



AVIATION



HIGHWAY



MARINE



RAILROAD



PIPELINE

Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Jeanerette, Louisiana	Accident Number:	CEN14LA415
Date & Time:	August 10, 2014, 10:15 Local	Registration:	N4690
Aircraft:	Bell 47G 2	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Defining Event:	Unknown or undetermined	Injuries:	1 Fatal
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 137: Agricultural		

Analysis

The commercial pilot/owner was conducting an agricultural application flight in the helicopter. A witness reported observing the helicopter flying about 200 ft above ground level and then descending to just above the sugarcane tops. The helicopter then pitched down and impacted terrain, and it was destroyed.

About 3 days before the accident, the helicopter received a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) ramp check, during which numerous discrepancies with the helicopter were found including, in part, a cracked tailboom tube structure, rusted bolts with improper grip lengths, a disabled transmission chip light, a worn transmission gear with a backed-off locknut, and a lack of proper lubrication. The FAA inspector noted that the helicopter was in a poor condition and considered to be unairworthy. The pilot/owner, who was also a licensed mechanic, performed his own maintenance. It is unlikely that the pilot corrected the maintenance issues in the intervening 3 days; therefore, the airplane was likely unairworthy at the time of the accident. The accident is consistent with the loss of helicopter control for reasons that could not be determined because the helicopter was destroyed at impact.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

The pilot's improper decision to operate an unairworthy helicopter, which resulted in a loss of control and subsequent impact with terrain.

Findings

Aircraft	(general) - Not serviced/maintained
Personnel issues	Decision making/judgment - Pilot
Personnel issues	Aircraft control - Pilot
Aircraft	(general) - Not attained/maintained

Factual Information

History of Flight

Prior to flight	Aircraft inspection event
Maneuvering-low-alt flying	Unknown or undetermined (Defining event)

On August 10, 2014, about 1015 central daylight time, a Bell 47G-2 helicopter, N4690, impacted terrain near Jeanerette, Louisiana. The commercial rated pilot, sole occupant, was fatally injured and the helicopter was destroyed. The helicopter was registered to and operated by Penn-Tex Helicopter, Inc. of Jeanerette, Louisiana, under the provisions of 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 137, as an agricultural flight. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed for the flight, which operated without a flight plan.

A witness who was driving northbound, reported observing the helicopter flying west to east, about 200 ft, above ground level. The helicopter descended to just above the sugarcane tops, and then pitched down. He then observed smoke and assumed the helicopter had crashed.

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspectors responded to the accident site. The helicopter impacted a vacant area of a sugarcane field. The helicopter was destroyed during the impact and evidence of a small post-crash fire was present. A specific deficiency was not identified at the accident site; however, the helicopter was considered to be in an unairworthy condition.

About three days prior to the accident, FAA inspectors were conducting ramp checks and inspected the accident helicopter. The inspectors found numerous discrepancies with the helicopter: the tailboom tube structure cracked through, rusted bolts and improper lengths, a disabled transmission chip light, transmission gear showed signs of wear and a locknut had backed off, and numerous areas that lacked proper lubrication were also observed. The inspectors noted that the helicopter was in poor condition, and considered the helicopter to be unairworthy. A postcrash review of the helicopter's maintenance records revealed they were in order with no discrepancies.

The inspectors reported that they planned further action on the pilot, who was also a licensed mechanic and maintained the helicopter; however, the accident happened before further action could be taken.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Flight instructor	Age:	60
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Unknown
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	Unknown
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane multi-engine; Airplane single-engine; Helicopter	Toxicology Performed:	Yes
Medical Certification:	Class 2 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	May 28, 2014
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	21450 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Bell	Registration:	N4690
Model/Series:	47G 2	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:	1976	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Restricted (Special)	Serial Number:	BB2383
Landing Gear Type:	N/A; Ski	Seats:	
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	100 hour	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2449 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	18 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:		Engine Manufacturer:	LYCOMING
ELT:		Engine Model/Series:	VO-435 SERIES
Registered Owner:	PENN TEX HELICOPTERS INC	Rated Power:	260 Horsepower
Operator:	PENN TEX HELICOPTERS 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:	KARA	Distance from Accident Site:	
Observation Time:	09:53 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	5 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/ None
Wind Direction:	300°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.06 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	31°C / 25°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Jeanerette, LA	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Jeanerette, LA	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:		Type of Airspace:	

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal	Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	Unknown
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal	Latitude, Longitude:	29.912221,-91.668891(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Hatch, Craig
Additional Participating Persons:	Robert Hardwick; FAA FSDO; Baton Rouge, LA
Original Publish Date:	June 1, 2016
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=89834

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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](#).