



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Tupelo, Mississippi	Accident Number:	CEN24LA112
Date & Time:	February 6, 2024, 19:15 Local	Registration:	N4054Y
Aircraft:	ROBINSON HELICOPTER COMPANY R44 II	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Tailstrike	Injuries:	1 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

The pilot reported that while attempting to land at his private helipad near a lake at night, he was unable to determine his height above the water. As he prepared to return to the departure airport, the tail rotor contacted the water. The pilot attempted to climb, but the helicopter began an un-commanded yaw to the right. The pilot reduced power and lowered the collective. The helicopter subsequently impacted the water and sustained substantial damage to the main rotor, tail boom, and vertical stabilizer. The pilot reported that there were no preimpact mechanical malfunctions or failures of the helicopter 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 pilot's failure to maintain clearance from water during a dark night landing.

Findings

Personnel issues	Monitoring environment - Pilot
Aircraft	Altitude - Not attained/maintained
Environmental issues	Water - Effect on operation
Environmental issues	Dark - Contributed to outcome

Factual Information

History of Flight

Landing	Tailstrike (Defining event)
Landing-flare/touchdown	Loss of control in flight
Landing-flare/touchdown	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	60, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Single-engine sea; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	4-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Class 3 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	September 21, 2023
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	(Estimated) 1850 hours (Total, all aircraft), 200 hours (Total, this make and model)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	ROBINSON HELICOPTER COMPANY	Registration:	N4054Y
Model/Series:	R44 II	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:	2013	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	13525
Landing Gear Type:	Skid	Seats:	3
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	November 1, 2023 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2500 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	130 Hrs at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, activated, aided in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	IO-540
Registered Owner:	MALONEY LEASING LLC	Rated Power:	245 Horsepower
Operator:	On file	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Does Business As:	Maloney Leasing LLC	Operator Designator Code:	

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Night/dark
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KTUP,341 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	7 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	20:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	285°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	6 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	None / None
Wind Direction:	10°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	N/A / N/A
Altimeter Setting:	30.12 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	8°C / 1°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Tupelo, MS (TUP)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Tupelo, MS	Type of Clearance:	VFR
Departure Time:	19:08 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:		Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 None	Latitude, Longitude:	34.227211,-88.632997(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Rutt, Brian
Additional Participating Persons:	John Parker; FAA - Jackson FSDO
Original Publish Date:	April 12, 2024
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=193774

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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](#).