



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Salome, Arizona	Accident Number:	LAX04CA121
Date & Time:	February 11, 2004, 10:30 Local	Registration:	N8AG
Aircraft:	Bell 47-G3B2	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	2 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The helicopter collided with a tree while attempting to land. The pilot obtained a weather briefing prior to his departure. The briefer reported turbulent winds in the area but indicated that he did not believe there would be gusty wind conditions in the intended landing area. The landing zone was a paved area about 200 feet wide and 300 feet long surrounded by trees, with a hill located to the north. The pilot said that while making the approach, about 25 feet above ground level, a "violent" gust of wind turned the helicopter 90 degrees to the left, and flipped it on its side. The helicopter impacted a tree. The pilot did not report any mechanical problems with the helicopter prior to the accident.

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 an adequate clearance from trees while approaching the landing zone.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: APPROACH - VFR PATTERN - FINAL APPROACH

Findings

1. WEATHER CONDITION - GUSTS
2. WEATHER CONDITION - HIGH WIND

3. OBJECT - TREE(S)
4. (C) CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Factual Information

On February 11, 2004, about 1030 mountain standard time, a Bell 47-G3B2, N8AG, collided with a tree while attempting to land near Salome, Arizona. The helicopter was registered to, and operated by, the pilot under the provisions of 14 CFR Part 91. The commercial pilot and passenger were not injured; the helicopter sustained substantial damage. The personal cross-country flight departed from the Wickenburg, Arizona, area about 0930, with a planned destination of a landing zone near Salome. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed, and a flight plan had not been filed.

During a telephone interview with the National Transportation Safety Board investigator-in-charge (IIC), the pilot reported that he obtained a weather briefing prior to his departure. The briefer reported turbulent winds in the area but indicated that he did not believe there would be gusty wind conditions in the intended landing area. The pilot had planned to meet a fuel truck at the landing zone. The landing zone was a paved area about 200 feet wide and 300 feet long surrounded by trees, with a hill located to the north.

The pilot attempted to land on a northerly heading because of a slight headwind. He stated that while making the approach, about 25 feet above ground level, a "violent" gust of wind turned the helicopter 90 degrees to the left, and flipped it on its side. The helicopter impacted a tree. He does not normally fly in winds more than 15 miles per hour; however, because the briefer told him that he didn't think there would be gusty winds in the area, the pilot opted to initiate the flight. The pilot did not report any mechanical problems with the helicopter prior to the accident.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Private	Age:	75, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):		Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 3	Last FAA Medical Exam:	June 24, 2003
Occupational Pilot:		Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	1320 hours (Total, all aircraft), 1030 hours (Total, this make and model)		

Co-pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	85, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):		Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:		Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:		Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:			

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Bell	Registration:	N8AG
Model/Series:	47-G3B2	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	6606
Landing Gear Type:	Skid	Seats:	
Date/Type of Last Inspection:		Certified Max Gross Wt.:	
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	TV0-435 Serie
Registered Owner:	On file	Rated Power:	
Operator:	On file	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:		Distance from Accident Site:	
Observation Time:		Direction from Accident Site:	
Lowest Cloud Condition:		Visibility	
Lowest Ceiling:		Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:		Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:		Temperature/Dew Point:	
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	Wickenburg, AZ	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Salome, AZ	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:		Type of Airspace:	Class G

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	2 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 None	Latitude, Longitude:	33.613334,-113.623886

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Charnon, Nicole
Additional Participating Persons:	Bruce Bassett; Federal Aviation Administration; Scottsdale, AZ
Original Publish Date:	April 28, 2004
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	This accident report documents the factual circumstances of this accident as described to the NTSB.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=58735

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