

9/21/17

Here's my written statement for the accident that occurred. Let me know if there's anything else I can provide.

John Alvarado

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On 9/20/2017, my student Michael Woods and I were getting ready to fly a Robinson R22 Beta II to KLGB to continue his solo training. We were flying helicopter N7514S and the plan was for us to go together and I would eventually jump out so he could conduct a supervised solo flight. This flight would include pick-ups, set downs, hovering (stationary and taxiing) and also flying in the pattern. Before this flight, he had already conducted 1.7 hours of solo time which included all the aforementioned maneuvers.

Before we took off, I had the aircraft fueled with 12.7 gallons of AVGAS 100LL from ACI Jet. Michael conducted a preflight inspection of the helicopter, and shortly thereafter, I conducted my own preflight (as I normally do) to double-check. We started up like normal and eventually received clearance to proceed westbound towards KLGB from KSNA. This was approximately at 1215pm local time. The flight path we normally fly is north along the 405 with a midfield crossing at KSLI. We received approval for a East Wardlow arrival and a landing at helicopter pad 1, which was the only one available.

At the time, the wind was coming from the South, approximately 170 @ 9kts (I believe those were the numbers. I asked for a wind check as soon as we landed but I don't remember exactly what it was). At the time of landing, we performed a left pedal turn to see how the helicopter was being affected and decided to do a pattern together to see how the helicopter would perform that day. This was Michael's first time operating at pad 1 as well so I wanted to be sure he knew the procedure to land there. We asked for left closed traffic and received permission to take off. We flew the normal pattern and Michael had no issues controlling the aircraft and coming in for a normal landing at the pad. Having done that and both of us feeling comfortable with the situation, I then asked for and received permission to exit the aircraft and supervise his solo. For the first 10 minutes or so, Michael performed pick-ups, set downs, pedal turns, and hover work to get acclimated. While this was happening, all the other helicopters on the pads exited and all were available. I had Michael set down and talked to him about switching to pad 3 since he felt more comfortable doing patterns there. He agreed and I walked away from the aircraft as he made his call to the tower, stating he was a student pilot at the end of it. He received permission to take off from pad 1, and performed a normal take-off. As he entered the pattern I walked on the field from pad 1 to pad 3. He did his normal pattern and received permission to land at pad 3 and he performed a normal approach to a hover over the pad. He then set the helicopter down and looked at me. I did not approach but gave him a thumbs-up to check his status and he returned a thumbs-up indicating he felt good and was going to continue on.

After this, he made his call to the tower asking for left closed traffic from pad 3, for which he received permission to take off. He performed a normal take off and jumped into the pattern. From

then, until his final approach, all looked well and normal and I felt no worry about him, the helicopter, or the conditions. As he was coming in for a normal approach, his descent angle, altitude, and speed all looked standard and well within limits from where I was standing. However, as he got closer, I noticed he seemed to slow down. Initially, I didn't think anything of it, I just thought he was going to come in short. As this was happening, his nose seemed to yaw back and forth. Not a lot, just shifting a few degrees left and right. This is usually pretty normal with winds from the south because as the aircraft loses speed, the wind starts to affect the aircraft more and interfere with the tail rotor. However, as this happened, from my point of view, the helicopter started to fall out of the sky. I immediately knew something was wrong because this was not a controlled descent, but more like the aircraft lost all lift and became a rock dropping out of the air. I saw the aircraft hit the ground, relatively level, but with the left front skid a little lower than the rest, roll over and rest facing away from me.

I had a radio transmitter with me, which is how I was able to listen to Michael make his radio calls, and I hit the transmit button (not sure if it works honestly) and yelled into it, "CRASH CRASH CRASH" as I was running towards the helicopter. As soon as I got there, I saw he was alive and conscious, then proceeded to turn the fuel shutoff valve OFF, the master battery OFF, turned the ignition to OFF, and tried to pull the fuel mixture, but it was stuck. I turned to Michael after and saw nothing looked broken, there wasn't blood gushing, and he seemed aware of what happened. I kept him still, removed any broken plastic windshield pieces that were near him, and waited for emergency services to arrive.