

Communication Summary

August 23, 2017

Information from: FAA Inspector Christopher J. Richards



Summary & Factual Information: Inspector Richards, in part, reported: Based on what I saw on the helicopter, every fracture surface shows evidence of failure in overload. I did not see anything that points to fatigue on any of the parts. The pilot had indicated that the mast 'just came off', but what I saw did not correlate with this. One of the rotor blades shattered, much like a baseball bat when hit by a ball in the wrong spot, and the other showed similar but much less significant damage.

The mast seems to have ripped out of the transmission towards the left (aft looking forward) which would be consistent with the results of such a forceful blade strike on the right side of the helicopter. All other damage seems to be secondary damage and failed in overload (showing the classic 45-degree shear lips throughout all fracture surfaces).

... One thing worth noting in [accident] pictures is that the fuel truck was on the right side of the helicopter and the pilot doesn't have much for visibility over his right shoulder (view blocked by a big plastic tank for holding mosquito spray). Also in those same pictures, the fueling hose is shown sprawled out on the ground. This particular design was such that if the pilot tried to take off when the fuel hose was still hooked up to the helicopter the line would not disconnect.

I can attest that the above summary is correct to the best of my knowledge:

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Air Safety Investigator