

Mitchell Rasmussen
Air Safety Investigator
AS-ANC

Date: 03/12/2024

Subject: ANC24LA017 - Pilot Interview

Contact: Elijah Hobbs, Pilot, Jack Harter Helicopters

The pilot stated that after flying past Nu'lolo, near the open-air sea cave he smelled smoke. He checked his gauges and noted that everything was green - no abnormal indications. The pilot immediately decided to fly to Kalalau for a precautionary landing. Less than five seconds passed, and the pilot then heard a 'pop' sound and initially thought that he had lost his oil cooler belt. The pilot then realized that he had encountered a complete and total loss of power and had immediately started descending. He began maneuvering the helicopter to land on nearby Honopū Beach because he knew that it was the only spot available to land. The pilot broadcasted two mayday calls then heard his RPM starting to spike and he realized that he had to shift his focus towards flying and landing the helicopter. The pilot turned the helicopter and lined up to land on the beach beyond some rocks and boulders but short of a rock wall that was at the end of the beach. The pilot flared and pulled collective, and on impact the helicopter rocked forward, towards the chin of the helicopter, then rotated to the right as the helicopter settled and came to rest on its side. In the interest of fire prevention, the pilot then pulled fuel cut-off and throttle-cut-off, shutoff power and subsequently crawled out of the helicopter to assess the situation and assist his passengers. The pilot reported that at some point between the initial pop sound, descent, and impact the engine shutdown without any action on his part. He reported feeling no abnormal vibrations and heard no rattling noises. The pilot noted that, during the emergency descent, the helicopter was initially producing the low rotor alert tone and engine horn was sounding the entire time. The pilot also stated that there was no smoke smell observed at the site after the accident.

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Date: 03/13/2024

Subject: ANC24LA017 - Passenger Interview

Contact: Katie Harivel, Passenger

Ms. Harivel recalled that a safety demo was conducted off-site in the check-in area where staff handed out laminated cards with information on front and back. In her opinion, it was not a very thorough briefing process. Her group then loaded into a van, drove to the airport, went through secure gate, and watched staff prep the aircraft. Two prior tours came back prior to their group departing.

Another helicopter had departed with a tour group and had returned only 15 minutes later. As Ms. Harivel's group was walking out to the accident helicopter, the other group, which had just landed and offloaded from a different helicopter, was walking back to the facility. Ms. Harivel asked what had happened during the flight and a female passenger said a light came on and the pilot elected to turn around.

As Ms. Harivel group approached the aircraft a female staff member gave them seating numbers and loaded them onto the helicopter. The male passengers sat in the back and Ms. Harivel, last to board, sat in the front seat. Prior to departure, the pilot asked if the passengers had any questions.

They flew to the Napali coast, went up coast, and came back down the way they came. Ms. Harivel stated that she then smelled a smoking, burning smell - all the other passengers commented they smelled it also. 30 seconds to 1 minute later, she heard a pop and the engine immediately stopped. It felt like they were not moving forward, just floating. A male passenger in the back asked if everything is ok and the pilot said that he was going to land the helicopter. She heard a beeping sound, and they began to slowly descend. The descent became faster and the pilot maneuvered

close to cliff, straightened out, began a rapid descent which felt like a nosedive into the ground. After hitting the ground, the helicopter flipped and hit the right side.

The pilot immediately kicked out the front window and instructed passengers to get out. She stated that no one knew how to get out of the helicopter. The Pilot told them to "twist the knob." Ms. Harivel felt for the knob and found it by her chest.

She stated that she could not feel her legs and asked for help. Another female passenger said she could not get out before Ms. Harivel got out. The pilot picked up Ms. Harivel, carried her away from the wreckage, and placed her down. The other passengers self-extricated.

Ms. Harivel stated that she believed the pre-flight safety demo was not that thorough. Staff passed out the briefing card and the male briefer had a thick Hawaiian accent. Ms. Harivel stated that she could not keep up with the instructions - at one point, she realized she was on the wrong side of the card when a staff member said, "you can go ahead and skip the next part." She stated that the instructions regarding the donning of the life preserver were thorough. However, she stated that there were no instructions about restraints when loading the helicopter and no one checked the restraint after loading. She recalled that a female staff strapped them in -as Ms. Harivel held her arms out. The female staff member then handed Katie headset, which Katie put it on. Ms. Harivel stated that she received no instructions on how to adjust her restraints or get out of the helicopter.