



Lynn Spencer
Air Safety Investigator
Aviation Safety / Eastern Region

Date: June 4, 2024

Subject: ERA24LA244 Record of Conversation

Contact: John Preston Ruth, pilot and builder

Mr. Ruth stated that he believes he was distracted by the LED lights on the blade tips to see if they were aligned vertically when he was hovering and lost control. "There was nothing wrong with the aircraft."

Mr. Ruth is a 71-yr-old former airline pilot with 15,000 hours flight time "who thought I was competent." He believes he just became visually disoriented. No issues with the flight controls.

6/3/24

FAA
AVIATION SAFETY INSPECTOR
GREENSBORO FSDO AFG-600/AE-39

PATRICIA CHRISCOE

AIRCRAFT: N331PF

MODEL: HUMMINGBIRD 300L

MANUFACTURER: VERTICAL AVIATION TECHNOLOGIES
SANFORD, FL (VERTICAL-AVIATION.COM)

DESIGN: 4 PLACE, AMATEUR BUILT EXPERIMENTAL

CERTIFIED MODEL S-52 (SIKORSKY)

UTILIZED BY U.S. NAVY, U.S. MARINES AND
COAST GUARD

SUMMATION: ACCIDENT 5/31/24 APPROX. 2040

I HAD BEEN TRACKING AIRCRAFT AT DUSK DUE TO

THE UTILIZATION OF LED LIGHTS ATTACHED TO

BLADE TIPS. (VISUAL REFERENCE) I WAS LOOKING INTENTLY

AT 10 O'CLOCK, 3, 9 POSITION FOR LIGHT ALIGNMENT.

POSITION. I REMEMBER THINKING READY TO CONCLUDE

HOVER AND SIMULTANEOUS LOST CONTROL OF AIRCRAFT
FROM HOVER.

1/2

CONTINUED:

I HAVE NO IMMEDIATE OPINION OF WHAT TOOK PLACE AT THAT TIME MECHANICALLY OR PILOT INPUTS. I FELT THE AIRCRAFT MOVING LEFT AND SLIGHT CLIMB. I LOWERED THE COLLECTIVE AND REDUCED THROTTLE POSITION. THE AIRCRAFT FINAL POSITION WAS IT'S RIGHT SIDE ABOUT FORTY YARDS FROM THE HOVER POSITION. I DO NOT REMEMBER ANY VISUAL REFERENCE ONCE THE AIRCRAFT STARTED LEFT TURN/CLIMB. I DO NOT REMEMBER VISUAL REFERENCES ONCE TURN I THINK BECAUSE I WAS LOOKING AT A DARKEN TREELINE AND FLAT PASTURE. [REDACTED]

(POST ACCIDENT)

I LOOKED FOR MECHANICAL FAULTS BUT COULD NOT FIND ANYTHING MORE THAN SUBSTANTIAL SHEAR DAMAGE DUE TO IMPACT OF FLIGHT COMPONENTS AND DRIVES. I AM AN EXPERIENCED HELICOPTER UNDER ALL CONDITIONS AND I HAVE NO CONCEPT OF WHAT TOOK PLACE TO END UP IN THIS AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT. [REDACTED]

W331PF AIRCRAFT BUILDER
PILOT CERT. [REDACTED]