

Brief of Accident

Adopted 01/27/1993

ATL92FA029
File No. 1954 12/07/1991 FUQUAY-VARINA ,NC Aircraft Reg No. N26FH Time (Local): 00:15 EST

Make/Model: Aerospatiale/AS350D ASTAR
Engine Make/Model: Lycoming / LTS-101-600A2
Aircraft Damage: Destroyed
Number of Engines: 1
Operating Certificate(s): None
Type of Flight Operation: Other Work Use
Reg. Flight Conducted Under: Part 91: General Aviation

	Fatal	Serious	Minor/None
Crew	1	0	0
Pass	2	1	0

Last Depart. Point: WILMINGTON, NC
Destination: DURHAM, NC
Airport Proximity: Off Airport/Airstrip

Condition of Light: Night/Dark
Weather Info Src: Weather Observation Facility
Basic Weather: Visual Conditions
Lowest Ceiling: 0 Ft. AGL, Broken
Visibility: 12.00 SM
Wind Dir/Speed: 170 / 003 kts
Temperature (°C): 4
Precip/Obscuration:

Pilot-in-Command Age: 48

Flight Time (Hours)

Certificate(s)/Rating(s)
Airline Transport; Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land; Helicopter

Total All Aircraft: 7215
Last 90 Days: Unk/Nr
Total Make/Model: 931
Total Instrument Time: 71

Instrument Ratings
Airplane; Helicopter

*** Note: NTSB investigators either traveled in support of this investigation or conducted a significant amount of investigative work without any travel, and used data obtained from various sources to prepare this aircraft accident report. ***

THE NEWS HELICOPTER WAS RETURNING FROM A REPORTING ASSIGNMENT AT NIGHT IN VMC CONDITIONS. THE SOLE SURVIVOR, A SPORTSCASTER, REPORTED THAT ABOUT 20 TO 25 MINUTES BEFORE THE CRASH, THE ENGINE CHIP LIGHT CAME ON. THE LIGHT CAME ON AND WAS RESET BY THE PILOT 5 TO 10 TIMES. THERE WAS ALSO A LOSS OF TORQUE ON THE TORQUE GAUGE. SUBSEQUENTLY, THE ENGINE LOST POWER & THE HELICOPTER CRASH LANDED IN AN OPEN FIELD. AN INSPECTION OF THE ENGINE REVEALED THE #2 BEARING HAD SEIZED, RESULTING IN FAILURE OF THE COMPRESSOR SHAFT. THE #2 BEARING HAD BEEN REPLACED DURING RECENT ENGINE MAINTENANCE, AND THERE WAS ONLY ABOUT 125 HOURS ON THE NEW BEARING. THE OIL JET TO THE BEARING WAS NOT BLOCKED OR CLOGGED. THERE WERE TORQUE FLUCTUATIONS OBSERVED ON TWO OCCASIONS DURING THE WEEK BEFORE TO THE ACCIDENT. SEVERAL COMPONENTS WERE CHANGED IN AN ATTEMPT TO PINPOINT THE PROBLEM. THE SURVIVOR'S SEAT BELT FAILED IN THE CRASH DUE TO AN IMPROPER INSTALLATION, AND HE WAS THROWN CLEAR OF THE WRECKAGE.

Brief of Accident (Continued)

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Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER(TOTAL) - MECH FAILURE/MALF
Phase of Operation: CRUISE - NORMAL

Findings

1. (C) IN-FLIGHT PLANNING/DECISION - IMPROPER - PILOT IN COMMAND
 2. (C) OPERATION WITH KNOWN DEFICIENCIES IN EQUIPMENT - CONTINUED - PILOT IN COMMAND
 3. (C) ENGINE ASSEMBLY,BEARING - SEIZED
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Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - EMERGENCY

Findings

4. AUTOROTATION - ATTEMPTED - PILOT IN COMMAND
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Occurrence #3: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - EMERGENCY

Findings

5. (F) LIGHT CONDITION - DARK NIGHT
6. MISC EQPT/FURNISHINGS,SEAT BELT - FAILURE,TOTAL
7. MAINTENANCE,INSTALLATION - IMPROPER - COMPANY MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL

Findings Legend: (C) = Cause, (F) = Factor

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident as follows:
THE PILOT'S IMPROPER DECISION IN CONTINUING THE FLIGHT WITH A KNOWN ENGINE PROBLEM, AND THE SUBSEQUENT SEIZURE OF THE NUMBER TWO ENGINE BEARING, RESULTING IN ENGINE STOPPAGE. DARKNESS WAS A RELATED FACTOR.