS; SAN JOSE , CA
Original Publish Date:	January 25, 1995
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=28844

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](#).