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To: [Allevne Eric](#)
Subject: N4047H Pilot Accident Report
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Hi Eric,

Here is the report that I promised you today. I will try to add a satellite image for an aid.

On April 4, 2019, I, Lee Hilty, License number 3266136 was flying N4047H, a 1990 Robinson R22 owned by my Dad to do a few errands and visiting friends. That day I flew from W78 to some of my Dad's private properties doing maintenance on a trailer that I use for work. So I had various items with me. A large wrench set, hand wipes, vise grips, hydraulic hoses and \$700 cash in a paper sunglasses box. After this I went to an auction that my amish friends were having. I stayed there until 4 o'clock or so. Then took off for the house to shower. Around 6-6:30 I landed at a private strip owned by a friend of mine that had invited me over for supper. After supper he asked if I should leave before the sun goes down. I assured him that it would not be an issue. We then played some card games and talked until around 9:30PM. At least twice during this time, he asked me if I wanted him to shine lights from the south end of the runway for a guide. Again I assured him that it would not be necessary. This is basically the last point that I can remember until I woke up in the ICU at UNC.

From what I have learned from my friend's account and the facts at the crash sight, this is my best description of the accident;

The moon was in a waxing crescent phase so it was very dark even though it was a clear night. No wind that I recall. The airstrip is close to north and south with trees on 3 sides and a pond with random trees to the east. Two hangars on the northern end of the runway with a concrete pad which is where I had landed the R22 pointing approximately north.

Around 10PM, he drove me to the airstrip and shined his lights at the helicopter for me to get everything ready. I climbed in the right side and fired it up. I do not remember putting my seat belt on, but I ALWAYS do and my friend said that I did. I turned on the nav lights and headlights. At this point I remember that he turned his lights off and then he turned his park lights back on so I could see him. I then lifted to a hover and turned what I thought was 180 degree turn. By my calculation later, it looks like it was only 155 degrees. After the pedal turn I started my departure toward the south.

I had plenty of room for a safe departure but I did not point in the correct direction. At approximately 50 AGL my main rotor came in contact with a 70ft pine tree. I have a vague memory of pine branches directly in front of my windscreen. I had taken off with too much nose low attitude for my lights to shine on the trees. At this point the rotor blades sliced through the tree and folded up. At some point, the right fuel tank ruptured, detached and flew 60ft to the south into the woods. The left fuel tank ruptured as well but did not detach. The craft spun to the right 270 degrees and fell 10-12ft to the west of the tree. Upon impact, the craft was in a nose low attitude pointing east. This is evident by the angle that the landing

skids had stabbed into the ground.

No one knows how I was removed from the craft with a three point seatbelt. My best guess is that I must have pulled full collective when I saw the branches (which was too late) and my fingers caught the buckle release. Which I am very grateful for! Then on impact I was ejected out the front windscreen which seems to be evident by the eight lacerations to my face. But this is only a theory and the fact that I did not suffer a broken right arm makes me think this is not true. I do believe that the seat frame design by Robinson is what saved me from a broken back, although I did partly crush one vertebra.

Somewhere in this half second crash, I must have gotten fuel on my back and right hand because I had 2nd and 3rd degree burns on 15-20% of my body. (This aircraft was not equipped with fuel tank bladders). I do not know what sparked the fuel except maybe the electrical panel. I also had a majorly dislocated and broken right ankle.

Meanwhile, my friend saw this whole thing transpire. He drove straight to me and heard the engine still running at full RPM. Because it was so dark and in the woods, he could not reach me without the very real risk of getting killed by a spinning rotor. He then discovered that he had no phone and no flashlight. So he drove back to the house to collect said items and called emergency services while driving back to the crash sight. This took about 3-4 minutes. At this point he came into the woods calling my name, thinking he had just witnessed me die. He said that I answered him like I didn't know why he was yelling. He found me by a different tree 8-12ft away from the helicopter. I had blood all over my face and pants.

Because I was alive and the cuts on my face made it appear that brain damage may have been sustained, he must have then called for a life flight. I had a t shirt and a button down long sleeve shirt on at supper, but he said that I was shirtless when he found me. I guess I took them off because of the fire. I later found only the cuffs to my long sleeve shirt, and the t shirt with a huge hole where my burns were. My friend then helped me to his truck and asked me to get in and sit down. He reported to me later that I refused to enter his truck with blood on my clothes and asked him to set me on the tailgate to wait for emergency services. I believe the ambulance arrived in 20 minutes and the life flight helicopter arrived in 45 minutes.

I do remember being in a tight space with someone very near me, and it felt like I was in the air again. I think that would have been the life flight. The next thing that I remember is being slide off a cold and uncomfortable stretcher onto another bed type device. Then in the ER with a few of my friends while they were stitching my face. I was told that I never lost consciousness, I was talking with people and answering questions but I don't remember about 3-5 hours of that night.

While in the ICU, they said that I kept telling them that I had \$700 cash in the helicopter in a paper box and that someones needs to look for it. A few friends and family members went to the sight to look at the wreckage and no one turned anything up. Then after the FAA had gone, my friend started picking things up and found my cash completely unharmed in a smashed paper box under the right side door which was 5ft south of the helicopter. The plastic wrap the wrenches were in was melted. The two headsets Bose and DC One were only melted circuit boards. My wallet was half burned and the interior was completely burned out.

This is the account of the accident to the best of my knowledge. I do want to add that I completely believe this was pilot error. If I had listened to my friend, none of this would have

happened. Also, with only 100+ hours in rotor, I should have not been taking off from an off-airport location to begin with. But I am still here and the lesson is learned.

Attached, you will find an image of the location of the accident. Red is the approach and Blue is the departure.

Thank you Eric, if there is anything else you need, please let me know.

Lee Hilty

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There are Old Pilots and there are Bold Pilots, But there are No Old Bold Pilots