

# S-76 Accident Interview Notes with Mr. Kent Swanson 07 OCT 2025

Interview Conducted By: ASI Daniel Latimer SAT FSDO

## Introductions and purpose of interview.

We are conducting an accident investigation on behalf of the NTSB.

How long have you been flying helicopters?

Answer: I've been flying helicopters since 1989.

Approximately how many hours do you have in M/M? This variant?

Answer: Approximately 60 per year. 200 hours total time in S-76D.

How many times have you landed at TA22? At night? Did you have/were you using any synthetic vision system in the helicopter?

Answer: I've landed 20-25 times at TA22, both daytime landings and at night.

Answer: I did not have, nor was I using any synthetic vision system in the helicopter  
(on 31 AUG 2025).

Answer: The flight was conducted under VFR, at night, unaided.

Were you the PIC sitting in the right seat the night of the accident? Who was the pilot flying?

Answer: Yes.

Answer: I was. (Swanson)

Was Mr. Buehrer acting as the SIC and sitting in the left seat the night of the crash?

Answer: Yes.

What were the weather conditions (near the intended point of landing) the night of 31 AUG 2025?

Answer: 1800 overcast with haze and lots of moisture, no fog. 50% illumination due to overcast and haze.

Was TA22 lit up the night of the crash? Were you provided this information? Were you in contact with anyone on the ground?

Answer: The Mirasol Ranch manager said he turned on the flood lights, but they are on a timer and only stay on for 90 mins. The helipad lights are activated by radio (pilot controlled lighting). We spoke to ranch manger from DAL, but not airborne.

Did you have a local approach for TA22, a heliport diagram, or a GPS Point in Space coordinate to fly to? Was this entered into your FMS?

Answer: Yes, we have an RNAV LPV approach to Mirasol Hills. I believe that the approach was loaded, but I'm not sure if it was activated.

We found an iPad in the crash wreckage. Were you running Foreflight or a similar flight software on the iPad for SA? Was the heliport loaded into the Foreflight?

Answer: Yes, we were both running foreflight on two iPads each mounted on the side of the instrument panel. The approach and route to destination was loaded on both iPads.

Have you flown this passenger before?

Answer: Yes.

Were there any company or outside pressure/demands applied to you and Mr. Buehrer that night? The FRAT lists your answer as a medium for urgency/pressure.

Answer: The last-minute nature of the trip (pop-up), caused the medium selection

What CFR Part was the flight conducted under?

Answer: It was flown under 14 CFR Part 135

The witnesses stated that you overflowed their homes but then returned a few minutes later, lower and slower than normal. Were you as a crew aware that you were approx. 1.5 miles from your intended point of landing?

Answer: When coming in for landing at Mirasol Hills, we typically fly a dogleg to the east to avoid Cabela Ranch, then a slight deviation to the west to land at the Mirasol Ranch in a SSE direction.

Was the helicopter equipped with EGPWS or TAWS and did you hear it activate prior to impacting the trees?

Answer: The helicopter was equipped with TAWS. I don't remember the TWAS giving an alert.

Was there anything unusual that occurred during the flight or during the time leading up to the flight? Any mechanical malfunctions or failures (partial or complete)?

Answer: The AP failures within the previous 6-8 months. We experienced no abnormalities prior to the helicopter impacting the trees.

Did you have any issues with other aircraft traffic, ATC, ground lights, laser pointers, passenger demands, or any distractions prior to attempting to land at TA22?

Answer: No.

Additional Questions for Mr. Swanson:

1. **This designated flying pilot changed when Mr. Beuhrer stated that he had never flown into TA22 at night. Was this your call as the PIC, or was this per the Paradigm GOM?**

Answer: Mr. Beuhrer requested not to be the flying pilot when it became obvious from the departure delays that the landing would take place at night, and I agreed to the change.

2. **What did you mean when you stated that, "due to previous autopilot failures, we did not want to attempt a night IFR flight into the ranch?"**

Answer: We did not want to be in IMC conditions with known autopilot issues for fear of losing control of the helicopter should the autopilot have a failure while IMC.

3. **In your statement you said, "We both acknowledged the pad lights in sight." What did you see?**

Answer: The Mirasol Hills pad lights are green. We both said we've got the green lights (in sight).

4. **You wrote in your statement that, "I cross-checked the GPS map display with the outside visual reference to confirm alignment, which matched." Was the GPS showing that you were 1.5 miles to the north of TA22?**

Answer: "We were not...I can't say that there was a discrepancy."

5. In your statement you wrote that you “Decoupled the aircraft,” was that a normal procedure for landing, or was there an issue with the AP?

Answer: I did this (decoupled the autopilot) in preparation for a normal landing.

6. Please clarify the remaining portion of your statement. “Within seconds, I realized the outside visual cues were not matching my control inputs, and I was losing reliable references. I transitioned to instruments, but the panel was already shaking severely, making it unreadable. That is my last recollection of the flight before regaining awareness in the wreckage.”

Answer: When setting up to land, I made a slight right turn and then back to the left. I’ve made many approaches into the Mirasol Hills pad. My ground references were not moving in the way I expected them to. It took me a few moments to figure out what was going on and by then the instrument panel was shaking badly and that’s all I remember.

7. What do you think caused the accident?

Note: \*Mr. Swanson struggled for words and appeared to be unable to provide an answer or explanation as to why the accident occurred.

8. In your opinion, were there any contributing factors to the accident? Any latent conditions?

Answer: Not that I can think of other than the pop-up nature of the flight, and the SIC unfamiliarity with landing at night. The Mirasol Ranch manager turned the flood lights on, but they come on for 90 mins only and he had already gone home.

9. Why did you not turn on the landing light prior to landing?

Answer: I don’t recall seeing any haze, but it was an expectations-based decision (not to turn on the landing light).

10. Did you as a crew run the Before Landing Check prior to impacting the trees?

Answer: Yes. After I decoupled, I called for the before landing check.

**11. Do you recall experiencing any night or visual illusions?**

**Answer: I do not recall any night or visual illusions.**



**Daniel T. Latimer**

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