

ERA25MA171

OPERATIONS

Group Chair's Factual Report - ATTACHMENT 9

Dir. Of Ops and Chief Pilot (MOR)

April 12, 2025 and January 27-29, 2026

Aaron McCarter
Accident Investigator-Operations
Aviation

Date: April 12, 2025,

Subject: NTSB initial call with the Director of Operations

Contact: Director of Operations (DO) Jason Costello @ [REDACTED]
New York Helicopter Charter Inc.
Time of call was about 1145 and lasted about 10 minutes.

Accident Investigator McCarter (Operations Group) called the Director of Operations (DO) of New York Helicopter Charter Inc. (Mr. Jason Costello) and requested a few minutes for introductions and to setup a future time to discuss the accident.

The initial phone calls went unanswered and straight to voicemail. Investigator McCarter left a voice message and about 30 minutes later, the DO (Costello) returned the call. He had been screening his calls because his phone number had gone out and the media was being relentless and would not stop calling; he apologized to which McCarter responded back saying it was not necessary and he completely understood.

McCarter informed Costello that he was going to keep the call brief and keep it to introductions and would setup another time to talk. Costello agreed. After introductions, he stated that he was no longer employed with NYHC. He was "fired" and no longer had access to anything.

He stated that immediately after the accident, he strongly recommended that they suspend operations; and do a "safety standdown," until they had some factual information and the investigation yielded something. He did it for safety reasons. No one had any idea what had happened, the situation was fluid and he thought it best to be proactive.

He called the owner (Roth) to say that they had to suspend the operations, and the owner strongly disagreed, said he was fired, and hung up the phone. When the FAA requested a stoppage of the operation, the owner responded to the FAA and informed them that the DO was fired and that he did not want to shut down the business and that he had 30 days to replace the DO.

Costello further stated that the owner can be larger than life; he has a really big personality, but he has no animosity towards Roth. He knows it's a stressful and tragic time for everyone involved.

He saw the video of the accident and stated that it was an immediate and catastrophic event, and he had no clue from an operation or maintenance aspect what would have caused the accident. "Whatever happened, happened very quickly." The pilot was well respected and had excellent credentials.

[END]



Date: January 29, 2026

Subject: Follow up communications with the Former Director of Operations
Regarding bird strike mitigation [REDACTED]

Contact: Former Director of Operations (DO) Jason Costello
@[REDACTED]
New York Helicopter Charter Inc.

Investigator McCarter (Operations) sent the former DO an e-mail requesting NYHC bird strike mitigation, training or anything documented regarding the avoidance of bird strikes including, but not limited to reporting, FAA involvement, avoidance techniques, airspeeds, altitudes, training, and familiarity of bird strike working groups and NTSB recommendations. A summary of his e-mail reply follows: His quoted e-mail reply follows:

"With bird mitigation we taught understanding that birds tend to dive when approached so do not fly below them. Avoid aggressive maneuvers when you see them as there may be more birds you don't see.

During migration months there maybe more birds in the area and they tend to be below 1500 agl will have more of them. There was also bird awareness training done through CTS I believe. Pulse lights were not mandatory to use but pilots knew that they helped to reduce bird strikes. During my time there I don't believe we had more than 2 or 3 birds strikes. All birds strikes were reported to the bird reporting forms sent out by the FAA. I also would report bird strikes to our Maintenance POI Mark Burnett. Any bird strike required a visual inspection by the pilot and notification of maintenance and management to determine what needed to be done.

Aircraft were flown at 90-100kts during tours which is a good speed to be able to see and avoid most birds."

[END]

Aaron McCarter
Accident Investigator-Operations
Aviation

Date: January 27, 2026; Time of call was 1659 and lasted about 5 minutes.

Subject: Pulselite and Operations Question

Contact: Former Chief Pilot (CP) of NYHC Octave Kuhn @ [REDACTED]
New York Helicopter Charter Inc.

Accident Investigator McCarter (Operations Group) called the former Chief Pilot (CP) of New York Helicopter Charter Inc. (Kuhn). Requested if he was knowledgeable with the Pulselite system on board the helicopter and what the operational requirements were.

Kuhn responded that although it's been a while since he worked for the operator, he remembers the Pulselite was only used during nighttime operations. There was no checklist procedure in the manual for its use or operation. He agreed that it was tribal knowledge, however, he always used it because he had knowledge that the system assisted with the mitigation of birds. It could reduce the chance of a bird strike by keeping the birds away. Each of the pilots had their own procedure for using the system.

Briefly discussed the SMS program that was early in its development and implemented; although it was in its infancy, they were using it as a starting point to build upon in the future and the coming SMS regulations.

Discussed the timeline for the final report to be released.

[END]



Date: January 29, 2026 @ 1317

Subject: Bird Strike Mitigation Question Follow Up e-mail

Contact: Former Chef Pilot (CP) of NYHC Octave Kuhn @ [REDACTED]

Investigator McCarter (Operations) sent the CP an e-mail requesting NYHC bird strike mitigation, training or anything documented regarding the avoidance of bird strikes including, but not limited to reporting, FAA involvement, avoidance techniques, airspeeds, altitudes, training, and familiarity of bird strike working groups and NTSB recommendations. A summary of his e-mail reply follows:

Bird strikes were not a regular occurrence for us. We spoke with pilots about it as birds were a factor we regularly encountered along our flight paths, especially around dusk. Mitigation methods consisted of non-aggressive evading maneuvers and not flying underneath birds as they tend to "dive" or lose altitude in sight of an aircraft approaching. When a bird strike occurred, operations and maintenance were notified, and a visual inspection was completed. The Director of Ops reported any bird strike to the Farmingdale FSDO.

Bird avoidance was generally done at lower altitudes than cruise/tour altitudes. Birds were generally an "issue" on takeoff and landing, and the pilots exercised increased caution. The did not encounter many bird strikes during his tenure. Tours were generally flown at airspeeds around 90 to 100 Knots and there was little difference between tour airspeed and transit airspeeds.

Pilots and leadership were not familiar with or aware of the RBSWG or the NTSB Safety Recommendations listed, meaning that the information was not passed down. Pilots actively avoided birds to the best of their ability. ¹ [END]

¹ Rotorcraft Bird Strike Working Group (RBSWG), associated ARAC guidance, and National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Safety Recommendations A-10-136 through A-10-147