



# Aviation Investigation Final Report

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<b>Location:</b>	Fort Myers, Florida	<b>Accident Number:</b>	MIA03LA047
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	January 24, 2003, 07:30 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N543FH
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Fairchild Hiller FH-1100	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Defining Event:</b>		<b>Injuries:</b>	1 Minor
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

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## Analysis

The flight had departed the airport and was traveling in a northwest bound direction when the pilot reported to the control tower that he was going down. The pilot told investigators that the helicopter's engine had lost all power, and that he performed an autorotation into the river. The pilot was rescued from the water by another helicopter that was in the area, before the helicopter sank. An FAA-supervised examination of the wreckage was conducted at the Lee County Mosquito Control Facility. The examination was assisted by an airframe and powerplant mechanic from the Lee County Mosquito Control Facility. About a tablespoon of fuel was drained from the fuel nozzle line. Approximately 3 ounces of fuel was drained from the fuel pump filter bowl. Four ounces of fuel was drained from the main tank to the pump inline filter and 1.5 quarts of fuel was drained from the main fuel tank. Approximately 22 quarts of brackish water was drain from the main fuel tank. The mechanic stated he remembered during the examination the fuel cap was not secured and no external damage was noted to the engine. No cracks or broken parts, leakages or rods were found when the exterior surface examination of the engine was conducted. A completed NTSB Pilot/Operator Aircraft Accident Report (NTSB Form 6120.1/2) was not received.

## Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's inadequate preflight/preparation and his in-flight planning/decision which resulted in fuel exhaustion and the loss of engine power.

## Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER(TOTAL) - NONMECHANICAL

Phase of Operation: CRUISE

Findings

1. (C) AIRCRAFT PREFLIGHT - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
2. FLUID,FUEL - EXHAUSTION
3. (C) IN-FLIGHT PLANNING/DECISION - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND

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Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY DESCENT/LANDING

Findings

4. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - WATER

## Factual Information

On January 24, 2003, about 0730 eastern standard time, a Fairchild/Hiller helicopter, N543FH, operated by a private individual as a Title 14 CFR Part 91 personal flight impacted with water during a forced autorotation and landing near Fort Myers, Florida. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed. No flight plan was filed. The helicopter was substantially damaged. The commercial-rated pilot received minor injuries. The flight had originated from Page Airport, Fort Myers, Florida, a few minutes before the accident.

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A completed NTSB Pilot/Operator Aircraft Accident Report (NTSB Form 6120.1/2) was not received from the pilot.

## Pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Commercial	<b>Age:</b>	Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Unknown
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	Helicopter	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	Airplane	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	No
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	No
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Unknown	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	UNK	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>			

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Fairchild Hiller	<b>Registration:</b>	N543FH
<b>Model/Series:</b>	FH-1100	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Helicopter
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>		<b>Amateur Built:</b>	
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Normal	<b>Serial Number:</b>	43
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Ski	<b>Seats:</b>	3
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	Unknown	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	2750 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>		<b>Engines:</b>	1 Unknown
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>		<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	
<b>ELT:</b>		<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	Rudi Dekkers	<b>Rated Power:</b>	
<b>Operator:</b>		<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Visual (VMC)	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Day
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>	KFMY, 17 ft msl	<b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>	3 Nautical Miles
<b>Observation Time:</b>	08:53 Local	<b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>	169°
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>	Clear	<b>Visibility:</b>	10 miles
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	None	<b>Visibility (RVR):</b>	
<b>Wind Speed/Gusts:</b>	11 knots / 19 knots	<b>Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Wind Direction:</b>	20°	<b>Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:</b>	/
<b>Altimeter Setting:</b>	30.39 inches Hg	<b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>	2°C / -9°C
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
<b>Departure Point:</b>	FORT MYERS, FL (FMY)	<b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>	Unknown
<b>Destination:</b>		<b>Type of Clearance:</b>	Unknown
<b>Departure Time:</b>		<b>Type of Airspace:</b>	Unknown

## Airport Information

<b>Airport:</b>	Page Field Airport KFMY	<b>Runway Surface Type:</b>	
<b>Airport Elevation:</b>	17 ft msl	<b>Runway Surface Condition:</b>	Unknown
<b>Runway Used:</b>		<b>IFR Approach:</b>	None
<b>Runway Length/Width:</b>		<b>VFR Approach/Landing:</b>	None

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	1 Minor	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>		<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	None
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>	N/A	<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Total Injuries:</b>	1 Minor	<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	26.583333,-81.849998

## Administrative Information

<b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>	Yurman, Alan
<b>Additional Participating Persons:</b>	Murry Huling; FAA; Tampa, FL
<b>Original Publish Date:</b>	September 29, 2004
<b>Last Revision Date:</b>	
<b>Investigation Class:</b>	<a href="#">Class</a>
<b>Note:</b>	
<b>Investigation Docket:</b>	<a href="https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=56403">https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=56403</a>

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](#).