

Jeff Ponds Statement

February 7 2013,

On February 6 2013, I was PIC of a Hiller UH-12B registration N5072R performing commercial scenic rides for Florida Biplanes Inc. at the Merritt Island Airport (KCOI). The first 5 flights were uneventful but on the 6th flight the helicopter lost power on climbout and I was forced to perform an emergency landing.

I am a commercially rated rotary wing pilot and CFI with approximately 700 hours total RW and 200 hours dual given. I currently have approximately 20 hours within this particular aircraft. I also hold a fixed wing SEL with private pilot privileges and have approximately 200 hours in fixed wing aircraft. I arrived at the airport to begin flying at approximately 3pm. I was well rested and had no physical issues or abnormalities. I performed a thorough preflight of the aircraft, weather, and operations area.

The first ride began around 1600hrs with the aircraft functioning well and no abnormalities noted. All engine temps and pressures were normal. Throughout that afternoon my flight path had been along the taxiway remaining north of the active runway to keep separation from area traffic and provide for suitable emergency procedures landing locations throughout the departure phase of flight.

The incident flight was at 1800hrs and, on warm up, no abnormalities or unusual sounds or vibrations were noted. Fuel was at an estimated 12 to 15 gallons based upon both the gauge reading and actual calculated flight time since full. During the takeoff all temps and pressures were confirmed normal and power appeared normal. The hover was nice and stable with nothing unusual noted. After making a call to Merritt Island traffic I began to initiate departure. The departure was normal and smooth. At last check prior to the incident the aircraft was accelerating and passing through approximately 45 knots IAS with nothing abnormal noted. While climbing thru approximately 75 to 100 feet agl I heard a pop and the engine lost power. To maintain rotor rpm the collective was lowered and right pedal was applied to counter a left yaw that occurred but I was unable to obtain a straight heading in line with the taxi way and direction of flight with application of right pedal. Upon approaching the ground I applied back pressure on the cyclic to reduce my airspeed and prepare for ground contact. At this point I was still unable to obtain flight direction heading control with right pedal application. I applied forward cyclic to level the aircraft, planning for a level ship landing, and pulled collective prior to ground contact.

Ground contact was made with a slight forward airspeed and a slight left yaw during the ground run. The left hand skid collapse at the end of the slide. At this point I reached down and pulled/confirmed all engine controls closed. I then checked on the condition of my passengers. The right passenger confirmed he was o.k. and the left passenger reported he was o.k. but did have some lower back pain. The main rotor blades were still turning, so I instructed both occupants to remain belted in their seats until the aircraft stabilized. I then turned off the Master switch. Once the aircraft had stabilized and the rotors had stopped all three of us exited the aircraft and walked clear of it.