



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Florence, Alabama	Accident Number:	ERA13LA308
Date & Time:	June 29, 2013, 11:30 Local	Registration:	N6331D
Aircraft:	Hiller UH-12A	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Tailstrike	Injuries:	1 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Positioning		

Analysis

The student pilot was attempting to land the helicopter on a trailer in order to transport it to another location. A witness reported that, while the helicopter was hovering above the trailer, it started to drift backwards. Subsequently, the nose of the helicopter rose, the tail struck the ground, the helicopter rolled to the right, the main rotor blades struck the ground, and the helicopter came to rest on the right side of the fuselage, which resulted in substantial damage. A postaccident examination of the helicopter did not reveal any mechanical malfunctions or abnormalities that would have precluded normal operation.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

The student pilot's failure to maintain control of the helicopter while landing, which resulted in a tail rotor ground strike and collision with terrain.

Findings

Personnel issues	Aircraft control - Student/instructed pilot
Personnel issues	Decision making/judgment - Student/instructed pilot
Aircraft	Pitch control - Incorrect use/operation
Personnel issues	Total experience - Student/instructed pilot

Factual Information

History of Flight

Landing-flare/touchdown	Tailstrike (Defining event)
Landing-flare/touchdown	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

On June 29, 2013, about 1130 central daylight time, a Hiller UH-12A, N6331D, impacted terrain during an attempted landing on a tow trailer near Florence, Alabama. The student pilot was seriously injured. The helicopter was registered to River Cleaning Inc., and operated under the provisions of Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 91, as a positioning flight. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed for the flight and no flight plan was filed. The flight originated from a parking area in the vicinity of the tow trailer just prior to the accident.

According to a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspector, who conducted an interview with an eyewitness, the student pilot was attempting to land the helicopter on the trailer in order to transport it to another location. He stated that the helicopter was hovering above the trailer when it started to drift backward. As the helicopter moved back, the nose of the helicopter started to rise and the tail subsequently struck the ground. The helicopter then rolled to the right, the main rotor blades struck the ground, and the helicopter came to rest on the right side of the fuselage, which resulted in substantial damage.

According to the FAA inspector, numerous attempts to interview the pilot were unsuccessful as the pilot has no recollection of the events surrounding the accident and that the pilot's flight experience was about 38 total flight hours. Examination of the helicopter at the accident location revealed that it had come to rest on its right side in the immediate vicinity of the trailer. The helicopter sustained substantial damage to the main rotor blades, skids, and fuselage. No mechanical malfunctions or abnormalities were noted that would have precluded normal operation.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Student	Age:	58
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Unknown
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 3 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	July 6, 2012
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	38 hours (Total, all aircraft), 38 hours (Total, this make and model)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Hiller	Registration:	N6331D
Model/Series:	UH-12A	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	213
Landing Gear Type:	Skid	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:		Certified Max Gross Wt.:	
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	FRANKLIN
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	6V4 SERIES
Registered Owner:	RIVER CLEANING INC	Rated Power:	210 Horsepower
Operator:	RIVER CLEANING INC	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	MSL,522 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	9 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	10:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	190°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	9 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	320°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29.76 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	30°C / 17°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Florence, AL	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Florence, AL	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	11:30 Local	Type of Airspace:	

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Serious	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Serious	Latitude, Longitude:	34.893054,-87.584167(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Etcher, Shawn
Additional Participating Persons:	John D Park; FAA/FSDO; Birmingham, AL
Original Publish Date:	June 2, 2014
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=87333

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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](#).