

8/2/2024 N20BH Crash Narrative

I was sitting in the rear left, forward-facing seat of the aircraft. After flying over the Idaho-Nevada border and over I-84, we made the decision that we would continue to fly to Pocatello instead of staying the night in Burley or Twin Falls, Idaho. We were east of Burley when I heard the pilot say that there was something wrong. I don't remember hearing or feeling anything abnormal with the aircraft at that time. A few seconds later, the pilot said that we would have to autorotate. Again, I don't remember hearing or feeling anything abnormal at that time. The other passenger in the back and I looked at each other and assumed our crash positions. Everything after that happened very quickly. We continued to descend forward rapidly and impacted the ground in what felt like two or three seconds. The initial impact was not as severe as I expected, but then the aircraft started shaking rapidly for what felt like five to ten seconds. When that stopped, I felt like I was being crushed and when I looked up above me, I could see a fire. The two of us in the rear seats exited through the right door of the aircraft and the pilot and front passenger exited through their respective doors. At the pilot's recommendation, we quickly gave ourselves some distance from the aircraft as soon as we were all out because there was still a small fire on top. I couldn't see any of the gauges from my seat, and all of my knowledge of what the pilot and front passenger saw in the few moments before the incident has come from after the crash.

Justin Rembelski's Statement for the N20BH Incident on 8/2/2024

From EKO "Elko, Nevada Airport" to PIH "Pocatello, Idaho Airport" at approximately 21:05 – 21:06 I felt a slight drop in altitude (maybe 10-20 feet) and then our pilot made the comment that something was wrong. I immediately started to look at the instrument panel to see if I noticed anything wrong with it. Nothing caught my attention at first and then out of the corner of my eye I noticed that the MGT gauge was no longer showing the numbers that it previously had been, somewhere in the range of 715-725. Which I found odd but wasn't too concerned about in that moment. As I continued to look at the instrument panel the MGT gauge shot into the red about three seconds after I first looked at it. Our pilot then made the comment that something was really wrong. I started to watch the gauge to see if the numbers would come back so I could see the temperature. The gauge completely turned off and when it turned back on it immediately went to 500 and then just soared into the red and I don't recall what the number jumped to. I recall looking out the front window and I could tell that we were losing altitude rapidly. Our pilot then made the comment "We are auto rotating. Sorry boys". I then assumed the crash position and my body tensed up completely, I thought "If I don't relax and I live through this I am going to be really hurt", so I took a deep breath and relaxed my whole body. I closed my eyes for a few seconds and after a few seconds of not hitting the ground, I opened my eyes to see that we were probably 1000-500 feet above the ground still. I watched until our pilot said "We are going down right here", he then flared the helicopter and we slowed down a lot. In the next second we were on the ground and sliding forward. After the sliding stopped, I thought to myself "That wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be and we are all going to be more than okay". Within that thought the helicopter started to violently shake and I became a rag doll. My arms and legs were flailing around, and my head was bouncing around, and I lost consciousness. The next thing I remember is one of my crew members telling me that I needed to get out of the helicopter. I then remember my crewmember picking me up and saying we needed to get away from the helicopter, I looked back and the last thing I saw of the helicopter was fire under the rotators. The four of them walked roughly 50 yards away from the helicopter and the pilot didn't feel comfortable with the distance, so we walked until we got out of the corn and into a clearing and started making calls at approximately 21:10.

Andrew Christensen

N20BH Helicopter Incident on 08/02/2024

We got fuel in Elko and were enroute to the Pocatello Regional Airport. At around 9:07 pm, I am unsure of the exact time, we were crossing farmland between Burley and Pocatello. The pilot announced something similar to 'we have an issue' and we started descending toward the ground. The descent felt controlled but fast. I looked to Jackson, the person sitting in the back with me to my left, and we both got into crash positions with our hands under our thighs and our heads down. As we were right above the cornfield, I saw how the aircraft was tilted with its nose up and the tail down. I then understood that this would be more serious than a hard landing when I saw the tail was going to hit the ground while we were still quickly descending. We hit the ground and I saw all of us and our baggage shake around. I do not remember the bags having any effect on me. Sometime around this point the person next me was collapsed toward my lap, I am not sure for how long but I did not think he was alive. I thought I saw a blood splatter on his seat, but found out a few days later that it was likely fluid from the engine. I then heard the engine above us was still powering and the cabin began violently shaking. I am not sure how long it shook but it was long enough for me to panic and think that we would be shaken until we were paralyzed or dead. I don't remember the shaking stopping or if it was me or Jackson who opened the door on my side. I think it may have been me who opened the door. The next thing I remember after the shaking was unbuckling my seatbelt and getting my body and head out the door with Jackson either right behind me or in front of me, I think he was right behind me because I don't remember him climbing over me, and I think I remember him holding onto me as we climbed out. I was still wearing my flight helmet and the cord must have disconnected from the communication box as I exited because I do not remember unplugging it; I took my flight helmet off when we started walking out of the field. Jackson and I got out of the right door and we were surrounded by tall corn strands. He opened the pilot's door and I saw flames coming out of the engine at the top. When the pilot got out I grabbed the fire extinguisher from between the front seats and took the plastic piece off the pin. I did not use the fire extinguisher because our training says it is for people and not property. I did keep the fire extinguisher with me. The three of us moved to the front of the aircraft as Justin got himself out of the front left door. He was

stumbling and looked like he may have an altered consciousness but quickly became more oriented. He walked toward us and all four of us were at the nose of the helicopter. We all asked each other if we were okay and we all were good enough to walk and communicate normally. Other than seeing flames at the top of the aircraft and the nose of the helicopter I did not look at the aircraft because all of my attention was on the three people with me so I did not know the condition of the helicopter when we walked away. We decided to leave the aircraft which I agreed with because of the fire and we couldn't see anything around us because of the corn. When we got to the edge of the cornfield I could see what looked like a house maybe 500 yards away and a harvesting plant close to it. We again checked on each other and examined our bodies for any injuries. We asked about neck pain. I examined the back of Justin's head and neck because I believe he was holding it, but there was no blood and no significant pain on the vertebrae, and he was communicating normally. The pilot had cuts on one of his shins and back pain, but the bleeding had stopped and he was walking around talking to us. Me and the two other firefighters had our cell phones and service, the pilot did not have his phone on him. Jackson called East Idaho Dispatch and emergency procedures began, more calls were made with all three phones but I was not as involved in the calls. Once I knew the initial condition of everyone, and there were not any immediate life threats, I sat down to rest because I had a headache and my head was spinning. We then started walking toward the harvesting plant along the cornfield a few minutes later. We had to cross a barbed wire fence, walk across a field, then another barbed wire fence until we were in the harvesting plant. We got to the road, made more calls and then a man who I believe was the owner drove up. A while later three ambulances and an air ambulance came. I rode to the Burley hospital in an ambulance with Jackson and the other two were in a different ambulance.