

National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Aviation Safety

Washington, DC 20594



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EXAMINATION SUMMARY

March 3, 2026

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A. ACCIDENT

Location: Thibodaux, Louisiana
Date: July 23, 2025
Time: 0630 central daylight time
Aircraft: Bell 206L-1, N2611

B. EXAMINATION SUMMARY

Investigator-in-Charge (IIC)	Timothy Sorensen ¹² Aviation Accident Investigator National Transportation Safety Board Denver, Colorado
Party Coordinator	Dean Johnson ¹² Principal Maintenance Inspector Federal Aviation Administration – Flight Standards Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Party Coordinator	Kurt West ¹ President JBI Helicopters Pembroke, New Hampshire
Participant	Joey Peltier ¹² Director of Maintenance JBI Helicopters Abbeville, Louisiana
Party Coordinator	Gary Howe ² Manager, Air Safety Investigations Bell Textron, Inc. Fort Worth, Texas
Party Coordinator	Jack Johnson ² Air Safety Investigator Rolls-Royce Corp. Indianapolis, Indiana

¹ Present during the on-scene examination.

² Present during the airframe/engine examinations.

C. ACCIDENT SUMMARY

On July 23, 2025, about 0630 central daylight time, a Bell 206L-1 helicopter, N2611, was destroyed when it was involved in an accident near Thibodaux, Louisiana. The pilot was fatally injured. The helicopter was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 137 agricultural application flight.

The wreckage was recovered to Cook and Cook, Inc., Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Post-recovery airframe and engine examinations were conducted on March 3, 2026, by the NTSB with the assistance of the FAA, JBI Helicopters, Bell Helicopter, and Rolls Royce.

D. EXAMINATION SUMMARY

1.0 Accident Site

The helicopter impacted a fallow sugar cane field. Approximate coordinates of the accident site were 29.8013 north latitude, 90.7740 west longitude. The elevation was about 20 feet.

A mature sugar cane field with 6- to 8-foot-high crops bordered the accident field. Both fields were oriented northeast-southwest (030° - 210°). A tree line bordered the west edge of the fields. Fields immediately east, north, and northeast of the mature sugar cane field. A set of powerlines was located about 180 ft from the north edge of the field being sprayed. The lines consisted of three transmission and two static lines. The static lines were about 85 ft above ground level (agl) at the supporting H-frames. The south static line was broken.

The fuselage came to rest lying on its left side, oriented on an approximate 115° heading, about 60 ft north of the broken static line. The right landing skid forward of the attachment strut was separated and located about 70 ft south the broken static line. The upper surface of the separated skid exhibited repetitive abrasion marks consistent with contact to a powerline, and the fracture surface appeared consistent with an overstress failure.

The tail boom was separated at aft fuselage. The aft portion of the tail boom came to rest about 112 ft east-northeast from the fuselage. An aft fuselage fragment was located about 203 ft east of the fuselage. Main rotor blades fragments were located about 50 ft north of the fuselage.

2.0 Airframe Examination³

Bell 206L-1 (s/n 45417)

The fuselage came to rest on its left side and exhibited extensive crushing damage consistent with impact. The tailboom was fractured near the intercostal support, with additional fractures located both forward and aft of the horizontal stabilizer. The outboard portions of both horizontal stabilizers were separated and located at the accident site. The vertical stabilizers remained attached to the tailboom and appeared intact. The landing skids remained attached with exception of the right skid segment forward the strut as noted previously.

The engine and main rotor transmission remained attached to the fuselage. The main rotor hub was separated and laying adjacent to the fuselage. The main rotor mast was fractured at the transmission. The fracture surface displayed a rough, granular surface along with 45° shear planes consistent with an overstress separation. The upper portion of the rotor mast was attached to the hub and exhibited similar fracture features. The mast displayed a gradual bend also consistent with an overstress separation.

The inboard portions of each blade remained secured to the hub. The remainder of the blades, outboard of the inboard skin doublers, were fragmented.⁴ The separated rotor blade sections were located about 50 feet north of the fuselage. Both blade sections were continuous to the tip with each counterweight securely attached. Both blade leading edges exhibited repetitive abrasion marks consistent with contact to a powerline. The pitch change links were fractured consistent with overstress.

Main rotor transmission continuity was confirmed. Specifically, rotation of the engine power turbine disc resulted in corresponding rotation of the drive shaft and remaining rotor mast segment on the transmission.

Co-pilot (left side) flight controls were not installed. The copilot pedals were present and properly locked out from operation. Movement of the cockpit collective control resulted in corresponding movement of the collective hydraulic servo. Similarly, cockpit cyclic control inputs produced appropriate movement of the associated cyclic hydraulic servos. The servos appeared intact and were securely attached to the mating airframe structure.

The control tubes from the right anti-torque pedal assembly to cockpit bellcrank were separated consistent with impact forces (overstress). Multiple separations of the pedal control tubes from the cockpit bellcrank aft were observed.

³ Directions related to accident site placement and component damage/deformation are with respect to an intact airframe unless otherwise noted.

⁴ A representative of the airframe manufacturer stated that main rotor blade separation immediately outboard of the doublers was consistent with the blades being under power at the time of the failure.

The control tubes were bent and the fracture surfaces appeared consistent with impact to the fuselage and separation of the tail boom following the wire strike.

Cockpit cyclic and collective control continuity were confirmed from the control sticks to the servo actuators. The left control tube from the actuator to the fuselage upper deck bellcrank was separated consistent with overstress. The center and right control tubes were intact, as were the pitch change links from the bellcrank to the lower portion of the swash plate.

The throttle was observed in the FLY position. Movement of the throttle was restricted because of structural damage near the engine area sustained during the accident sequence.

The elevator control tubes exhibited multiple separations from the cockpit leading to the horizontal stabilizer. These separations were consistent with impact forces and separation and fragmentation of the tail boom.

All tail rotor drive shaft segments had separated from the tail boom due to fractured hanger bearings. The No. 1 segment had been pulled from the oil cooler blower shaft. The No. 2 TRDS exhibited a torsional fracture. and the No. 6 segment had separated from the TRGB.

The tail rotor gear box rotated freely by hand with no abnormal sounds. Oil was present in the gear box, and the chip detector was free of debris. Both tail rotor blades were unremarkable, and all associated hardware was present. The adjustable rod to the pitch change lever was bent during the accident sequence, preventing pitch change of the blades. The tail rotor static stops showed evidence of hard contact with the yoke but were not bent.

The recording hour (Hobbs) meter indicated 415.9 hours at the time of the exam.

3.0 Engine Examination

Rolls-Royce 250-C30P (s/n CAE895601)

The engine remained within the engine compartment but exhibited extensive impact damage. The exhaust duct was crushed nearly flat against the exhaust collector. The exhaust duct had to be removed to access the power turbine.

All engine control fittings, including pneumatic and oil lines, B-nuts, clamps and associated hardware, were checked by hand for torque. All accessible B-Nuts were at least hand-tight and were marked with torque paint.

The compressor (N1) was rotated by hand. Rotation of the compressor was difficult. There was no evidence of impact damage to any compressor blades. N1 continuity was confirmed from the compressor through the accessory gearbox to the starter/generator, as well as to the gas generator turbine (verified by inserting a boroscope into the gas generator turbine).

The power turbine (N2) was visually examined and exhibited no evidence of operational damage or failure. The power turbine rotated easily by hand, resulting in corresponding rotation of the main drive shaft and tail rotor drive shaft. Drive continuity was continuous through the main transmission to the remains of the main rotor mast.

Rotational witness marks were present on both the main power output shaft, as well as the tail rotor drive steel shaft. The steel shaft had disengaged from the tail rotor drive train during the accident sequence, however the steel shaft left evidence on the aft firewall of continued rotation and flailing after disengagement. The oil cooler fan (squirrel cage) exhibited extensive rotational damage, with all the fan blades sheered from the fan rotor.

The engine oil tank was separated from the airframe during the crash sequence and torn open; no oil was present. The airframe-mounted oil filter was intact; the blocked-filter bypass indicator showed the filter to not be in bypass.

The engine-mounted oil filter was opened and examined. The filter housing contained clean, bright oil which had no abnormal smell. The filter element was removed and examined; the filter had captured carbon debris and a small amount of metal.

The airframe fuel filter was removed and opened. The filter housing contained roughly a pint of clean, bright fuel. The filter element was free of debris.

The fuel spray nozzle was removed and examined. The spray face was intact and did not exhibit excessive carbon coating.

Boroscope examination of the combustor section (via the fuel spray nozzle port) revealed no evidence of abnormal combustion or operational damage of the combustion liner. The first stage turbine blades exhibited evidence of thermal erosion.

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