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Date: 3/25/2024

Subject: ERA24LA148, Witness Statement review

Contact: Yamil Gonzalez, Signature Utility Services,

A witness submitted a written statement to the National Transportation Safety Board for review, detailing personal observations of the wreckage and surrounding area. The individual noted that he is not a certified aircraft accident investigator and that his account is based on personal experience and opinion. The following is a summary of the submitted statement:

On March 18, 2024, a witness who arrived on scene shortly after the accident involving a Hughes 369D helicopter, N102SU, near Belleville, West Virginia, provided observations of the crash site.

The witness reported that the helicopter was inverted, with the aerial saw assembly still attached. The saw support pipe was fractured at its midpoint. He interpreted this as an indication that the event may have occurred too rapidly for the pilot to release the saw. The tailboom was separated from the main fuselage, and the main rotor blades were severely damaged and scattered throughout the area. Based on the debris pattern, the witness believed the engine was producing power during the descent, with sufficient force for the blades to sever the tailboom.

He further observed that various rotor head components were dispersed across the site, which he interpreted as additional evidence of engine operation until impact. Upon closer inspection, he stated that the engine, engine mounts, transmission, engine-to-transmission driveshaft, and associated components appeared intact. He reported that he manually rotated the engine-to-transmission driveshaft and that it turned freely in both directions, suggesting no mechanical seizure.

The witness stated that the helicopter's nose section exhibited crushing damage consistent with contact with trees or branches during the descent. At the suspected initial ground impact point, he observed a depression in the terrain consistent with the aerial saw striking the ground.

He noted that the accident site was located in mountainous, hilly terrain. While he did not assess wind conditions at the site, he was located approximately 25 miles away at Jackson County Airport and described the wind conditions there at the time as gusty.

The witness reiterated that he is not a trained aircraft accident investigator and that his observations reflect personal experience and opinion.

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