



Bradley Gottschalk
Aviation Accident Investigator
Eastern Region, Aviation

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 pilot that was flying N545HA at the time of the accident.

"On the evening of October 22, 2025, during a hovering autorotation training exercise conducted under night vision goggles (NVG) at Wetumpka Airport, a hard landing occurred, resulting in tail boom damage.

██████████ noted that we should maintain a safe height above the ground, and we made corrections to remain below five feet to ensure a smoother touchdown in the grass. I called, "3, 2, 1, auto," and ██████████ rolled the throttle down. I noted that some time had passed and that it would be necessary to cushion the landing, but I acted too soon by pulling up on the collective, which caused the rotor to stall prematurely and increased our height above the ground before impact.

Both the instructor and I acknowledged that the landing was harder than usual but did not observe any immediate indications of a problem. In hindsight, we should have shut down to conduct an inspection to determine whether any damage had occurred before continuing back to base.”