



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	ROCK HILL, South Carolina	Accident Number:	ATL91LA096
Date & Time:	May 20, 1991, 09:45 Local	Registration:	N7507J
Aircraft:	SCHWEIZER 269C	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Aerial observation		

Analysis

THE COMMERCIAL PILOT WAS FLYING AN AERIAL OBSERVATION FLIGHT. HE TURNED ON THE COCKPIT HEAT. A COPPERHEAD SNAKE EMERGED FROM THE HEAT VENT NEAR HIS FEET. AS THE PILOT MANEUVERED TOWARDS A LANDING AREA, THE SNAKE APPEARED POISED TO STRIKE. HE TRIED TO STEP ON THE SNAKE WITH HIS FOOT AND SUBSEQUENTLY LOST CONTROL OF THE HELICOPTER. THE HELICOPTER CONTACTED TREES AND TERRAIN AND WAS DESTROYED. THE SNAKE WAS NOT FOUND AFTER THE ACCIDENT. DRUG, ALCOHOL, AND SNAKE VENOM TESTING ON THE PILOT WAS NEGATIVE.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: THE PILOT DIVERTED HIS ATTENTION TO A POISONOUS SNAKE IN THE COCKPIT AND FAILED TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OF THE AIRCRAFT.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT
Phase of Operation: APPROACH

Findings

1. (C) OBJECT - ANIMAL(S)
2. (C) AIRCRAFT CONTROL - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (C) DIVERTED ATTENTION - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: APPROACH

Findings

4. OBJECT - TREE(S)

Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Factual Information

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	43, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Unknown
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane; Helicopter	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane single-engine; Helicopter; Instrument airplane; Instrument helicopter	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	March 25, 1991
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	5700 hours (Total, all aircraft), 1800 hours (Total, this make and model), 5660 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 300 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 100 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	SCHWEIZER	Registration:	N7507J
Model/Series:	269C 269C	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:		Serial Number:	S1364
Landing Gear Type:	Skid	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	May 14, 1991 100 hour	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2050 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	12 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	2056 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	LYCOMING
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	H10-360-D1A
Registered Owner:	DOOLEY HELICOPTERS, INC.	Rated Power:	190 Horsepower
Operator:	DOOLEY HELICOPTERS, INC.	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Does Business As:	DME HELICOPTERS, INC.	Operator Designator Code:	

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	CLT ,749 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	13 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	09:50 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	30°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Unknown	Visibility	4 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast / 600 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	8 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	20°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	12°C / 11°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	N/A - None - Fog		
Departure Point:	(29J)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	Company VFR
Destination:	GREENVILLE (GMU)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	09:30 Local	Type of Airspace:	

Airport Information

Airport:		Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:		Runway Surface Condition:	
Runway Used:	0	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	None

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Serious	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Serious	Latitude, Longitude:	34.92971,-81.019172(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Sasser iii, Roff
Additional Participating Persons:	DAVID SEXTON; COLUMBIA , SC
Original Publish Date:	December 15, 1992
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=8407

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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](#).