



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	LAKEPORT, California	Accident Number:	LAX97LA257
Date & Time:	July 18, 1997, 09:30 Local	Registration:	N6323F
Aircraft:	Fronsman EXEC	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot said he was practicing hover operations, when the oil pressure began to decrease. By the time he had landed at his parking ramp, the oil pressure was at zero. As he exited the helicopter, the pilot noticed smoke and flames coming from the right side of the engine compartment. He was unsuccessful in extinguishing the fire with a portable fire extinguisher, and the helicopter was destroyed in the subsequent ground fire. The pilot had completed a condition inspection of the experimental helicopter immediately before the flight.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: an undetermined failure of the oil system (lines or filter), while hovering, which resulted in an engine compartment fire that erupted and subsequently destroyed the helicopter after it was landed.

Findings

Occurrence #1: AIRFRAME/COMPONENT/SYSTEM FAILURE/MALFUNCTION
Phase of Operation: HOVER - IN GROUND EFFECT

Findings

1. (C) LUBRICATING SYSTEM - UNDETERMINED

Occurrence #2: FIRE
Phase of Operation: STANDING

Findings

2. (C) ENGINE COMPARTMENT - FIRE

Factual Information

On July 18, 1997, at 0930 hours Pacific daylight time, a homebuilt experimental Fronsman Rotorway Exec helicopter, N6323F, was destroyed by a ground fire following a loss of oil pressure while hovering at the Lakeport, California, airport. The helicopter was owned and operated by the pilot and was on a local area personal flight. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time and no flight plan was filed. The private pilot, the sole occupant, was not injured. The flight originated about 0915 on the morning of the accident from the Lakeport airport.

In a statement to Federal Aviation Administration inspectors, the pilot said he was practicing hover operations when the oil pressure began to decrease below red line. By the time the pilot landed at his parking ramp, the oil pressure was at zero. As he exited the helicopter, the pilot noticed smoke and flames coming from the right side of the engine compartment. He was unsuccessful in extinguishing the fire with a portable extinguisher and the helicopter was destroyed in the subsequent ground fire.

The pilot completed a condition inspection on the helicopter immediately prior to the flight.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	58, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 3 Valid Medical-w/ waivers/lim	Last FAA Medical Exam:	May 6, 1997
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	225 hours (Total, all aircraft), 150 hours (Total, this make and model), 8 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 8 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 2 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Fronsmen	Registration:	N6323F
Model/Series:	ROTORWAY EXEC ROTORWAY E	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	Yes
Airworthiness Certificate:	Experimental (Special)	Serial Number:	3237
Landing Gear Type:	Skid	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	July 18, 1997 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	1350 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	1 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	150 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	Rotorway
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	RW152
Registered Owner:	NATHAN F. FRONSMAN	Rated Power:	152 Horsepower
Operator:		Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Does Business As:		Operator Designator Code:	

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	UKI ,614 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	35 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	09:45 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	340°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	20 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/ None	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	0°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	20°C / 11°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	(102)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:		Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	09:15 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class E

Airport Information

Airport:	LAMPSON FIELD 102	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	1398 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	0	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	Full stop

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	On-ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	39.039554,-122.930023(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Rich, Jeff

Additional Participating Persons: KEN MEYER; SACRAMENTO , CA

Original Publish Date: July 31, 1998

Last Revision Date:

Investigation Class: [Class](#)

Note:

Investigation Docket: <https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=29849>

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