

Sorensen Tim

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, July 16, 2018 10:46 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Helicopter accident.

My Name is Dave Marsh. [REDACTED]

Im a skydive instructor and live at the Franklin airport in the apartment behind the office. I usually walk back and forth during the day and hang out in my air conditioned living room when Im not needed. Richard will call me if he has tandems and I walk over. So I dont know everything that happened during the day. Just those moments I was there.

A few of our pilots wanted a ride in the helicopter as well as some of the jumpers. My wife wanted a ride too but she was in the apartment most of the day, and only came out once or twice for a few minutes. Richard was adamant that no one would get a ride until he had at least an hour flying it. He wanted to make sure it was safe and he wanted to practice for a while because it was the first time flying this season.

The first time he took it out, it started pretty quick. I estimate he stayed there for at least 10 minutes letting the helicopter warm up. The engine sounded a little rough the first few seconds. I was impressed that within a minute or so the engine sounded really good. When he lifted off it sounded smooth as can be. He hovered about 3 ft off the ground for a while. Then flew slowly around the immediate area between 6 and 12 ft off the ground. After a few minutes it looked like he was precision flying right next the corn field. He would get right up to the edge and fly right next to it. Then turn around and get just as close on the other side. He did that for a little while, then slowly moved over to the gas pump and hovered in place just a minute. He then set it down next to the pump very gently. Everything I saw looked smooth and safe. No jerky movements.

I went inside for about an hour We had been waiting for the clouds to move away so we could get our tandems up. I came out as the first tandem was going up with my coworker. The sky was pretty clear above the airport. Most of the clouds were out of the immediate area. We had plenty of openings. I mentioned to the Lady I was getting ready to take up, that she would have a beautiful video with the clouds on the horizon behind us. The windsock showed the wind was coming from the south. It was pretty light. Probably between five and eight mph.

I didn't see it, but one of the pilots said they put plenty of gas in the Helicopter. He said it was almost full but not topped off.

People were already asking for a ride. Richard was adamant he was going to fly it again for a while before any passengers went up.

I started getting my passenger ready for our jump. Putting her harness on and getting my rig ready. I wasn't watching Richard. I could hear him flying around though. The engine still sounded smooth.

It was between 530 and 6 I believe. I don't know for sure. The first tandem had landed and was standing next to us, I was using the back of our truck to get ready for my tandem. The truck was sitting on the tarmac pretty close to our overhead door. I could see Richard flying North over the fields. My estimate he was about 100 ft off the ground. He turned to the west, still looking fine and sounding good.

Then I saw a plume of white or grey smoke trailing the helicopter as it descended from 100 ft. It didn't drop out of the sky it was still flying west when it dropped below the tall corn. I don't remember if I could still hear the engine or not.

I don't remember hearing a crash. a few of us jumped in the back of the truck, threw out the equipment and hurried out to help Richard.

When we got there the helicopter was on fire and Richard was walking towards us through the bean field. Two of my coworkers went to help him walk back. I stayed with the truck because I thought he looked ok. Believe it or not I was also thinking one less set of foot prints knocking the farmers beans down. If we didn't see him we were prepared to do anything to get him out of the helicopter. We started laughing and crying when we saw he was alive and walking.