

February 12,2023

On, February 6, 2023, at 2133, I landed N36FA, on the load truck, after finishing the spray jobs for the night. The loader loaded me with 50 gallons of rinse water. After checking the load hose and fuel (about 150 lbs), I took off, from the load truck, and went to an open, unplanted, bare field about 200 yards from the truck. I started spraying the rinse water out at 40 feet above the ground. I was moving forward at about 20 knots in Translational Lift. When the spray tank was almost empty, the helicopter began to bounce and tilt in all directions, fish-tailed slightly for a few seconds and then the engine shut down completely. My first reaction was to raise the nose to stop the forward motion as I pushed the collective down. The work lights were pointed upward so I could not see the ground. I pushed the nose over to give me a visual reference to the ground. However, flying over bare ground at night is equivalent to flying over water at night; there is no depth perception, making it impossible, for me, to judge my altitude or speed of descent. I was pumping the collective until I got close enough to the ground to be able to tell how fast I was coming down. When I felt I was close to the ground, I pulled full collective and the helicopter touched down. Because the terrain of the field had a slight incline at the front of the helicopter, the front of the skids touched down first followed by the rear skids. It was a hard landing, certainly. One of the main rotor blades hit the cowling that covers the tail rotor driveshaft and cut the drive shaft. The main rotor and head broke off at the top of the main shaft and landed about a hundred feet to the left of the helicopter. I assessed the situation, shut everything down and exited through the right door.