



RECORD OF EMAIL

Samantha Link
Aviation Accident Investigator
Western Pacific Region

Date: January 29, 2018
Person Contacted: Mr. Paul Wik (District Wildlife Biologist)
NTSB Accident Number: WPR18FA074

Narrative:

Mr. Wick provided the following statement via email. The NTSB investigator-in-charge replaced the names of people with their identifying roles, and removed specific injury related information. No other changes were made:

The following is a summary of events occurring on January 27, 2018 related to the crash of Hells Canyon Helicopter H369TH.

The purpose of the days activities was to net gun mule deer to place radio collars on adult does. Ms. Hansen (from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife) and myself met at the pilot's hanger in Clarkston at 10:30 on Saturday morning to start coordinating capture efforts with the pilot and his crew. Flight operations were started shortly after 1300, with the pilot, a mugger (front passenger seat), and a gunner (back left side) heading to Garfield County to work north of Highway 12.

Ms. Hansen and myself (I drove the company fuel truck) drove to the Gould City area to meet the pilot in 2 hours to provide fuel and additional collars. The pilot arrived at that fuel site around 1500, taking on fuel, additional collars, and providing us samples from captured deer. Conditions were windy, with the pilot reporting some winds around 40mph. About 1515, the pilot and crew took off heading generally west down Deadman Creek, with crew in the same seating positions as previously mentioned. The pilot told me he would have enough fuel for the remainder of the day, so I should head back to the hanger to meet him later. Ms. Hansen left the refuel site towards Spokane to return home while I arrived at the hanger sometime around 1600-1610. At about 1620 I logged onto Automated Flight Following (AFF) to check on the flight's status and see where they were working. At that time I noticed that the helicopter's position was a "red dot", indicating that the AFF had stopped working at that spot (15:34 was the time indicated for when the AFF lost contact). Thinking that this was odd, I watched it for

15-20 minutes without it returning to normal function. About 1635-1640 I called Garfield County Sheriff's Office (GCSO) to see if they had any reports of problems in the area and explained the reason for my call. I did not want to declare an emergency at that time because we have had incidents in the past where the AFF loses signal for periods of time when all operations are normal. I told the GCSO dispatcher that I would monitor the situation for another 20 minutes and get back to her if I needed assistance or if the helicopter arrived at the hanger. At 1700, with no change in the AFF information, I started driving towards the last known location. At this time, I also called GCSO and said we may have a problem and need to start emergency services toward the area. I provided the dispatcher with the Lat Long (46deg 36.3078', -117deg 40.1784) and directions to get to the site. I told her Lower Deadman Creek road at the junction of Ping Gulch and Breakdown road. I said that it looked like the best directions were to head south on Breakdown road approximately 1.5 miles to where the first big canyon comes in from the left. Head up that left canyon for 1-1.5 miles and the site is on the north side of the Canyon on the DNR parcel of ground.

In addition to the above actions, at 1625 I texted the pilot "You good? AFF has you not moving as a red dot in the bottom of a draw". At 1701 I texted the pilot to "Call me. About to send S.A.R.". No responses were received from these texts. I also tried multiple times to raise the pilot on the company radio without success. I was able to locate a portable radio in their hanger that had the company frequency that I took with me to the crash site. While driving into the site I continually tried contacting any of the crew on this frequency without success.

I am unsure of exactly when I arrived on Breakdown road, but it was likely around 1740. I drove south from Deadman Rd to a gate across the road. While I was at that gate, Officer John arrived behind me. From that point we were together the remainder of the night. We located the side canyon and drove up it to where we reached the area of the coordinates. At that time, we saw a man on the hill with a flashlight to the North. Also at that time, LifeFlight 26 or 28 arrived overhead and assisted us in finding the crash site. Officer John communicated on the radio to coordinate information with LifeFlight.

Officer John and I hiked into the crash site (GPS stated 270 m from the road) and assessed the situation. The gunner was still hiking back to the crash site when we arrived at the site. We chose not to hike into the gunner as he was able to get a call out confirming 2 trapped patients and we assumed since he was walking, he was the least injured.

Upon arriving at the helicopter, I immediately approached the pilot, who was sitting inside the cockpit at the ground level (door of passenger seat) with his helmet off. He was conscious, but not alert. We located the mugger and initiated any aid we could provide. At this time, the LifeFlight crew arrived at the site and with their assistance we were able to get the pilot and crew to the helicopter at the bottom of the draw.

Paul Wik
District Wildlife Biologist
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

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Submitted by: Samantha Link