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Date: November 21, 2025

Subject: ERA26FA035, Interview with Flight Paramedic on circumstances of the accident

Contact: [REDACTED], Flight Paramedic, Vanderbilt Life Flight

[REDACTED] was interviewed in person on November 14, 2025. Present for the interview was NTSB Investigator Lewis, FAA Inspector Mullins, and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was advised that he was entitled to have representation present for his interview, he elected to have [REDACTED] present as representation. [REDACTED] was informed that the statement would be recorded and that a memorandum for record of the interview would be generated for the public docket. Below is a summary of the interview.

Question: Can you discuss the events leading up to and including the accident starting at the beginning of the day?

- Normal shift goes from 0700 - 1900 at Life Flight 1 in Gallatin, TN. Nothing was out of the ordinary for shift change. Daily check offs were completed. Helmet inspections were being conducted so I was working on that.
- The tones dropped and we were requested for a scene flight for Rutherford County. I don't remember if it was a standby first and then response which is how those normally progress.
- We got up to go; [REDACTED] grabbed the blood from the blood cooler and the drugs out of the lock box. We headed to the aircraft and all three of

us conducted our walk around as we normally do, loaded up and lifted off to scene.

- At some point we were canceled for that flight. I heard AIRCOM in Omaha canceled us and we could return. At that point I believe we started turning in the air. I did not realize that we were extraordinarily high. Our normal altitude around this area is about 1,500 feet above the ground, sometimes as high as 2,500 feet above the ground. I confirmed with AIRCOM that we were returning to base and that we were cancelled.
- During each flight we have our primary or secondary providers which determine who is doing what with regards to patient care. This happened to be my turn to do primary, so I was sitting in the middle seat. Primary usually handles radio communications. [REDACTED] was sitting in the outboard right seat.
- I looked forward and [REDACTED] didn't make any noticeable movements. Usually, the pilots will nod or give a thumbs up with eyes in the cockpit working the avionics to turn us around. We didn't get confirmation from [REDACTED] that we were turning around. I leaned up and tapped him on the shoulder, and he looked at me, I said "[REDACTED], did you hear that? We are RTB, [REDACTED] are you ok?" and he just had a complete blank stare.
- I did not know or feel that we were in a climb. I remember looking outside and thinking we are high. I tapped on [REDACTED] and said "[REDACTED], [REDACTED] can you hear me?" and there was no response whatsoever. His eyes were open but there was no emotion. Just prior to that I saw him trying to make an input into the GPS or maybe the auto pilot. He couldn't make contact with the button; he couldn't put his finger on the button.
- I remember [REDACTED] reaching over my shoulder while I was still buckled. [REDACTED] and I exchanged some words about the situation, and I told [REDACTED] "this is real, this is legit, it's happening, get on the radio."
- In a life flight scenario of an incapacitated pilot, the first priority is to make sure the aircraft is flying and revive the pilot if you can and then call for help.
- [REDACTED] was not responding or making any purposeful movement. I don't remember if he was making any pedal inputs. I remember that I

unbuckled and [REDACTED] fussed at me for getting unbuckled. I leaned forward to see what the autopilot was doing. The only thing I remember seeing illuminated was an IDENT button. I did not see that the autopilot was engaged at that moment. Some pilots don't fly with it on if they are not going very far.

- As I am leaning forward, I noticed there was a deafening rush of air, loud enough that I knew at that point nothing on the console mattered and I needed to slow us down. I remember looking out the pilot's door window and seeing that the horizon was at an angle, indicating we were in a steep dive.
- I had never touched a cyclic in flight before, we are not allowed to. Watching pilots hands while flying I knew that small inputs result in small reactions. I needed a large reaction, so I grabbed the cyclic on top of [REDACTED] hand. His hand remained on the cyclic and he did not resist at all.
- I pulled the cyclic back which made the aircraft squat, and it was much more than I was expecting, and much more than [REDACTED] was expecting. I think [REDACTED] said "whoa". At that point I made smaller inputs to slow us down. I knew from watching my pilots land I knew I had to decrease the power, so I reached across [REDACTED] lap and tapped down on the collective because I knew that would slow us down.
- I was trying to get us at some sort of a level attitude. I got us to a point where we were slowing. We had stable flight but were going fast. I didn't realize we were in a turn. There was a lot of farmlands around. We were pointing to [REDACTED] telling him to "land us, you need to land us now." I point out a field just left of our centerline.
- My position at the time was kneeling over the console to reach the flight controls and was out of my seat. The only coherent reaction I got from [REDACTED] was he indicated where I was pointing and said to me "there, no there", and he pointed to a field further way and much more wide open. I looked up and saw a bright yellow field with descending terrain and lined by trees.
- At this point we were significantly slower, we were level, I could not tell if we were descending but I think we were. I never rolled the throttle back or down. I think I may or may not have made other adjustments to the collective, if there were it was from me.

- [REDACTED] left side was completely limp, he did not resist anything I was trying to do. I don't know if he was making any pedal inputs. We were slowing down and getting lower but at a much lower rate than previous. I saw a row of trees, tall pine trees and was aiming for the pine tree so it would be softer than the maple trees.
- We had been fairly stable up to the point we hit the trees. The top of the trees was between the rotor disc and the skids; I flared again just as we hit the treetops. When we hit the tree, we started shaking violently. I was expecting that and was prepared for that. At this point I was still out of my seat, leaning over the console trying to control the aircraft.
- As we came closer to the ground we were still shaking violently. At 10-20 feet I made a hard flare so the tail would hit first. The tail hit first, then on to the right rear skid but we ended up flat and upright.
- After the initial impact, we lifted up briefly and came back down on the left chin, then rolled onto the left side. I was thrown against the overhead, then back down against the side of the pilot's seat. I ended up on the floor behind the pilot's seat with my back against the left sliding door window, my left leg was folded under me.
- I knew my leg was broken; I did not feel the fractures in my chest or broken back but knew I couldn't move much other than to hold traction on my leg. I was thrown onto the side of the pilot's seat then behind the pilot onto the left window. I remained unbuckled through the whole thing.
- We were on our left side. I could hear [REDACTED] moving and yelled at him "[REDACTED] you have got to turn it off, shut it down." I smelled for fuel because I didn't want to burn.
- I remember looking up at [REDACTED] and he was completely unresponsive. I watched him die; I watched him go from pink to blue. I knew there was nothing I could do. I could not physically get to him, I had a broken leg, wide open knee, and my back was broken in two places. If I would have released him from his harness he would have crushed me.
- I am still yelling at [REDACTED] to shut it down. I hear in my helmet calling "Life Flight 1, Life Flight 1, what is your status." I didn't know at the time that it was Vanderbilt communications because they had been tracking the flight.

- I tried to make a transmission "this is Life Flight 1, we [are] down in a field, I have two critical, and one serious patient". I heard "help is on the way". I now know that my radio transmissions did not go out, but I still heard someone trying to talk to me, asking "do you have an emergency?"
- I saw that my watch face was lit up with a red circle and E911. I then spoke into my watch "I don't know if you can hear me. This is LifeFlight One, we are down in a field, I have two critical and one serious." The person I was talking to was the Wilson County E-911 communicator because my iPhone had sensed the impact, sent out a crash alert with a location, and contacted 911. I was talking to 911 through my apple watch. I heard her say "Life Flight 1 I hear you and help is on the way." My wife also received the crash alert on her phone.
- My focus then shifted to [REDACTED], I was yelling at him to respond but he remained limp in his harness, and I just watched his color change. My worry at that point was about fuel and fire.
- The next thing I remember is holding traction on my leg because I knew my leg was broken and I needed to stay conscious. I had blood on my hands; I thought the blood was from [REDACTED]. I did not know my knee had been torn open. Someone in a bright yellow shirt and blue shorts was walking around outside the aircraft and banging on it. I told him not to do that. I remember the sirens, Wilson County came and I was yelling, "you have to shut it down, you have to shut it down, I can tell you how to do that."
- I remember someone yelling they were going to get us out. I don't remember telling them about the pilot was having a stroke. I remember them cutting and pulled [REDACTED] out and they were cutting to get me out. I told them to stop cutting because I was getting hot metal shavings. They covered my face and the cutting continued.
- I remember someone saying they were going to pull me out, but they were going to give me ketamine before they do. I told them "I think that is a very good idea." I remember the poke in my arm, and everything got fuzzy. I felt the hand on my shoulder and levitated out of the aircraft. I screamed in pain and blacked out. Next thing I remember I woke up in the ICU.

Question: Who did you say canceled your call out?

- Rutherford County: We were on our way to a scene flight and Rutherford County contacted our dispatch to cancel our flight.

Question: Did [REDACTED] have his flight helmet on, or did you take it off?

- Yes, we all had our helmets on.

Question: So, Did [REDACTED] have his flight helmet on at the time of impact?

- Yes, we all did.

Question: Did [REDACTED] ever unbuckle and come out of his seat?

- [REDACTED] stayed in his seat and harnessed the whole time.

Question: Did the aircraft, when it was rolled on it's side did aircraft shutdown itself or did you shut it down?

- I think it shut itself off.

Question: Would you and [REDACTED] typically in the same seats on other flights?

- Sometimes we would switch, we knew what roles we were going to do so it didn't really matter where we sat. Generally, the middle seat is the primary care provider, and the outboard seat would be secondary.

Question: Is [REDACTED] the one who transmitted about the pilot incapacitation?

- Yeah, that was [REDACTED], I made no outbound radio transmission other than when we were on the ground.

The digest was emailed for review by the interviewee on February 19, 2026. The interviewee replied on February 19, 2026, with their edits to be incorporated into the narrative. The amended digest was emailed back on February 20, 2026, for final review. Final review was received by the interviewee's representative on February 20, 2026.