



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Mitchell, Indiana	Accident Number:	CEN24LA017
Date & Time:	October 17, 2023, 14:50 Local	Registration:	N490AE
Aircraft:	BELL HELICOPTER TEXTRON CANADA 206L-4	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Birdstrike	Injuries:	3 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 135: Air taxi & commuter - Non-scheduled - Air Medical (Unspecified)		

Analysis

The air medical flight departed from a hospital and was enroute to the operator's base of operation. About 30 minutes after departure, while in cruise flight, at an airspeed of about 109 kts and an altitude of about 1,058 ft above ground level, the helicopter encountered a bird strike with a black vulture (*Coragyps atratus*). A heavy vibration ensued, and the pilot performed an off-airport landing to a field. The helicopter sustained substantial damage, which was a bent pitch change link for the main rotor system, from the bird strike. There was no mechanical malfunction/failure of the helicopter that would have precluded normal operations.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

The inflight collision with a bird while in cruise flight.

Findings

Environmental issues	Animal(s)/bird(s) - Ability to respond/compensate
Environmental issues	Animal(s)/bird(s) - Effect on equipment

Factual Information

History of Flight

Enroute	Birdstrike (Defining event)
Landing	Off-field or emergency landing

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Flight instructor	Age:	42, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Front
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	4-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Helicopter	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Helicopter	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Class 2 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	June 16, 2023
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	May 1, 2023
Flight Time:	2106 hours (Total, all aircraft), 114 hours (Total, this make and model), 1992 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 38 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 11 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 2 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	BELL HELICOPTER TEXTRON CANADA	Registration:	N490AE
Model/Series:	206L-4	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:	2006	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	52336
Landing Gear Type:	Skid	Seats:	5
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	October 8, 2023 AAIP	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	4450 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Turbo shaft
Airframe Total Time:	7344.2 Hrs as of last inspection	Engine Manufacturer:	Rolls Royce
ELT:	Installed	Engine Model/Series:	250-C30P
Registered Owner:	Air Evac MS Inc	Rated Power:	650 Horsepower
Operator:	Air Evac MS Inc	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	On-demand air taxi (135)
Operator Does Business As:		Operator Designator Code:	EVCA

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	BFR,727 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	4.9 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	14:35 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	350°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Overcast / 3300 ft AGL	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:		Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.1 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	13°C / 6°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Indianapolis, IN (81II)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	Company VFR
Destination:	Paoli, IN	Type of Clearance:	VFR
Departure Time:	15:15 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class E

Airport Information

Airport:	Virgil I Grissom Municipal Airport BFR	Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:		Runway Surface Condition:	Vegetation
Runway Used:		IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	Full stop

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	2 None	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:		Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	3 None	Latitude, Longitude:	38.769667,-86.419167(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Gallo, Mitchell
Additional Participating Persons:	Charles Hoover; Federal Aviation Administration, Indianapolis FSDO; Plainfield, IN
Original Publish Date:	December 7, 2023
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class 4
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=193266

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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](#).