



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Venice, Louisiana	Accident Number:	FTW03LA106
Date & Time:	March 6, 2003, 07:20 Local	Registration:	N945PT
Aircraft:	Eurocopter AS350B2	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	5 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation		

Analysis

The helicopter impacted water while maneuvering in a turn. The 16,000-hour pilot stated that a weather brief was obtained prior to departure, and the weather reported at Venice, Louisiana, near the intended destination was 2 1/2 statute miles visibility, with increasing visibilities and sky conditions improving. At approximately 0715 and 40 nautical miles northwest Boothville, Louisiana, deteriorating weather conditions developed. The pilot elected to execute a right turn and descend to an altitude where weather conditions were better, and sight of water was evident. At a slow rate of speed "estimated no faster than a walk," the tail rotor struck the water. The aircraft yawed to the left and a ditching maneuver was entered while close to the water at a slow speed. The aircraft impacted the water on its left side and immediately filled with water. Weather conditions at NEW at 0653 were reported as winds calm, visibility 1/2 statute mile, ceiling indefinite at 100 feet, and fog. Weather conditions at Boothville, Louisiana (BVE), 40 nautical miles northwest of the accident site, at 0751, were reported as winds from 180 degrees at 3 knots, visibility 1/4 statute mile, ceiling indefinite at 100 feet, and fog.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's inability to maintain directional control following a loss of tail rotor drive. A contributing factor was the fog.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT ENCOUNTER WITH WEATHER
Phase of Operation: CRUISE

Findings

1. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - FOG

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

Findings

2. (C) ROTOR SYSTEM, TAIL ROTOR - NOT ENGAGED

Occurrence #3: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

Findings

3. (C) DIRECTIONAL CONTROL - NOT POSSIBLE - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

On March 6, 2003, at 0720 central standard time, an Eurocopter AS350B2 helicopter, N945PT, was destroyed upon impact with water following a loss of directional control while maneuvering in the vicinity of Venice, Louisiana. The helicopter was registered to the Bank One Leasing Corporation of Columbus, Ohio, and operated by Taylor Energy Company of New Orleans, Louisiana. The non-instrument rated commercial pilot and four passengers sustained minor injuries. Instrument meteorological conditions (IMC) prevailed, and a company flight plan was filed for the 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91 business flight. The flight originated from the Lakefront Airport (NEW), near New Orleans, Louisiana, approximately 0655, and was destined for the Mississippi Canyon 20 platform located in the Gulf of Mexico, approximately 6 nautical miles of Boothville, Louisiana.

The 16,000-hour pilot, who reported having accumulated 1,200 hours in the accident aircraft, reported in the Pilot/Operator Aircraft Accident Report (NTSB Form 6120.1/2) that a weather brief was obtained prior to departure, and the weather reported at Venice, Louisiana, near the intended destination was 2 1/2 statute miles visibility, with increasing visibilities and sky conditions improving.

Approximately 0715 and 40 nautical miles northwest Boothville, Louisiana, deteriorating weather conditions developed. The pilot elected to execute a right turn and descend to an altitude where weather conditions were better, and sight of water was evident. At a slow rate of speed "estimated no faster than a walk," the tail rotor struck the water. The aircraft yawed to the left and a ditching maneuver was entered while close to the water at a slow speed. The aircraft impacted the water on its left side and immediately filled with water.

The pilot and passengers egressed through the top of the helicopter. The use of a hand-held marine radio aided in the search and rescue. The flares onboard the aircraft did not work, and the raft could not be located due to the aircraft resting in an upside-down position. All occupants were rescued by units of the United States Coast Guard approximately 50 to 80 minutes after they entered the water.

Weather conditions at NEW at 0653 were reported as winds calm, visibility 1/2 statute mile, ceiling indefinite at 100 feet, and fog.

Weather conditions at Boothville, Louisiana (BVE), 40 nautical miles northwest of the accident site, at 0751, were reported as winds from 180 degrees at 3 knots, visibility 1/4 statute mile, ceiling indefinite at 100 feet, and fog.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Flight instructor	Age:	46, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Helicopter	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	January 17, 2003
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	November 15, 2001
Flight Time:	16000 hours (Total, all aircraft), 1200 hours (Total, this make and model), 15000 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 300 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 50 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 0 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Eurocopter	Registration:	N945PT
Model/Series:	AS350B2	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	2848
Landing Gear Type:	Skid	Seats:	6
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	Unknown	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	4961 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Turbo shaft
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Turbomeca
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	Arriel 1d1
Registered Owner:	Bank One Leasing Corp	Rated Power:	750 Horsepower
Operator:	Taylor Energy Company	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Instrument (IMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:		Distance from Accident Site:	
Observation Time:		Direction from Accident Site:	
Lowest Cloud Condition:		Visibility	0.5 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Indefinite (V V) / 100 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	0 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	0°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29.85 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	15°C / 13°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	N/A - None - Fog		
Departure Point:	New Orleans, LA (NEW)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	Company VFR
Destination:	MS Canyon 20, GM (GOM)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	06:55 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	4 Minor	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	5 Minor	Latitude, Longitude:	29.433332,-89.459442

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Wigington, Douglas
Additional Participating Persons:	Brian T Capone; FAA FSDO; Baton Rouge, LA
Original Publish Date:	June 2, 2004
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=56591

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](#).