



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	Meadview, AZ	Accident Number:	LAX02LA178
Date & Time:	05/28/2002, 1045 MST	Registration:	N1075S
Aircraft:	Bell 206L-1	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:		Injuries:	1 Minor

Flight Conducted Under: Part 91: General Aviation - Positioning

Analysis

The pilot said that prior to impact, the helicopter was operating normally but he could not recall details. One witness said the helicopter descended along the canyon wall at an altitude of 40 to 50 feet, and slowed its descent as it made a course reversal towards the landing zone. The nose "dipped," then rose, and the tail boom struck the ground and separated, and the helicopter began to "spin out of control." Another witness saw the helicopter "twisting in a horizontal plane, i.e. the tail swinging from side to side" just before impact. A third witness, a helicopter pilot, said the wind was light and variable as he heard rotor blade "slap," and knew the helicopter was in a turn. He then heard the sound of impact. According to the company's loader, there was no change in the engine or rotor sounds prior to the tailboom striking "a small incline of a hill." Postaccident examination disclosed no evidence of mechanical malfunction.

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 distance and altitude during landing approach, resulting in the helicopter striking the ground during approach.

Findings

Occurrence #1: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: APPROACH

Findings

1. (C) DISTANCE/ALTITUDE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: APPROACH

Findings

2. (F) TERRAIN CONDITION - RISING

Factual Information

On May 28, 2002, approximately 1045 mountain standard time, a Bell 206L-1, N1075S, registered to Monarch Enterprises, Inc., of Kirkland, Washington, and operated by Papillon Airways, Inc., doing business as Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters, of Meadview, Arizona, was destroyed when it impacted terrain while on landing approach in the Grand Canyon approximately 15 miles east of Meadview. The commercial pilot, the sole occupant aboard, received minor injuries. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed, and no flight plan had been filed for the positioning flight being operated under 14 CFR Part 91. The flight originated at a nearby landing zone approximately 1120.

According to a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspector, the accident occurred on the third flight of the day. The helicopter had been operating as a nonscheduled domestic passenger flight. "Papon 10" transported three passengers to the bottom of the Grand Canyon and returned. Two more passengers were then transported to the bottom of the Canyon, and the original three passengers boarded and were brought back. The helicopter returned to get the other two passengers. On its landing approach, the helicopter struck a hillside, bounced on its skids for 60 feet and cartwheeled, coming to rest on its left side. The pilot was able to evacuate the helicopter on his own. When the inspector later interviewed the pilot at the hospital, he had no recollection as to what had happened. He said that prior to impact, the helicopter was operating normally. The FAA inspector said he found no evidence of mechanical malfunction.

Several witnesses submitted written statements. One witness said the helicopter descended along the canyon wall at an altitude of 40 to 50 feet, and slowed its descent as it made a course reversal towards the landing zone. The nose "dipped," then rose, and the tail boom struck the ground and separated. The helicopter then began to "spin out of control." Another witness saw the helicopter "twisting in a horizontal plane, i.e. the tail swinging from side to side" just before impact. A third witness, a helicopter pilot, said the wind was light and variable as he heard rotor blade "slap," and knew the helicopter was in a turn. He then heard the sound of impact. The company's loader reported that the tail boom struck "a small incline of a hill." The witness added that there was no change in the engine or rotor sounds.

The pilot was involved in a similar accident on December 7, 2000, near Henderson, Nevada, (LAX01-L-A061). According to the FAA inspector who was aboard the helicopter and monitoring a check ride being administered to the pilot, he misjudged his height above the ground during a pinnacle approach and collided with terrain.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	54, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	Seatbelt, Shoulder harness
Instrument Rating(s):	None	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Valid Medical--w/ waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	01/22/2002
Occupational Pilot:		Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	6200 hours (Total, all aircraft), 966 hours (Total, this make and model), 6100 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 68 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 30 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 2 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Manufacturer:	Bell	Registration:	N1075S
Model/Series:	206L-1	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	43566
Landing Gear Type:	Skid	Seats:	3
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	05/09/2002, 100 Hour	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	4150 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	55 Hours	Engines:	1 Turbo Shaft
Airframe Total Time:	22603 Hours as of last inspection	Engine Manufacturer:	Allison
ELT:	Installed, activated, did not aid in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	250-C30P
Registered Owner:	Monarch Enterprises, Inc.	Rated Power:	650 hp
Operator:	Papillon Airways, Inc.	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	On-demand Air Taxi (135)
Operator Does Business As:	Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters	Operator Designator Code:	PG9A

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	IGM, 4775 ft msl	Observation Time:	1056 PDT
Distance from Accident Site:	60 Nautical Miles	Direction from Accident Site:	173°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Temperature/Dew Point:	29° C / -1° C
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility	10 Miles
Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	9 knots/ 16 knots, 230°	Visibility (RVR):	
Altimeter Setting:	30.01 inches Hg	Visibility (RVV):	
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	Grand Canyon, AZ (1G4)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	Company VFR
Destination:	(NONE)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	1130 MST	Type of Airspace:	Class G; Special

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Minor	Latitude, Longitude:	

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Arnold W Scott	Adopted Date:	10/24/2002
Additional Participating Persons:	Frank J Vavra; FAA Flight Standards District Office; Las Vegas, NV		
Publish Date:			
Investigation Docket:	NTSB accident and incident dockets serve as permanent archival information for the NTSB's investigations. Dockets released prior to June 1, 2009 are publicly available from the NTSB's Record Management Division at pubinq@ntsb.gov , or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/ .		

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