



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Los Fresnos, Texas	Accident Number:	CEN16LA161
Date & Time:	April 21, 2016, 11:12 Local	Registration:	N64702
Aircraft:	Bell 47G-2A	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:	Loss of control in flight	Injuries:	1 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 137: Agricultural		

Analysis

According to the operator, the commercial pilot of the helicopter was performing an aerial application flight when the helicopter struck a set of power lines that ran perpendicular to the field being sprayed. The operator stated that the lines were obscured due to trees.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

The pilot's inability to see and avoid the power lines because of trees obscuring his view.

Findings

Personnel issues	Identification/recognition - Pilot
Environmental issues	Wire - Contributed to outcome

Factual Information

History of Flight

Maneuvering-low-alt flying	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)
Maneuvering-low-alt flying	Loss of control in flight (Defining event)
Uncontrolled descent	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

On April 21, 2016, about 1112 central daylight time, a Bell 47G-2A, N64702, collided with power lines, impacted terrain, and caught fire near Los Fresnos, Texas. The pilot, the sole occupant on board, was seriously injured. The helicopter was destroyed. The helicopter was registered to and operated by Hendrickson Flying Service, Inc, Rochelle, Illinois, under the provisions of 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 137 as an aerial application flight. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the accident, and no flight plan had been filed. The local flight originated from Weslaco, Texas, at an undetermined time.

The following account of the accident is based up a report submitted by the operator because the pilot was seriously injured and was in the hospital: The pilot was spraying a cotton field between two sets of power lines that ran parallel to his flight path. The helicopter struck a third set of power lines that ran perpendicular to the field being sprayed. The power lines were obscured by trees. A ground fire erupted after the accident, resulting in the helicopter being destroyed.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Flight instructor	Age:	61, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	4-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane; Helicopter	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane multi-engine; Airplane single-engine; Glider; Instrument airplane	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	February 18, 2016
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	5605 hours (Total, all aircraft), 120 hours (Total, this make and model), 5284 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 20 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 18 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 5 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Bell	Registration:	N64702
Model/Series:	47G-2A	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:	1962	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Restricted (Special)	Serial Number:	2706
Landing Gear Type:	Skid	Seats:	2
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	March 14, 2016 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2850 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	12920 Hrs at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Not installed	Engine Model/Series:	VO-435-A2F
Registered Owner:	Hendrickson Flying Service, Inc.	Rated Power:	260 Horsepower
Operator:	Hendrickson Flying Service, Inc.	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	Agricultural aircraft (137)

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KMFE,107 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	51 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	10:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	210°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 1900 ft AGL	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 3400 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	9 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/ None
Wind Direction:	150°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	29.92 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	28°C / 22°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	Weslaco, TX	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Weslaco, TX	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:		Type of Airspace:	Class G

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Serious	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	On-ground
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Serious	Latitude, Longitude:	26.071666,-97.476387(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Scott, Arnold
Additional Participating Persons:	Carlos F Gallardo; FAA Flight Standards District Office; San Antonio, TX
Original Publish Date:	May 1, 2017
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=93052

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](#).