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Date: 11/9/2025

Subject: NTSB Accident Number ERA26LA026

Contact: FAA Inspector, John Vaughan, BHM FSDO

The following statement was extracted from an email attachment received on 11/7/2025, from the FAA Inspector assigned to the accident. The statement is from the instructor pilot that was on board N545HA at the time of the accident.

"SUBJECT: Statement Regarding Training Events on 22 October 2025

CREW: [REDACTED]-Instructor Pilot/Check Airman

[REDACTED]-Pilot Trainee

[REDACTED]: Pilot Trainee

We departed from the Wetumpka base at about 1656 to conduct [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] day and night/NVG training and orientation in the Birmingham area. We conducted numerous takeoffs and landings at Brookwood, UAB, and the alternate Children's Hospital helipads. We then repositioned to KBHM for refuel. After refuel at KBHM, we conducted the same training and orientation under NVGs then, with [REDACTED] flying, we departed Birmingham and flew to the Alex City base, Tallassee Hospital, Franklin Airfield (07A), then returned to the Wetumpka base for refuel and pilot swap.

We departed the Wetumpka base with [REDACTED] flying at about 22:47 and flew to the Wetumpka airport (08A) to train maneuvers in the traffic pattern (autorotation's, quick stops, hovering autorotation's, slopes, etc). He performed a few traffic patterns completing a quick stop, some normal approaches and a couple of autorotation's with power recovery. We then hovered into the sod area adjacent to the runway and after a briefing about the maneuver, completed 4 hovering autorotation's.

The first hovering autorotation was ok but he drifted slightly right about 3-4 feet and had a heading deviation of about 15 degrees to the right. I debriefed the maneuver and gave an assessment and

corrective instruction. A second one was performed. Heading and drift control was better, but the touchdown was more pronounced and not as cushioned as the first. I debriefed the maneuver and offered additional corrective instruction regarding heading and drift control, and I commented that landings tended to be less abrupt and gentler when performing the maneuver at lower hover heights. (I estimated his hover height to be about 4 feet AGL at initiation). The third and fourth maneuvers were markedly improved, with drift and heading more controlled. The last one was completed well within standard with very minimal drift and heading deviation and a very gentle touchdown.

We then began IIMC instrument recovery training with me giving him instruction on setting up the avionics for an instrument approach, and then having him perform the RNAV 9 approach into the Wetumpka airport. At the completion of the approach we departed for scene/off-airport/LZ training, then flew a simulated patient transport to Baptist Medical Center South. From there we flew to the Alex City base, the Tallassee hospital helipad then returned to the Wetumpka base for termination of training.

While damage was apparently sustained during the flight, I never once suspected that any maneuver we performed would have caused the damage that was discovered later. Aircraft systems and flight handling characteristics were normal throughout the entire flight, and at no time did I suspect aircraft damage at any time. Post-flight was conducted and no damage was noticed.

As a side note, both pilot trainees have an excellent control touch, and both have above average piloting and aircraft handling skills. Both are very responsive to correction and instruction and both display very positive attitudes and personality traits.”