



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Preliminary Report

Location:	Andalusia, AL	Accident Number:	ERA22FA343
Date & Time:	July 29, 2022, 15:02 Local	Registration:	N124LN
Aircraft:	Eurocopter AS350	Injuries:	2 Serious, 1 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 135: Air taxi & commuter - Non-scheduled - Air Medical (Discretionary)		

On July 29, 2022, about 1502 eastern standard time, a Eurocopter AS 350 B2, N124LN, was substantially damaged when it was involved in an accident near Andalusia, Alabama. The commercial pilot and one crewmember were seriously injured, and a second crewmember sustained minor injuries. The helicopter was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 135 air medical flight.

The approximate 15-minute flight departed a base in Evergreen, Alabama and cruised at 2,000 ft mean sea level, destined to Andalusia Health Hospital with the intention to pick up a patient for transfer to a different hospital. During a postaccident interview, the pilot stated that he remembered reporting 7 miles from South Alabama Regional Airport (79J), Andalusia, Alabama. Although 79J was not the destination, the pilot made the report on the common traffic advisory frequency for traffic avoidance as an airplane had just departed 79J. The pilot did not recall the accident sequence. He felt sweaty and clammy toward the end of the flight but was not lightheaded and did not experience vertigo. He remembered someone telling him to “pull up” three times and then remembered being in an ambulance.

The flight paramedic stated in a postaccident interview that the helicopter was approaching the hospital helipad and descending; however, it seemed low as the helipad was still about 1 mile away. The flight nurse was seated behind the pilot, tapped him on the shoulder and said that they were too low. The pilot replied “yeah, yeah, yeah,” and initially leveled off, but then the nose began to pitch down into another descent. At that point the flight nurse made a mayday call, shook the pilot’s seat and told him to “pullup, pullup, pullup.” The helicopter subsequently nosed-up, made a left turn and impacted a field on its right side.

The flight nurse was critically injured and could not provide a statement.

Witnesses in the field stated that the helicopter flew overhead about 300 ft above ground level, nosed up 90° or more, before turning left and impacting trees, powerlines, and the ground.

The wreckage came to rest on its right side, oriented about 165° magnetic. An approximate 100-ft debris path was observed, oriented on a westerly heading. The beginning of the path consisted of fallen tree branches and powerlines, followed by the aft tail boom and the main wreckage at the end of the path. The three main rotor blades remained attached to their respective hinges; however, all three star arms were fractured at an approximate 45° angle and the main rotor blades were resting on the ground in a stacked position. The aft tail section separated in two sections, forward of the horizontal stabilizer, and forward of the tail rotor gearbox. The tail rotor system remained attached to the vertical stabilizer. The tail rotor blades remained attached with one exhibiting tip damage and the other partially separated at the root. The tail rotor drive shaft separated at the flex coupling and at the forward steel short shaft. The right horizontal stabilizer exhibited leading edge damage, consistent with a wire strike.

An Appareo Vision 1000 cockpit video recorder was retained and forwarded to the National Transportation Safety Board Vehicle Recorders Laboratory for data download.

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Eurocopter	Registration:	N124LN
Model/Series:	AS350 B2	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Amateur Built:			
Operator:		Operating Certificate(s) Held:	On-demand air taxi (135)
Operator Designator Code:			

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	VMC	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	79J,310 ft msl	Observation Time:	14:56 Local
Distance from Accident Site:	5 Nautical Miles	Temperature/Dew Point:	34°C /23°C
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	8 knots / , 210°
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility:	10 miles
Altimeter Setting:	30.07 inches Hg	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	Company VFR
Departure Point:	Evergreen, AL	Destination:	Andalusia, AL

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	2 Serious, 1 Minor	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:		Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:		Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 Serious, 1 Minor	Latitude, Longitude:	31.309532,-86.495984

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Gretz, Robert

Additional Participating Persons: Clay Perkins; FAA FSDO; Birmingham, AL
Jason Trask; Air Methods; Greenwood Village, CO

Note: