

Steven Paul Williams statement on the events of 24 April 2025.

I arrived at the Granite City base at approximately 1830 ready for the night shift. The aircraft and crew were out on a patient flight when I arrived at the base. I took the time before they returned to duty in and checked the weather for the region for the night.

When the aircraft returned, I had a discussion with the outgoing pilot, Ryan Fretz, about the flights they had for the day and possible limitations that the evening's weather might place on operations. Ryan remained at the base while I performed a preflight of the aircraft. Ryan answered the questions I had pertaining to the aircraft, i.e. location of cockpit switches, operation of the FM radio and comm panel. We also discussed the issues they have been having with nesting birds and the setting up and storing of the devices used to deter them. Jason, the flight paramedic, was restocking the medical supplies in the back of the aircraft during my preflight.

After the completion of the preflight, I was still speaking with Ryan on the helipad, Chace, the flight nurse. came out of the hangar and asked if it was still the plan to go to the PR event that had been scheduled for earlier that day. Ryan gave me the details of the PR and the location of the landing zone adjacent to the Hartford Fire Department. He described the obstacles surrounding the LZ, powerlines on the north and east sides with trees on the west and south side. I also reviewed the aerial photo of the LZ in Google Earth. I anticipated landing either from the north or south along the north/south road just east of the grass LZ. I also noted some map features to help me locate the LZ once I was over Hartford. Ryan offered to drive up to the LZ to be present on the ground with a flashlight to help me locate the LZ. Given the information I received I made the decision to go forward with the PR. I called AirComm and made a request for a flight plan for the PR. Once completing and submitting the manifest and risk assessment in Complete Flight, OCC issued a flight release.

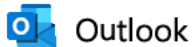
Jason, Chace and I walked out to the aircraft. We stowed the bird deterring devices and extension cords running to the aircraft. The crew and I performed preflight walk arounds of the aircraft before entering the aircraft. I performed then verified the prestart checklist. Before starting the engines, I asked if the crew was ready to start. After their verbal confirmation I ran the engine start procedure. I asked the crew if they were ready for takeoff and upon their verification, we departed for the PR. I picked up the aircraft into a hover and balanced the torques on the engines before departing. Shortly after departure the flight nurse called out the door light. All three of us verified that there were no open doors and we continued the flight as allowed by the flight manual.

I flew a northeast course somewhat paralleling the course of the river up to Hartford. Once we arrived over the west side of Hartford, I used the features that I picked out earlier on Google maps to help find the general area of the LZ in town. The LZ was lit with two rows of yellow lights, spotlight shining upwards on the powerlines on the northside and Ryan waiving the flashlight in the air. I picked up the LZ out of the right side of the aircraft as we flew up the west side of town. As we circled the LZ, I observed the area both through and around the NVGs to decide on the best approach path for the LZ. I decided to make the approach from the north into the LZ.

I made the approach into the LZ keeping the powerlines on the north side in sight as long as possible. After passing over the lines I made a very steep approach down to the LZ. At some point during the final descent into the LZ I asked the crew to clear the tail so I could rotate it away the powerlines. They cleared the tail, and I rotated the tail to the left. Before settling the aircraft on the ground, I rotated the tail again, so the aircraft was facing the fire station. I performed the engine shut down procedure. The med crew exited the aircraft after I gave them the clear and they kept the LZ secure while the blades were still spinning.

The PR was a LZ training event that was conducted by one of the flight nurses from the Granite City base. Once completed the decision was made to return to base. One of the firefighters asked me if I wanted the spotlight to remain on the powerlines to the north and I told him yes. I observed the obstacles, trees and powerlines, around the LZ from the ground. I made the decision to depart the LZ with the aircraft pointed towards the powerlines on the northside and slide the aircraft to the east in the climb to avoid the tree on the south.

The medical crew and I performed a preflight walk around and entered the aircraft. At some point after putting on my helmet and before takeoff, I noticed I could not see the uppermost wire on the northside without the aid of the NVGs and decided to make the departure with the NVGs down. After completing the prestart, start and before flight procedures with the acknowledgement that the crew as ready to takeoff picked the aircraft up into a hover. In the hover, I balanced the torques on the engines and started lifting the aircraft out of the landing zone. I used the powerlines in front of me for reference as I climbed up and to the right out of the LZ. Shortly after, in the climb, the aircraft stopped climbing, made a sudden turn around the yaw axis and descended rapidly impacting the ground.



Accident Statement

Below is my account of my shift and the events of 4/24/2025 to the best of my recollection.

Prior to my scheduled shift I had proper rest and was not feeling ill or had any other concerns.

Granite City is my primary base and N880SL is our primary aircraft. Our day Pilot was Ryan Fretz is one of our primary pilots. My partner, Jason Pierce, is a travel flight nurse who has worked previous shifts at Granite City and flown in N880SL. The night pilot was Steven Williams who is a St. Louis Children's pilot and has picked up shifts at Granite City in the past.

At the beginning of our shift we checked the aircraft and did our daily checks as well as had our morning brief with Ryan. The aircraft and medical equipment were normal with no concerns. There were no anticipated weather or operational issues. We were aware of a public relations event that was a landing zone class with Hartford Fire which was scheduled to be a 1900 and completed by Ryan prior to the end of his duty shift.

During the shift we completed two patient transports. Both were interfacility transfers. The second transport was out of the ordinary as the hospital was placed on lockdown due to a threat made to a shooting victim in the ER which caused us to be delayed at the bedside and unable to leave until the lockdown was over.

We arrived back at base from that transport shortly after 1900. Steven was already at base waiting for our return.

After arriving back at base Jason and I began restocking medical equipment and completing paperwork for charting. During this time Ryan was out at the aircraft with Steven giving him a brief re-orientation to the base as Steven had not worked at the base recently.

A little bit after being back at base Danica, our flight nurse who was teaching the LZ class, reached to say they were nearly finished with the class and asked if we were still able to attend for the hands on aircraft training. Jason and I discussed it and agreed that on our end we could still do the PR. Our charting for the first flight was nearly completed and the charting for the second flight could wait till after the PR. We did not feel fatigued or distressed from previous flights and our operational time was well within what we typically do in a shift. Personally, I did not feel rushed or pressured to participate in the PR event. We commonly do multiple patient transports and/or PRs in a shift.

After that we went out and discussed the PR with Steven. Ryan was still at base and discussed the landing zone. They looked at the LZ on the Ipad and discussed the known obstacles in the area. I personally have landed at the Hartford LZ in the past on multiple occasions however it has been

approximately a year since we have performed training there. From my understanding another flight company was performing their training over the last year and had also landed there for LZ classes.

We completed our shift brief with Steven. Steven agreed that we could complete the PR flight and then proceeded to call AirCom for a flight request and obtain OCC approval.

Jason, Steven, and I completed our preflight walk arounds and entered the aircraft. Steven and I had our night vision goggles as we currently had two pairs as our third was sent out for routine maintenance. Steven did his checklist, and we departed as normal.

Arrive overhead to the LZ Steven performed is orbits and recon. He identified the LZ and obstacles. We all agreed to proceed with landing. Steven approached from the north and then turned to orient the aircraft nose to the north towards the firehouse. Steven completed shutdown and we departed the aircraft and complete our post landing walk arounds.

Obstacles noted were the powerlines to the 12 o'clock, a fence and tree to the 8/9 o'clock and a tree to the 6 o'clock of the aircraft as it was oriented with the nose to the north. The street to the 3 o'clock was shut down and blocked off. There was portable scene lights and fire apparatus lights that light up the LZ. I felt that all obstacles were clearly visible.

At this time the fire department approached the aircraft. Danica and Ryan were present and went over aircraft shut down and emergency procedures with the fire department as part of the LZ training. After that we had a general Q&A session. After that was complete, we prepared to depart back to base.

Jason, Steven, and I completed our walkarounds and entered the aircraft. Steven completed his preflight checklist and brief as normal. I do not recall if Steven was under NVG for takeoff or if he was unaided. I had my NVG ready to deploy however felt there was too much ambident light to use them. The fire department had portable scene lights underneath the wires to the north that light up a large portion of the LZ as well as had headlights on their firetruck and streetlights.

As soon as we started lifting off I felt that the aircraft was drifting aft. My initial thought to myself was that Steven was intentionally sliding aft to gain more distance from the powerlines to our 12 O'clock however after a couple seconds I felt that the aircraft was continuously and quickly moving aft and that we were significantly farther back from our initial landing spot. I began to say stop, having concern for the tree to our 3 o'clock, however before I could get the word out, I felt and heard the impact with the tree. At this point the helicopter began to spin and then impacted the ground. Upon impact to the ground I lost consciousness .

When I awoke, I realized that were had crashed. Steven was already out of the aircraft. After a few seconds of processing what had happened I began to try to perform emergency shut down of the aircraft. I reached up to shut down the engines at which time I had shooting pain down my back and legs and realized that my back was likely broken. I was able to get the throttles pulled back to idle however could not engage the detents to fully shut of the engines. At that time I was in intense pain and did not try to reach for the fuel/battery shut offs.

Shortly after this Ryan approached the aircraft and instructed me to jettison the door however it appeared the door was stuck into the ground. I told Ryan not to move me as my back was likely broken and it was at that time he informed me the aircraft was on fire and that I had to be extricated. Ryan was

able to forcibly pull back the door and pull me out and away from the aircraft. Ryan went back into the aircraft to finish the shut down and deploy the fire bottles.

After that Danica continued to pull me farther away from the aircraft. At that point EMS arrived and rendered medical care to me and I was transported to the hospital.

Recollection of April 24, 2025 from Jason Pierce

- I arrived to the Granite City base at approximately 0645 well rested and ready for shift change at 0700
- Chase (Flight Nurse) and I spent some time with the offgoing crew discussing their shift and performing the daily counts of the narcotics and blood.
- Brief completed with Ryan (AM Pilot). Aircraft taken out of service by maintainers for scheduled maintenance. Chase and I did not check the aircraft at this time so as to not distract the mechanics from doing their job. That would be completed after the aircraft was put back into service.
- Daily assignments completed - such as online chart reviews etc.
- Scheduled maintenance completed, Arch 1 back in service, aircraft medical equipment checked off and aircraft prepared for flight to complete required test flight with Auto pulse (new mechanical CPR device to Air Methods)
- After testing Auto Pulse in flight - Arch 1 was diverted for interfacility transport from Alton hospital to St Louis.
- Flight completed without complication and Arch 1 crew returned to base, restocked supplies and were back in service.
- I began working on documentation from patient transport, ate lunch and relaxed for a little bit.
- 2nd flight request - Granite City hospital to St Louis. This transport was an ICU transport that took a little more time than usual related to a hospital lock down that took place while we were with the patient in the ICU. Arch 1 aircraft returned to base until hospital and law enforcement ensured that it was safe to proceed with transport. Air Methods leadership was kept informed and Arch 1 crew worked with hospital management as well as Air methods leadership and local law enforcement to complete the transport safely without complication.
- After completing this patient transport Arch 1 crew returned to base.
- Ryan (AM Pilot) conducted shift change with Steven (PM Pilot)
- Chase and I began restocking medical supplies and starting required documentation from previous transport.
- Arch 1 crew was notified that they were requested to attend a scheduled LZ lecture that was originally planned for earlier in the evening, but now the time has been changed to accommodate Arch 1 crew attending after completing pilot shift change and previous patient transport.
- Introductions were completed between myself and Steven as we had not met prior to this shift. Shift briefing completed and once Steven had all required releases, Steven, myself and Chase all walked out to the aircraft. 2 pairs of NVG's were available for use at this time and I was going to be sitting in the patient compartment of the aircraft so I did not have NVG's for the night shift. Walk arounds were completed and I loaded into the left aft facing seat and buckled my seatbelt. Steven confirmed everyone secured and ready for lift off and then we departed base for the LZ lecture in Hartford, IL.
- I was able to hear Chase and Steven identify the LZ as well as identify potential hazards to flight prior to making the decision to land. Being in the aft facing seat my view was

limited, but I attempted to identify any other hazards to flight as we made our final approach however, I was not able to identify anything else that I believed needed to be reported.

- We landed safely at the LZ. Chase identified first that there were several people in front of the aircraft and after receiving approval from Steven came off coms and stepped out of the aircraft - to watch to make sure no one approached the aircraft. I also coordinated with Steven to step out of the aircraft at the 3 o'clock position to make sure no one approached the aircraft from the local establishment across the street. The aircraft was shut down without event.
- The LZ training was very typical with flight crew interacting with the fire department staff.
- At the end of the LZ training the fire department staff went back to the fire department to observe Arch 1 lifting off from the scene. Walk arounds were completed. I recall taking as much time as needed to look over the aircraft thoroughly and identify potential hazards to lift off - tree, wires.
- I loaded into the aircraft and belted into the aft facing seat on the left side of the aircraft. Communication was verified between the flight crew and I verified I was secured and ready for lift off.
- As we lifted off - I was looking out the left side window (left side of aircraft - my right) and I thought it looked like we were drifting aft - before I said anything I saw tree leaves fly/scatter and I heard a noise that I believed was the tail rotor striking the tree leaves. I am not certain of that - in my mind that is what I was thinking. Immediately I felt the aircraft shift/rock and then it felt like we briefly stabilized and I had a quick thought that maybe the aircraft was back under control and we could safely land. Shortly after that I could feel that we were rapidly falling to the ground.
- When we struck the ground I either briefly lost consciousness or my eyes just shut. When my eyes opened, the door next to me was gone and I immediately could feel that my back was in extreme pain. My seatbelt remained buckled and my legs were out of the aircraft. One of my feet was pinned between the bottom of the aircraft and the ground. I could see what I believed to be fuel on the ground and a small fire. I knew I needed to get my foot out and get away from the aircraft. The other two thoughts I had were: 1. Once I got free to try to get to the front and help my partners but I didn't think my back could tolerate that. 2. Make sure the blades were stopped so I didn't get killed but turning blades. Once my foot was free I self extricated to what I felt was as far as I could get on my own and laid down on the ground related to my back pain.
- I could see that my partners were getting help to get out of the aircraft and someone came to check on me and hold my head to protect my spine. Shortly after that I could see that the fire was more extensive in the aircraft and I asked to be drug farther away from the aircraft while we were awaiting EMS to arrive to begin administering care and transport to the trauma center.
- I was provided EMS care and transport to St Louis University Medical Center for Trauma care not available in the local community.