



Memorandum for Record

Fabian Salazar
Air Safety Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
Investigator in Charge

NTSB Accident Number: WPR19LA087
Aircraft Registration & Make/Model: N506PH / MD Helicopter 369E
Accident Location: Kukuihaele, HI.
Accident Date: 2/21/2019

Robert Mitchell
Pilot

Interview date and time: February 26, 2019, 1600 PST

He arrived to work about 0545 and began his preflight activities. The aircraft had just completed a 300-hour inspection the night before. He got his weather brief. He pre-flighted the helicopter in the hangar which allowed him to use the lights of the hangar as it was still dark. He got a fuel sample and placed the jar back in the locker. He realized he had used the fuel jar for another aircraft, so he alerted maintenance and told them what he had done.

Around 0630 he started the aircraft using external power and launched out about five minutes later to do the ground and hover work for the 300-hour inspection. He still had power checks to do. He performed a max performance power check and noted the numbers were average. He climbed up and transitioned at about 2000 ft. mean sea level (msl). He flew to the pick-up point.

In transit he flew at 3000 to 4000 ft. msl (about 2500 AGL). The flight was about 20 minutes. He arrived near the pickup site and descended to 2500' msl and conducted a reconnaissance (recce) pass. He was flying at about 125-130 knots. He was flying a long, wide 180 turn to the landing area. He was over a eucalyptus forest and was descending to an altitude to allow a normal approach altitude. He was in about a 30° angle of bank turn and had increased his collective when he heard something. While he was hearing the noise, he saw a yellow flash out of the corner of his eye it was down and left because he was looking up and right due to the turn he was in. This was followed by a red flash. He looked and saw his engine exhaust temperature at 909° C and his torque was at 0%. He saw the red engine OUT light come on and he heard the horn. He immediately looked at the torque gauge and it read zero. His dual tach gauge (Np and Nr) was up at 100%. He thought that was because he was still in the turn and the rotor blades were G-loaded. Knowing he was still over the eucalyptus trees he wrapped up the throttle and

attempted to get away from the trees. He turned into the wind. He could hear the engine “going down” [failing] and didn’t need to reference the gauges any more. His focus was on find a place to land. At this time, he thought he was about 100 ft. agl. About the time he rolled out of the turn he was at about 500 to 300 ft. agl. He was over undulating cattle pasture with three to four-foot grass. The surface resembled moguls on a ski slope. He had been to the landing zone before and was aware of the terrain, but it was the only place to land. The landing zone itself was full of people and cars so he chose deliberately not to try and land there.

He said the following occurred in a matter of seconds. The engine reignition started to kick off so he decided not to roll off the throttle because he thought he might have power at the bottom of the autorotation, but the engine came off line again and that was when he found the best place for his touchdown. This place was just a few hundred feet from the actual LZ. He started to aim for that point. He observed a barbed-wire fence between himself and the actual LZ which confirmed the point he selected was the place he would have to land at. At this point the engine reignition system started to come back online again, but this time it sounded like the engine would restart. He pulled in a little collective and he heard the engine completely die and the Nr start to droop. He noticed he was going to overshoot his intended landing spot, so he applied aft cyclic. He leveled the aircraft and pulled in collective right as he touched down. He landed a few yards of his intended spot, but he landed hard and the left skid departed. The helicopter bounced and came down on its left-hand side (without the skids). When he impacted the ground, the left door departed the helicopter.

When the helicopter came to rest, the pilot was laying on the ground while still in his seat. He tried to shut off the power with the twist grip on the collective, but it was buried in the ground. He was able to switch off the fuel shutoff valve. He then was able to roll off the twist grip. He rolled off all the avionics switches.

He was stuck in the helicopter. Some witnesses were able to help extricate him through the front windscreen area.