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**Date:** 10/19/2022

**Subject:** ERA23LA011, Correspondence with Right Rear Seat Passenger Tim Wells

The following excerpt is derived from an email received on 10/19/2022 from FAA Inspector Mr. Marquin Israel. The information is directly copied from an email from Mr. Wells (in blue, below):

### N5DF Helicopter Crash Statement

Date of Crash: October 8, 2022

Submission of Statement to FAA: October 19, 2022

Prior to departing Useppa Island for the landing zone located on the property of 15660 Pine Ridge Road in Fort Myers, FL (26.51344° N, 81.93694° W) the pilot discussed his flight plan with us; he indicated that we would take off and fly in the general direction of the main land and the passengers & I would give him directions by voice to the landing zone (LZ). I looked up the GPS coordinates on my phone of the LZ assuming that's what the pilot would want to input into his flight instruments but he said it wasn't necessary and that we could guide him there once we got over the main land. I was seated on the right side of the helicopter directly behind the pilot. Weather on Useppa Island was clear with no rain in the forecast, we departed around 5:40PM.

We crossed over Pine Island flying with a southeast heading over St. James City headed for the Sanibel Causeway. When we arrived at the Sanibel Causeway toll plaza we followed Summerlin Road east towards Pine Ridge Road. The pilot overshot our "turn" onto Pine Ridge Road so he had to make a left bank, I was able to see lots of building detail on my right side as we passed HealthPark/Golisano Children's Hospital. As we got closer I confirmed the complex that contained the landing zone over the headset and the pilot began his approach to land. I didn't notice any nearby trees blowing around so the wind appeared to be calm at the LZ, I did not see a windsock either for the pilot to reference wind intensity or direction.

As we descended I both felt & heard something mechanical change with the helicopter, it was at that point we started spinning clockwise. The pilot said over the headset that he lost control and it was apparent we would be crash landing. As we were spinning the helicopter was shaking & shuddering, I don't remember much after the initial impact other than it was hard and loud, I don't recall if we were fully upright or tilted. After 2 or 3 bounces we came to rest on a ditch laying on the left side of the helicopter, I looked towards John "JC" Meyer who was sitting to my left and saw he was out of the cockpit already but at the time I didn't know how. The crash detection

feature on my Apple Watch went off and notified my emergency contacts and began calling 911, the time was 6:04PM.

I remember trying to unbuckle my harness but it wasn't coming unlatched. I felt a lot of blood coming out of my head and dripping down my face. When I finally did unbuckle my harness I don't remember how I got out of the cockpit, but I remember someone helped me over to a nearby curb where people tended to my head wound. I kept saying out loud that there were 4 of us inside so nobody was forgotten, it was hard to talk since it felt like I had the wind knocked out of me. There was a small fire that was quickly extinguished by firefighters. After having my head laceration treated at the crash scene I was transported by ambulance to the Gulf Coast Hospital Trauma Center.

Tim Wells

