

National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Research and Engineering

Washington, DC 20594



ERA25MA171

PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICE

Specialist's Factual Report

August 12, 2025

A. ACCIDENT SUMMARY

Location: Jersey City, New Jersey
Date: April 10, 2025
Time: 1515 eastern daylight time (EDT)
Helicopter: Bell 206L-4, New York Helicopter Charter Inc, N216MH

B. PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICE SPECIALIST

Specialist: W. Deven Chen
Electrical Engineer – Recorder Specialist
National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)

C. DETAILS OF THE INVESTIGATION

A recorder group was not convened. The NTSB Vehicle Recorder Division received the following personal electronic device (PED):

Recorder Manufacturer/Model:	Apple iPhone 15 Pro Max
Part Number:	A3106

The Vehicle Recorder Division was also informed that the pilot was wearing a pair of Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses, which were capable of recording photos and videos. The Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses were likely a second generation released in 2023 (there was no newer generation available prior to the accident). The options for video recording length were 15 seconds, 30 seconds, 1 minute, and 3 minutes. The smart glasses stored data locally on the device. To upload the recordings to a paired smart device (likely a smartphone), one of the two scenarios below needs to occur:

- 1) Once photos are taken or video recording ends on the smart glasses, an "Import" button will be available on the Meta application on the paired smart device, and this button needs to be CLICKED for the recordings to be uploaded to the paired smart device.
- 2) On the Meta application (May 2025 version), there was an option for "Auto-import media" setting. With this setting being enabled, photos and videos on the smart glasses can be automatically uploaded to the paired smart device WHEN THE SMART GLASSES' ARMS ARE CLOSED.

If the pilot was recording during the accident flight, the pilot would have had to click the "Import" button on the Meta application or to close the smart glasses' arms during the accident sequence in order for the media to upload. Since this scenario was improbable, the photos or videos were likely only stored locally on the smart glasses. As of the published date of this report, no Ray-Ban Meta glasses were recovered from the accident site.

1.0 Recorder Description

PEDs are a category of devices comprised primarily of portable computing devices and mobile phones. Portable computing devices are typically capable of internet access, email, messaging services, and run user-installed applications to perform specific tasks. Depending on the model, mobile phones can perform many of the same tasks as portable computing devices, plus have voice call and text messaging capabilities. PED user and system data is typically stored on non-volatile memory¹ and can be accessed through manufacturer-provided interfaces.

1.1 Recorder Data Recovery

The Apple iPhone 15 Pro Max was received in water within a zip bag, as shown in Figure 1. Figure 2 shows there was water intrusion in the interior of the device. The main circuit board on which the data was stored was removed from the device, ultrasonically cleaned, and dried in a vacuum oven. The device was then placed into a surrogate device; however, the device did not power on. The device was sent to a third-party data recovery facility. After being repaired, although it was not fully stable, the device was able to power on. From the background image, it was determined that the device belonged to the adult male passenger onboard the N216MH. The data recovery facility informed NTSB that this iPhone was locked with a numeric passcode of unspecified length. The Transportation Disaster Assistance division (TDA) of NTSB reached out to the family members of the victim for assistance in search of the passcode. TDA was informed that the device was issued to the adult male passenger by his employer, and that neither the family members, nor the employer knew the passcode. Without the passcode, no data was recovered from the device.

¹ Non-volatile memory is semiconductor memory that does not require external power for data retention.



Figure 1. The Apple iPhone 15 Pro Max as received by NTSB Vehicle Recorder Division.



Figure 2. The interior of the Apple iPhone 15 Pro Max after being opened.