

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Office of Aviation Safety - Eastern Region

Date: February 24, 2026

Subject: ERA26LA122, Record of Conversation/Interview

Contact: [REDACTED]

Mr. [REDACTED] was interviewed by phone on February 24, 2026, at 0940 EST. The phone call was made from Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspector James E. Williams cellular phone of [REDACTED]. Mr. [REDACTED] provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED] and a cellular phone number of [REDACTED]. The interview took place in a building near the accident site. Also present in-person for the interview were FAA inspectors James E. Williams (FAA-IIC), Chris Polek and Jeff Evans, of the Harrisburg, PA, FAA Flight Standards District Office.

At the beginning of the interview he was advised the NTSB is a federal agency mandated by Congress to investigate aircraft accidents to further its mission of transportation safety. The NTSB has no authority to take any action against any individual and does not seek to determine fault or liability. Any person NTSB talks with has the right to representation. The representative may be - but does not have to be - a lawyer, and may support and counsel the witness but may not supplement the witness's testimony. The witness may have the opportunity, if he/she wishes, to review and provide comments or clarifications to their interview record before its finalized and published by the NTSB. Mr. [REDACTED] agreed to the interview without representation and did want to review the digest before publishing.

He was advised by e-mail when sending this document for review that it will not be released to the public until the investigation is finished and when published, any personal identifiable information (PII) including name¹, cell phone number, e-mail

¹ For all NTSB investigations initiated after October 1, 2025.

address, street address, pilot certificate number, etc., will be redacted and not viewable in the released document.

Mr. [REDACTED] provided an address of [REDACTED] East Berlin, Pennsylvania 17316. His date of birth is [REDACTED] His pilot certificate number is [REDACTED] He holds a commercial pilot certificate with rotorcraft helicopter and instrument helicopter ratings. He also holds a flight instructor certificate (CFI) with rotorcraft helicopter rating. He holds a 2nd class medical certificate issued January 12, 2026, with a limitation, "must use corrective lenses to meet vision standards at all required distances." He has between 7,500- and 7,600-hours total flight time with an estimated 750 to 800 hours in make and model. His last Flight Review² was accomplished on February 5, 2026, in a McDonnell Douglas MD500.

He is employed by Trip Wire Aviation and High Voltage Aviation (HVA). He worked full-time with HVA, and part-time for Trip Wire Aviation.

NTSB Questions -

Were you wearing your corrective lenses at the time of the accident?
Yes.

What is your job title with Trip Wire Aviation?
Pilot/Instructor Pilot.

What is your job title with HVA?
Pilot/Instructor Pilot.

How long have you been employed by Trip Wire Aviation?
Since August 2025.

How long have you been employed by HVA?
Since April 2023.

With Trip Wire Aviation what aircraft are you approved to operate?
The Hughes 269 and MD 500.

With HVA what aircraft are you approved to operate?
The MD 500 D and E models.

² In accordance with 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 61.56.

NTSB Questions Continued -

What was the purpose of the flight?
Training of the other pilot.

What was the other pilot's name?
[REDACTED]

Explain the seating positions?

Mr. [REDACTED] was in the right seat and he (Mr. [REDACTED]) as the CFI was in the left seat.

Explain in detail the flight from the preflight inspection to the accident?

They both performed the preflight inspection using the manufacturer's checklist. They walked around the helicopter and found no discrepancies. All oil levels (transmission, tail rotor gearbox, engine) were good and the preflight was "normal with nothing found." After the preflight inspection was completed, the student asked and he provided a briefing of the planned training flight. The helicopter was then pulled out of the hangar, and they prepared for a normal engine start. After the engine was started the student initiated the lift off from the ground and everything was normal until the helicopter was light on the skids. The student had aft cyclic input and he (Mr. [REDACTED]) questioned that input then "nudged" the cyclic forward. The helicopter continued lifting off the ground and entered a "real nose-low attitude." The student's reaction was faster than his, and both applied full aft cyclic input, but the helicopter never responded with what he thought would be a flare attitude. The nose of the helicopter never got back up, and the helicopter ran out of room. He is baffled by the event and welcomes questions/dialog to have him think of any reason for the event to occur.

Were there any audible warnings?
No.

Was any yaw present?
No, just normal anti-torque pedal input for liftoff.

What height was attained when he 1st recognized the nose-low attitude?
5 ft above ground level (agl). It was almost instantaneous and was "significant" getting his attention.

Were you taking off from a dolly or the ground?
Ground.

FAA Questions -

During the preflight inspection what did the flight control check consist of?
A full range of motion, full range for cyclic, collective and anti-torque.

Was there any binding of any of the flight controls during the full travel check of them as part of the preflight inspection?
No.

During the full travel check of the flight controls was there any abnormal stop limit noted for cyclic, collective or anti-torque?
No.

What weight and balance computation was performed?
There is not too much for the Hughes 269A to change weight and balance like a Bell 47 that needed ballast.

Do you have the completed weight and balance form?
Yes, he can provide to the FAA and NTSB.

Were you lifting off into the wind?
It was a calm wind. The wind wasn't a factor. It was a beautiful day.

How close to the building were you when the flight was initiated?
The helicopter was pushed outside 25 to 30 ft from the building.

Please re-explain the liftoff?
As the student picked up, he (Mr. [REDACTED]) could feel the helicopter getting light on the skids. He noticed the forward dampers were starting to "stretch" and the aft dampers were starting to "squat." Mr. [REDACTED] pushed forward on the cyclic to avoid a tail strike. Almost about the same time as the helicopter was lifting off, it entered into a nose-down attitude. Both applied full aft cyclic against the stop to level the helicopter with the student reacting faster than Mr. [REDACTED] but it did not respond to the control input.

Was the helicopter picked up slow?
It wasn't a clean and jerk, maybe a little faster than he would have. The student still had control of the helicopter.

As soon as the helicopter lifted off it tilted forward?
Yes, while at 5 ft agl they had full aft cyclic input applied to remedy the nose-down attitude after lifting off.

FAA Questions Continued -

Was there any forward motion during the event?

Yes, they were below effective translational lift (etl) but were moving forward.

Was there any recent maintenance to the helicopter flight controls?

Not that I am aware of.

NTSB Questions Continued -

How much flight time did the student pilot have in helicopters?

Between 40 and 50 hours.

How much flight time did the student pilot have in the accident make and model helicopter?

I don't know. I estimate him to have about 25 hours.

What certificates and ratings does the student hold?

Student pilot certificate.

Who was the pilot-in-command for the flight?

Mr. [REDACTED]

How many times had the helicopter been pushed from the hangar to that spot for an intended flight?

"A bunch" maybe 15 to 30 times.

When the helicopter was at 5 ft agl while in a nose-low attitude what was it doing?

Climbing.

What maximum altitude did the helicopter attain?

About 15 ft agl.

Was there any vibration?

No.

Was there any video that captured the accident?

He was not sure. Maybe there was a surveillance camera. Later in the conversation a person entered the area and advised that the motion sensing camera did not video capture the event, but audio was recorded.

NTSB Questions Continued -

Were you recording?

I was not

Explain the touchdown?

Both had full aft cyclic input, and about 2 seconds later the helicopter impacted the building.

Did the fuselage impact the building or just the main rotor blades?

The main rotor blades hit first followed by the fuselage.

Explain what restraint you were wearing and what was your injury?

He was wearing the shoulder harness and lapbelt. He sustained a few cuts on his hands and bruised ribs.

Was there any issue with your restraint?

It worked good.

Were you wearing a helmet?

Yes.

Was it damaged?

A few paint scratches.

Was the student wearing a helmet?

Yes.

What injury did the student have?

Superficial cuts to his legs, bruises to his back, small chips from his vertebrae. Both were admitted to the hospital and released a couple of hours later. The student did not require surgery for his vertebrae injury.

When was the last time that you flew that helicopter?

Wednesday (February 18, 2026).

Were there any problems with the helicopter or the systems during that flight?

No. That flight was training. Mr. [REDACTED] was the "student" and another CFI, [REDACTED] was the PIC.

NTSB Questions Continued -

As part of the preflight inspection for the accident flight were there any deferred discrepancies?

It did not have any.

What FAA regulation when operating for HVA?

Part 91 and 133.

What FAA regulation when operating for Trip Wire Aviation?

Part 61 for training and Part 91.

If there is a squawk for a helicopter, is it written down?

Yes, the aircraft uses software called ModernHawk³.

Can FAA and NTSB get a copy?

Yes.

FAA Questions Continued -

Is there any relationship with the helicopter between HVA and Trip Wire Aviation?

No relation between HVA and Trip Wire Aviation regarding the helicopter.

When did the student last fly?

I don't know but I can find out. The student is a co-owner of the helicopter.

This past summer there was a ground resonance event, did it involve this helicopter?

No.

When you "nudged" the cyclic was there any reaction?

"I do not recollect it made a difference."

What was the maximum degrees nose-down was the helicopter?

"A lot." It was far enough nose-forward for him to consider lowering the collective but in that instance when staring at the ground he feared doing a "barrel roll." He tried to turn left to clear the hangar, but he couldn't, he didn't have time. It was maybe 30° to 40° low, enough that it concerned him. He had only 2 seconds to recognize and respond.

³ ModernHawk's software is a comprehensive maintenance solution specifically tailored to meet the complexities of helicopter maintenance <https://modernhawk.com>

FAA Questions Continued -

Inspector Polek was trying to confirm whether the normal procedure was to push the helicopter straight out of the hangar, lift off to a hover, do a pedal turn, and then fly away from the hangar?

It was normal to pick up to a hover, make a pedal turn into the wind then depart. The wind was maybe 8 knots.

When the helicopter was pushed out of the hangar was it facing the hangar?
Yes.

What were the winds?
"Wasn't much."

Are there any standard procedures for pushing the helicopter out of the hangar a certain distance based on the wind?

The helicopter was pushed as far as it could because of the location of soft ground.

NTSB Questions Continued -

When was the last time that you flew with the student?
He did not recall but he can check. He estimated 2 to 3 weeks earlier.

Did you get a sense that the initial nose-up input was from the student?
I did not.

Was the student a fixed wing pilot?
He is not.

What do you think happened?
He replayed the event many times and can't come up with a solid explanation. Weight and balance was not an issue. "I have no idea.". It was warm and the area was muddy. He thought about dynamic rollover but did not know if the skid was caught in the soft ground.

What was the fuel load?
About 16 gallons. It was about 1/2 full.

Could the fuel quantity gauge be wrong?
It is possible.

NTSB Questions Continued -

What is your weight?

About 210 pounds.

What is the weight of the student?

About 220 pounds.

Was the helicopter being operated close to the published gross weight limit?

It was close to it.

Was there any fuel leakage as a result of the accident?

Yes.

FAA Questions Continued -

How did you check the fuel load besides looking at the fuel gauge?

A tap test of the single fuel tank. He felt it was about 1/2 full.

Can you see the level of fuel in the fuel tank when visually checking?

You can with a flashlight.

When was the last time you attended any safety seminars, webinars such as Wings?

About 2 years ago.

Are you a member of the Wings program?

Yes, he had to take Special Awareness Training for HVA because of operating near KDCA.

Have you had any Air Carrier or Simulator training?

No.

Any external training?

No, MD stopped doing training.

Did you bring your pilot logbook with you?

Yes, it is in my truck.

Did you receive a preflight weather briefing?

Yes, from ForeFlight.

FAA Questions Continued -

Was there any precipitation?
No, it was clear.

NTSB Questions Continued -

Where were you intending to fly to?
Gettysburg Regional Airport (W05), Gettysburg, Pennsylvania which was 1.5 miles away.
While there they intended to perform emergency procedures such as practice autorotation.

Do you have a syllabus you are following when flying with the student?
No⁴.

What flight is this with that student?
"20 something."

Is there any scenario where the helicopter was not airborne and a skid was stuck in mud?
It happened so fast.

Was the student recording any video at the time
I don't know.

Do you have a contact for the student?
At this stage FAA inspector Williams advised that he had that information.

What altitude was the helicopter at when it collided with the building?
The main rotor blades hit about 15 ft agl, while the fuselage hit about 10 ft agl then the helicopter fell to the ground.

Any more questions from FAA?
No.

Do you (Mr. [REDACTED]) have any questions for NTSB?
None at this time.

Do you (Mr. [REDACTED]) have any questions for FAA?

⁴ He had one that he used years ago but it is long gone and he can't find it anymore.

None at this time.

The call ended at 1048 EST.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on February 24, 2026. He replied on February 25, 2026 at 1342 EST with comments that were incorporated into the narrative. The amended digest was sent to him for final review on April 29, 2026. He replied the same day verbally at 1752 EDT with comments that were incorporated into the narrative. The amended digest was e-mailed to him for review on April 29, 2026. He replied the same day at 1823 EDT with, "Looks good...." The FINAL digest was e-mailed to him and the investigative team on April 29, 2026.

Timothy W. Monville
Sr. Air Safety Investigator
Office of Aviation Safety - Eastern Region

Date: March 4, 2026

Subject: ERA26LA122, Record of Conversation/Interview

Contact: [REDACTED]

Mr. [REDACTED] was contacted by phone on March 3, 2026, by Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspector James E. Williams, of the Harrisburg, PA FAA Flight Standards District Office (Harrisburg FSDO). Also on the call was FAA inspector Chris Polek, also of the Harrisburg FSDO. Inspector Williams brought NTSB into the call at 1337 EDT, calling from [REDACTED]. Mr. [REDACTED] provided a cellular phone number of [REDACTED] and an e-mail address of [REDACTED].

At the beginning of the interview he was advised the NTSB is a federal agency mandated by Congress to investigate aircraft accidents to further its mission of transportation safety. The NTSB has no authority to take any action against any individual and does not seek to determine fault or liability. Any person NTSB talks with has the right to representation. The representative may be - but does not have to be - a lawyer, and may support and counsel the witness but may not supplement the witness's testimony. The witness may have the opportunity, if he/she wishes, to review and provide comments or clarifications to their interview record before its finalized and published by the NTSB. Mr. [REDACTED] agreed to the interview without representation and did want to review the digest before it was published.

He was advised by e-mail when sending this document for review that it will not be released to the public until the investigation is finished and when published, any personal identifiable information (PII) including name¹, cell phone number, e-mail address, street address, pilot certificate number, etc., will be redacted and not viewable in the released document.

Mr. [REDACTED] owner of the helicopter, provided a mailing address of [REDACTED] Orrtanna, Pennsylvania 17353. His date of birth is [REDACTED]. He holds a student pilot

¹ For all NTSB investigations initiated after October 1, 2025.

certificate, certificate number [REDACTED] He also holds a 2nd class medical certificate issued February 18, 2025, with a limitation, “must use corrective lens(es) to meet vision standards at all required distances”, adding that is for his right eye. He does not have a Statement of Demonstrated Ability (SODA).

NTSB Questions –

Explain in detail the flight beginning with the preflight inspection and ending with the accident? He was at the barn/hangar, and the helicopter was pushed out. The weather was fine but it was muddy in back. The preflight inspection was fine which included a check of the fluids, adding that it took about 20 minutes. Mr. [REDACTED] got into the right seat while Mr. [REDACTED] was in the left seat. He (Mr. [REDACTED]) checked the flight control frictions, checked the radios, and started the engine. He then allowed the engine to warm up and performed an engine run-up, increasing engine rpm to 1,850 at which he checked the generator, fuel pump, and with the manifold pressure at 15 inches of Mercury (inHg), he checked the magnetos reporting they checked good. The sprag clutch also checked good. He verified with Mr. [REDACTED] (CFI) that it was ok to engage the clutch at 1,600 rpm. He waited for the engine gauges to be in the green arc, and asked Mr. [REDACTED] if it was ok to lift off. He pulled collective and reported that in his experience the helicopter is usually light at 18 to 20 inHg manifold pressure, but on that day, which was cold, he kept pulling collective. The week before there was some ice, and the helicopter started to get light and he moved the cyclic around. He picked up on the collective and Mr. [REDACTED] pushed the cyclic, which he thought was too much. He pulled the cyclic but the helicopter “lunged forward and hit the barn/hangar.” At no point was the helicopter hovering. Once the main rotor blades stopped, he noted a fuel leak. He got out of the helicopter first and helped Mr. [REDACTED] out next. Mr. [REDACTED] then disconnected the aircraft’s battery. He (Mr. [REDACTED]) had never previously pulled up that much on the collective even when flying in the summer or in 3 different helicopters.

What restraint was he wearing?

The four-point restraint and a helmet. Mr. [REDACTED] was also wearing the same restraint and also a helmet.

When the helicopter moved forward you pulled the cyclic?

It happened so fast. With respect to the collective he pushed it down. The manifold pressure was higher than he had ever seen before for liftoff.

What was the highest altitude attained?

The helicopter was on the ground and then on its side.

Was Mr. [REDACTED] mirroring you with the flight controls?

His hands were in his lap with one hand next to the cyclic and his feet by the anti-torque pedals. He (Mr. [REDACTED]) had left anti-torque pedal input while pulling collective. The cyclic was in the same position as usual while the wind was from 4 knots. The “mud was out there.”

Explain what part of the helicopter was in the mud?

When they pushed the helicopter out of the barn/hangar it went from a concrete floor to fine grass that was planted this past fall. The rear portions of both skids were in the mud.

NTSB Questions Continued –

How would you describe the rear portion of the skids and the mud?

There was no real slope but while in the helicopter it was “leaning back.”

How deep into the mud were the rear portion of the skids?

1/4 to 1/2 way along the skids, from the rear of the skid to 1 ft in front of the skid crosstube.

How deep into the mud was the rear portion of the skids?

A few inches, but enough that it left marks and would have been visible when the FAA inspected the helicopter.

How far did Mr. [REDACTED] push the cyclic?

I don't know. He took corrective action. After the accident he and Mr. [REDACTED] talked and both admitted pulling the cyclic.

Did he ever say my aircraft?

No. the entire event last about 1 second.

How many times have you flown with Mr. [REDACTED] with him acting as a CFI before?

About 12 times.

FAA Questions –

You mentioned of those 12 flights the manifold pressure during the accident flight was higher than normal. What was it usually?

18 to 20 inHg, or about 20 inHg to lift off the ground.

What manifold pressure were you at during the accident flight?

It exceeded 26 inHg.

What is your weight?

210 pounds. He did performance calculations for that flight.

Are you accustomed to flying the helicopter at the same weight as the weight on the accident flight?

Absolutely fair.

Was the manifold pressure too high?

“Yes, in hindsight he thinks maybe they got stuck in the mud.”

FAA Questions Continued –

Are you accustomed to flying in warm weather?

He has been in flight training for about a year and the purpose of the accident flight was to practice emergency procedures for an upcoming checkride.

How many flights have you made in that year?

45.

When was your most recent flight excluding the accident flight?

January 30, 2026.

Of all those 45 flights were all made at the same location as the accident flight?

No, they were conducted at various locations like Smoketown, Gettysburg, a private property, and Mid Atlantic.

How many times have you operated the helicopter at the same location as the accident flight?

About 15.

When operating at the same spot as the accident was the helicopter always pushed out of the hangar in the same location as it was for the accident flight?

Yes, they always push it out to meet the grass.

You have taken off from that spot before?

Yes I have.

The wind was from 3 to 4 knots?

Yes, it was barely anything.

What did you use for wind information?

The flagpole to the left.

You mentioned in describing the event that when the helicopter was getting light you moved the cyclic around?

No reply was recorded².

Did Mr. [REDACTED] push the cyclic?

Yes, he thought they would hit the tail.

² A reply was requested when sending for review and comment.

Did you have the same sensation that you needed to move the cyclic forward?
Yes, it had been “leaning to the back” than compared to normal when it would lean forward.

Did you say the forward cyclic input was too much?
After flying a year with inputs from a CFI, the CFI would apply minimal corrective flight control input. He pulled back on the cyclic due to muscle memory adding the helicopter was never in a hover. The helicopter went forward, hit the building and came to rest on its side.

FAA Questions Continued –

As part of your preflight check did that include a check of the flight controls?
He visually checked the linkages; the blades and the checks were normal.

The helicopter only had 14 gallons of fuel?
They planned to get fuel at Gettysburg. To him it, “felt like they were stuck and it let go.” It was cold that morning.

NTSB Questions Continued –

Where was the wind from in relation to the helicopter’s position?
It was from the west. The helicopter was facing south. He and the CFI discussed the wind, did risk assessments, and there was “nothing to be concerned about.”

After pushing the helicopter out was there any discussion between you and Mr. [REDACTED] about the mud?
No, the only discussion was about the mud on their shoes.

FAA Questions Continued –

Were your shoes muddy and did you clean them on the skid before boarding the helicopter?
I did.

Was there a fair amount of mud on your shoes?
Yes, it was present.

When you felt the helicopter lurch forward you said you applied aft cyclic and then 1 second later the helicopter impacted the building?
Yes, as soon as it moved forward he pulled the cyclic. The helicopter was never in a state where it was hovering. The nose was way more forward, causing him to apply full aft cyclic.

How many gallons of fuel were on-board?
13 to 14 gallons.

Did you look into the fuel tank?

He based it on the fuel quantity gauge. The helicopter has a 30-gallon fuel tank, and the fuel quantity gauge is spot on. Postaccident they put buckets to collect leaking fuel and collected about 7.5 gallons with an estimated 2 gallons remaining in the tank.

FAA Questions Continued –

Did you perform the weight and balance calculations?

Yes.

Was the helicopter within limits?

Yes, they were. [REDACTED] has him perform extensive performance calculations.

What is the normal hover power required?

Summer and winter are different. But it is usually 18 to 22 inHg manifold pressure.

Did you have any injuries?

Bumps and bruises.

Did you go to a hospital or urgent care facility?

Both went and were checked out fine.

NTSB Questions Continued –

Did you perceive a change in engine sound or detect any change in engine or main rotor rpm?

No sir.

At this stage of the interview Mr. [REDACTED] was advised that FAA was on-scene and went thru the flight controls for collective, cyclic, and anti-torque. He was informed that FAA did not find any discrepancies. Mr. Williams clarified that they could not get complete anti-torque continued due to the damage. Mr. [REDACTED] questioned how there was no malfunction when no access panels were removed as part of the on-scene investigation. Mr. [REDACTED] asked if any measurements were taken. Mr. [REDACTED] said he wanted to know what, if anything preimpact had occurred.

What is the name and contact of the insurance adjuster?

He will provide.

FAA Questions Continued –

Between the January 30th flight and the accident flight was there any maintenance performed?

I have to look. From memory they did work on radios and the transponder.

Any work to the flight controls?

No.

FAA Questions Continued –

How long was the flight on January 30th?
It was .7 hour.

Was it initiated from the same location as the accident location?
It was. Other pilot's had also flown that helicopter after January 30th.

NTSB Questions Continued –

Can you provide us a list of the other pilots?
Yes, there was 1 other than Mr. [REDACTED] It was also flown by [REDACTED] who performed practice autorotative landings.

The times the helicopter was pushed out of the hangar to that same spot was it muddy?
That was the only time it was muddy. The previous times the temperature was below freezing.

Any more questions FAA?
None.

Mr. [REDACTED] any questions for NTSB?
None.

Mr. [REDACTED] any questions for FAA?
None.

The call ended at 1436 EST.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on April 29, 2026 and again on May 5, 2026. He did not reply. The FINAL digest was e-mailed to him and the investigative team on June 1, 2026.