



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Childs, Florida	Accident Number:	ATL04TA142
Date & Time:	June 30, 2004, 20:00 Local	Registration:	N128FC
Aircraft:	Bell UH-1H	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Public aircraft		

Analysis

According to the pilot after landing, he noticed that one of the skids were off of the pavement and was beginning to settle in the ground. The pilot lifted the helicopter to reposition the skid on the pavement. At the same time, the refuel trailer was being pulled forward towards the helicopter. After the helicopter was positioned on the pavement, the refueling trailer continued towards the helicopter until it struck the right synchronized elevator on the tail boom assembly. Examination of the helicopter revealed the right synchronized elevator was buckled. No flight control or mechanical anomalies were reported by the pilot. Review of the USDA Forest Service operating procedures revealed that there were no operating procedures for "hot" refueling. Subsequent to this accident procedures have been adopted to prevent another reoccurrence of this accident.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:

The vehicle driver's inadequate visual lookout and his failure to maintain clearance. A factor was the lack of company standards and operation procedures.

Findings

Occurrence #1: ON GROUND/WATER COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: STANDING - IDLING ROTORS

Findings

1. CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - DRIVER OF VEHICLE
2. (C) VISUAL LOOKOUT - INADEQUATE - DRIVER OF VEHICLE
3. (F) PROCEDURE INADEQUATE - COMPANY/OPERATOR MANAGEMENT

Factual Information

On June 30, 2004, at 2000 eastern daylight time, a Bell UH-1H helicopter, N128FC, registered to and operated by the USDA Forest Service FEPP, was struck by a fuel trailer while the driver of the refueling vehicle positioned to refuel the standing helicopter near Childs, Florida. The public use flight was conducted under the provisions of Title 14 CFR Part 91 with no flight plan filed. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the accident. The commercial pilot was uninjured and helicopter sustained substantial damaged. The flight was participating in a wildlife fire operation in the vicinity of Childs, Florida, on June 30, 2004 at 1800.

According to the pilot, while participating in a wildfire operation, he maneuvered the helicopter to land and conduct a "hot" refueling. After landing, the pilot noticed that one of the skids were off of the pavement and was beginning to settle in the ground. The pilot lifted the helicopter to reposition the skid on the pavement. At the same time, the refuel trailer was being pulled forward towards the helicopter. After the helicopter was positioned on the pavement, the refueling trailer continued towards the helicopter until it struck the right synchronized elevator on the tail boom assembly.

Examination of the helicopter revealed the right synchronized elevator was buckled. No flight control or mechanical anomalies were reported by the pilot. Review of the USDA Forest Service operating procedures revealed that there were no operating procedures for "hot" refueling. Subsequent to this accident procedures have been adopted to prevent reoccurrence of this type accident.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	54, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Front
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane; Helicopter	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim	Last FAA Medical Exam:	December 22, 2003
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	April 22, 2004
Flight Time:	6000 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Bell	Registration:	N128FC
Model/Series:	UH-1H	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Special flight (Special)	Serial Number:	64-13750
Landing Gear Type:	Skid	Seats:	1
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	April 1, 2004 AAIP	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	9500 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	34 Hrs	Engines:	1 Turbo shaft
Airframe Total Time:	6607 Hrs as of last inspection	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	T53-L-703
Registered Owner:	Florida Department of Agr	Rated Power:	1600 Lbs thrust
Operator:	USDA Forest Service	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Does Business As:	Florida Division of Forestry	Operator Designator Code:	

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Dusk
Observation Facility, Elevation:	FMY,17 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	25 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	19:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	360°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 4200 ft AGL	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 7000 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	4 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	110°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29.87 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	25°C / 23°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	FORT MYERS, FL (FMY)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Okeechobee, FL	Type of Clearance:	Unknown
Departure Time:	17:59 Local	Type of Airspace:	Special

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	27.016944,-81.45111

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Alleyne, Eric
Additional Participating Persons:	John Murphy; Orlando FSDO; Orlando , FL
Original Publish Date:	June 8, 2005
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=59760

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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](#).