



As a Pilot In Command for MED-TRANS, A Global Medical Response Solution, I am providing this statement as requested by representatives of the NTSB concerning the accident that occurred May 18, 2022 involving helicopter N851AL in Christmas Valley, Oregon.

On May 18, 2022 at approximately 14:30, I accepted a patient transfer from Sky Lakes Medical Center to St. Charles Medical Clinic. After successfully completing the transfer, the medical crew unloaded the patient while I refueled the helicopter. At approximately 16:30 I received a request from flight comm for a scene call located at the Christmas Valley airport. My crew for the 18th of May consisted of 3 medics. I requested an assumed patient weight from flight comm because we were already heavy as a crew, and I had previously fueled the helicopter calculating fuel for the trip back to Klamath. After receiving the assumed patient weight, I completed a weight & balance and determined that I would need to burn some fuel off before takeoff, and while enroute. Next, I looked at the weather for Prineville (S39), KRDM, KBDN, and Sunriver (S21) using aviationweather.gov and foreflight. To the best of my memory the skies were mostly BKN with some ceilings around 6000ft to 7000ft. Winds were mostly out of the northwest with speeds approximately 15-20kts, and max gusts being in Bend at around 30kts. As far as weather for Christmas Valley airport, there is no weather reporting. I made the decision to accept the scene call, alerted the rest of my crew, performed our walk arounds, and loaded up into the helicopter. After burning some fuel we departed St. Charles Medical Center enroute to Christmas Valley Airport.

Enroute to Christmas Valley we did not experience any significant weather, and the aircraft was operating within its normal operating limitations. We flew at 1500ft agl for the enroute portion which put us at approximately 4500ft MSL to 5800ft MSL at various segments during the enroute portion. I did note, and commented to the crew on the winds at altitude as the Garmin was indicating that we had a 44kt tailwind and a high groundspeed.

During the arrival portion into Christmas Valley airport we descended to approximately 4800ft MSL and entered the traffic pattern from the north on a 45 which set us up for a right downwind for runway 25. Aware of the winds from the metar's and taf's I had previously reviewed, as well as from the information received from the Garmin at altitude, I began searching for the windsock to confirm wind speed and direction. As expected the winds were approximately out of the W to NW, and the wind speed judging from the wind sock being straight out with the tip occasionally dropping, I judged to be approximately 15-20kts and possibly gusting between 25-30kts. During my turn to final I side stepped to the parallel taxiway for runway 25. I slowly air taxied down the parallel taxiway looking for the ambulance that had the patient we were to pick up, while also keeping an eye on the windsock. The helicopter was handling well, and there was no indication that the winds would exceed any aircraft limits unless I was to hover OGE with the winds at my tail. My original thought after spotting our landing area was to land with my nose into the wind and have the ambulance reposition to the patient side. I am new to the EMS industry. It was brought to my attention when I began working at the Airlink 3 base in Klamath that while we still make our approaches as best we can into the wind, we always turn at the pad to put our patient side door to the ambulance or hospital walkway so that the patient can more easily and safely be loaded and unloaded into and out of the helicopter. As I lined up on the pad and began to descend I noticed there were structures serving as a sort of wind break and decided instead to perform a right pedal turn putting the left door to the ambulance. As I came to a 3ft hover above the pad I applied right pedal to bring the nose right and tail left. The pedal turn went smoothly not requiring any large inputs. However, just as I landed it felt almost like we were rear ended. We were being pushed forward fairly rapidly. Ahead of us were hazards like trees, and buildings, and to the left of us were wires, and the ambulance. Caught by surprise, and somewhat confused as to what was going on, my first reaction was to see and avoid obstacles, as well as to position the helicopter away from people and property. I increased collective and applied aft cyclic. The wind from the rear was so powerful that the cyclic was completely in my crotch, and I could not stop forward movement. I continued to increase collective to attain a height that would clear us of obstacles. In the midst of all this I attempted to maintain heading until clear of obstacles, which was requiring large pedal inputs left and right. By the time I got to an altitude of approximately 25-30ft and lowered the collective to hold altitude, I still had full aft cyclic, but the pedals seemed to have had no effectiveness and the nose started to spin to the left. My last effort after recognizing I had completely lost control of the tail rotor was to take the twist grip to Idle. For some reason at this point I had very little situational awareness and felt I was losing consciousness. I knew there was a structure nearby and did my best to stay clear of it. The last thing I remember before complete loss of consciousness is trying to find the ground to judge when to cushion our landing with the collective. All of this happened in less than a minute approximately. Control inputs were all made in coordination.

The landing phase of the flight to Christmas Valley ended in an accident. I have truthfully and accurately recounted to the best of my recollection the events that occurred May 18, 2022. After the attempt to cushion the landing I was completely

unconscious. My next memory is being awakened during extraction, and frantically asking for the condition of my crew.