

Douglas County Sheriff's Office
216 7th Avenue West Alexandria, MN 56308
Phone 320-762-8151 Fax 320-763-4493
Case Number: 16-9795

INCIDENT: Aircraft Crash

DATE/TIME: 09/17/2016 at 0207 hours

LOCATION: [REDACTED]
 Alexandria, MN

COMPLAINANT: Austin Cole Hanson, DOB [REDACTED]
 No address given
 [REDACTED]

WITNESS: Fred Townsend, DOB [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 Alexandria, MN 56308

EVIDENCE: * Recorded statements

OFFICER
ASSIGNED: Douglas County Sheriff's Office
 Alexandria Police Department
 Alexandria Fire Department
 North Memorial Ambulance

NARRATIVE: On 09/17/2016 at approximately 0207 hours, Douglas County Dispatch advised of a possible helicopter crash on the eastside of Lake Winona in Alexandria, MN. I was currently in the City of Brandon, MN and I immediately headed towards the scene.

Upon my arrival at the scene, I noticed officers on scene were beginning to load the first patient. It should be noted while enroute to the scene, Deputy Dan Wacker indicated that there were three victims and it was in fact a North Memorial Air Ambulance that had crashed. I immediately began assisting on scene and continued to do so until all three patients were removed from the crash scene and transported to the Douglas County Hospital.

I spoke with other deputies and Sgt. Lerfald. Sgt. Lerfald asked that officers begin to tape the area off with crime scene tape and begin taking statements from witnesses and neighbors to the crash site.

I retrieved my digital audio recorder and made contact with the nearest residence. He identified himself as Dr. Fred Townsend. He provided me with the following information:

- He was in the bathroom when he heard a helicopter approaching the house.
- The helicopter was very loud and sounded as if it was almost going to fly directly over the house.
- It sounded as if it was coming from the northwest of his location.
- As the helicopter got closer, he heard what sounded to be a second helicopter.

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- He first noticed the helicopter sound on the south side of the house and immediately after that he heard it moving around the house to the north side and then back to the south side of the house.
- As the helicopter returned to the south side of the house, he heard a loud crashing noise that was extremely loud.
- At that point he believed something had struck his house.
- He went outside and looked around his yard.
- He noted debris field and damage to vegetation and trees in the area.
- Other neighbors began to come out.
- As they were standing outside, he began hearing someone yell for help.
- They moved to the southeast of his residence and began finding parts of a helicopter.
- They located a crash helicopter just into the woods to the southeast of his house.
- They began to help on scene.
- Two of the helicopter crew were still inside the helicopter and the third person was approximately five yards to the southwest of the helicopter cabin.
- He continued assisting on scene until law enforcement and EMS arrived and replaced him.

I next went to a residence directly to the north of the residence I was just at. I knocked on the door several times and was not able to make contact with anyone. I went back to the southeast and made contact with a party whose driveway the helicopter crashed next to. They invited me into their home and I briefly spoke with him and his wife. The male party said he had slept through the crash, however, his wife stated she heard it. She described hearing what sounded to be two separate helicopters to the northwest of her residence and then followed by a loud crash. She estimated the time when she first heard the helicopters to the crash was approximately 15 to 20 seconds. She did not see anything. I concluded my conversation with them.

I moved to the next residence to the north and I made contact with the complainant, Austin Hanson. Austin provided me with the following information:

- He was in his bedroom and heard a helicopter.
- He often hears helicopters but this one sounded extremely different.
- He opened his window and saw a helicopter in a bright green light.
- The helicopter and green light were only visible for a couple of seconds.
- The helicopter continued to sound different from previous helicopters he has heard landing.
- After approximately 22 to 30 seconds, he heard a loud crash.
- He put his contacts in and immediately ran outside.
- At first they did not see anything.
- They noticed –inaudible– in his yard and began walking that way.
- As he walked that direction, he heard someone yelling for help.
- This led him to the southwest of his residence to the scene of the crash.

At that point he described the following scene:

- He approached the helicopter, just into the wood line, he noted two parties inside the helicopter.
- A gentleman in a white shirt was seated to the rear portion of the cab.

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- He was still strapped into his seat and unstrapped himself as he (Austin) was on scene.
- Another party wearing a flight suit was pinned in the front part of the cabin.
- This party was conscience and talking to him.
- The party in the white shirt was also conscience and was able to relay some information.
- He then noticed a third crew member approximately five yards to the southwest of the cabin of the helicopter.
- This party was groaning loudly and appeared to have extreme difficulty breathing.
- He began to assist on scene until they were replaced by EMS and law enforcement.

I asked Austin if he had seen or heard anything else that he believed could help me and he just continued to reiterate that the helicopter sounded extremely strange. He said they hear helicopters landing at the airport almost daily with the local Life Link Helicopter being stationed there. I concluded my conversation with him.

I spoke with Sgt. Lerfald and he indicated that he believed that would be enough statements for the evening. I assisted on scene until I cleared to handle a residential burglary alarm.

SUMMATION: I responded to a North Memorial Helicopter crash. I assisted on scene and took three recorded statements from witnesses. This report will be forward to the appropriate agencies and personnel.

Deputy Daryl Giese, # 215

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