



Aviation Investigation Final Report

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| Location: | SLATINGTON, Pennsylvania | Accident Number: | NYC97LA174 |
| Date & Time: | August 30, 1997, 10:20 Local | Registration: | N5303V |
| Aircraft: | Hiller UH-12B | Aircraft Damage: | Substantial |
| Defining Event: | | Injuries: | 1 Minor |
| Flight Conducted Under: | Part 91: General aviation - Personal | | |

Analysis

The helicopter was for sale, but was not airworthy, and had not been flown for 6 months. The owner had shown the helicopter to the pilot a week prior to the accident. The owner and the pilot performed a ground run, but the owner would not allow the helicopter to be flown. A week later the pilot flew the helicopter without the owner's permission, and without the owner present. Witnesses reported that the helicopter did not appear to be stable at any time in the repeated attempts at takeoff. On the third attempted lift off, the helicopter became airborne, moved forward, and climbed to an altitude of approximately 5 to 10 feet above the ground. It then moved aft and the tailboom impacted the ground. The helicopter then rolled right, and the main rotor blades struck the ground. During a period of 18 months, repeated attempts to have the pilot provide a statement, or complete and return the required National Transportation Safety Board Pilot/Operator Aircraft Accident Report form 6120.1/2, were unsuccessful.

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 control of the helicopter.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: HOVER - IN GROUND EFFECT

Findings

1. (C) AIRCRAFT CONTROL - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Factual Information

On August 30, 1997, about 1020 Eastern Daylight Time, a Hiller UH-12B, N5303V, a helicopter, was substantially damaged when it impacted the ground during an uncontrolled descent from a hover at the Slatington Airport, Slatington, Pennsylvania. The certificated commercial pilot received minor injuries. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed for the local flight. No flight plan was filed for the personal flight conducted under 14 CFR Part 91. According to the owner of the helicopter, it was not airworthy. The helicopter was for sale, and had not flown for approximately 6 months due to required maintenance. The rotor tachometer was inaccurate and needed to be repaired or replaced. One week prior to the accident, the pilot expressed interest in purchasing the helicopter. The owner allowed the pilot to examine it. As they operated the engine on the ground, the pilot insisted they conduct a test flight. The owner repeatedly told the pilot that he could not fly the helicopter due to the erroneous rotor tachometer. On the day of the accident, the pilot flew the helicopter without permission, and without the owner present. On the third attempt at liftoff, the pilot lost control, and the helicopter impacted the ground.

Witnesses reported that the helicopter did not appear to be stable at any time in the repeated attempts at takeoff. On the third attempted lift off, the helicopter became airborne, moved forward, and climbed to an altitude of approximately 5 to 10 feet above the ground. Then the helicopter move aft, followed by a decrease in power. The tailboom impacted the ground, the helicopter rolled right, and the main rotor blades struck the ground. After the accident, the pilot attempted to conceal the wreckage in a hanger, but a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Inspector was at the airport during the accident. The FAA Inspector reported the accident to the Flight Standards District Office.

According to a Federal Aviation Administration Inspector, there was no evidence of pre-impact mechanical malfunctions with the helicopter. Flight control continuity was confirmed and approximately 12 gallons of fuel remained in the tanks. Witnesses told him the engine sounded "normal."

During a period of 18 months, repeated attempts to have the pilot provide a statement, or complete and return the required National Transportation Safety Board Pilot/Operator Aircraft Accident Report form 6120.1/2, were unsuccessful.

Pilot Information

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| Certificate: | Commercial; Private | Age: | 76, Male |
| Airplane Rating(s): | Single-engine land; Single-engine sea; Multi-engine land | Seat Occupied: | Unknown |
| Other Aircraft Rating(s): | Helicopter | Restraint Used: | |
| Instrument Rating(s): | Airplane | Second Pilot Present: | No |
| Instructor Rating(s): | None | Toxicology Performed: | No |
| Medical Certification: | Class 2 Valid Medical-w/ waivers/lim | Last FAA Medical Exam: | August 21, 1997 |
| Occupational Pilot: | No | Last Flight Review or Equivalent: | |
| Flight Time: | | | |

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

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|--------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Aircraft Make: | Hiller | Registration: | N5303V |
| Model/Series: | UH-12B UH-12B | Aircraft Category: | Helicopter |
| Year of Manufacture: | | Amateur Built: | |
| Airworthiness Certificate: | Normal | Serial Number: | 571 |
| Landing Gear Type: | Skid | Seats: | 3 |
| Date/Type of Last Inspection: | Annual | Certified Max Gross Wt.: | 2500 lbs |
| Time Since Last Inspection: | | Engines: | 1 Reciprocating |
| Airframe Total Time: | | Engine Manufacturer: | Franklin |
| ELT: | | Engine Model/Series: | 6V4 |
| Registered Owner: | LOUIS A DAMIANI INC. | Rated Power: | 210 Horsepower |
| Operator: | | Operating Certificate(s) Held: | None |
| Operator Does Business As: | | Operator Designator Code: | |

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

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|---|----------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| Conditions at Accident Site: | Visual (VMC) | Condition of Light: | Day |
| Observation Facility, Elevation: | ABE ,394 ft msl | Distance from Accident Site: | 11 Nautical Miles |
| Observation Time: | 09:51 Local | Direction from Accident Site: | 60° |
| Lowest Cloud Condition: | Scattered / 3200 ft AGL | Visibility | 10 miles |
| Lowest Ceiling: | None | Visibility (RVR): | |
| Wind Speed/Gusts: | 6 knots / | Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Wind Direction: | 350° | Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual: | / |
| Altimeter Setting: | 30 inches Hg | Temperature/Dew Point: | 21°C / 15°C |
| Precipitation and Obscuration: | No Obscuration; No Precipitation | | |
| Departure Point: | (69N) | Type of Flight Plan Filed: | None |
| Destination: | | Type of Clearance: | None |
| Departure Time: | 10:20 Local | Type of Airspace: | Class E |

Airport Information

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|-----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|------|
| Airport: | SLATINGTON AIRPORT 69N | Runway Surface Type: | |
| Airport Elevation: | 380 ft msl | Runway Surface Condition: | |
| Runway Used: | 0 | IFR Approach: | None |
| Runway Length/Width: | | VFR Approach/Landing: | |

Wreckage and Impact Information

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|----------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Crew Injuries: | 1 Minor | Aircraft Damage: | Substantial |
| Passenger Injuries: | | Aircraft Fire: | None |
| Ground Injuries: | N/A | Aircraft Explosion: | None |
| Total Injuries: | 1 Minor | Latitude, Longitude: | 40.749542,-75.609664(est) |

Administrative Information

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| Investigator In Charge (IIC): | Kukla, Randi-jean |
| Additional Participating Persons: | MARTY LYNN; ALLENTOWN , PA |
| Original Publish Date: | June 21, 2000 |
| Last Revision Date: | |
| Investigation Class: | Class |
| Note: | |
| Investigation Docket: | https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=39426 |

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](#).