



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	Highlandville, MO	Accident Number:	CEN15LA066
Date & Time:	11/26/2014, 2321 CST	Registration:	N902LC
Aircraft:	MD HELICOPTER INC MD 900	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Miscellaneous/other	Injuries:	1 Minor, 2 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 135: Air Taxi & Commuter - Non-scheduled - Air Medical (Medical Emergency)		

Analysis

The pilot was executing an off-airport landing during night visual meteorological conditions at the time of the accident. The pilot reported that he had completed two orbits of the area and had selected a large nearby field as the landing site. As the helicopter descended to about 20 ft above ground level, the pilot observed a set of power lines paralleling the helicopter's flightpath that he had not identified during the initial orbits of the landing area. He attempted to move the helicopter left to avoid the power lines, but the main rotor blades inadvertently struck one of them. The pilot maintained control of the helicopter and landed it safely. A postaccident examination revealed substantial damage to three of the main rotor blades. The remaining two rotor blades sustained minor damage. The pilot did not report any failures or malfunctions with the helicopter before impacting the power lines.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The pilot's inability to identify the power line during the initial approach in night visual meteorological conditions and his subsequent failure to avoid the power line once he identified it on final approach.

Findings

Aircraft	Altitude - Not attained/maintained (Cause)
Personnel issues	Identification/recognition - Pilot (Cause)
Environmental issues	Dark - Effect on operation Wire - Awareness of condition (Cause)

Factual Information

On November 26, 2014, about 2321 central standard time, a McDonnell Douglas model 900 helicopter, N902LC, was substantially damage when the main rotor blades struck a power line during landing near Highlandville, Missouri. The pilot was executing an off-airport landing to a field in order to pick-up a patient at the time of the accident. The pilot sustained minor injuries; the two medical crew members were not injured. The helicopter was registered to the Lester E Cox Medical Centers and operated by Air Methods Corporation under the provisions of 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 135 as an air medical flight. Night visual meteorological conditions prevailed for the flight, which was operated on a company visual flight rules flight plan. The flight originated from the Cox Medical Center facility in Springfield, Missouri, about 2310.

The pilot reported that he had completed two orbits of the accident scene and selected a large nearby field as the landing site. Using the helicopter search and landing lights, the pilot identified a pole at the southeast corner of the field with wires running toward the north. However, about 20 feet above ground level, he identified a second set of power lines paralleling the helicopter's flight path. He observed those power lines in his peripheral vision from under the night vision goggles. He attempted to move the helicopter to the left to avoid them, but the main rotor blades inadvertently struck one of the lines. The pilot maintained control and landed safely.

A postaccident examination revealed substantial damage to three of the main rotor blades. The remaining two rotor blades sustained minor damage. Debris from the power line struck and broke the pilot's door window. The pilot did not report any failures or malfunctions with the helicopter before impacting the power lines.

History of Flight

Approach	Miscellaneous/other (Defining event) Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)
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Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	65
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Helicopter	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 2 With Waivers/Limitations	Last Medical Exam:	12/09/2013
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	07/16/2014
Flight Time:	8271 hours (Total, all aircraft), 632 hours (Total, this make and model), 13 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 8 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Manufacturer:	MD HELICOPTER INC	Registration:	N902LC
Model/Series:	MD 900	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	900-00118
Landing Gear Type:	Skid;	Seats:	
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	11/12/2014, Continuous Airworthiness	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	6499 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	10 Hours	Engines:	2 Turbo Shaft
Airframe Total Time:	3110 Hours	Engine Manufacturer:	P&W CANADA
ELT:	C126 installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	PW207E
Registered Owner:	Lester E Cox Medical Centers	Rated Power:	572 hp
Operator:	Air Methods Corporation	Air Carrier Operating Certificate:	On-demand Air Taxi (135)

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Night
Observation Facility, Elevation:	SGF, 1268 ft msl	Observation Time:	2252 CST
Distance from Accident Site:	20 Nautical Miles	Direction from Accident Site:	345°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Few / 2200 ft agl	Temperature/Dew Point:	1° C / 4° C
Lowest Ceiling:	Broken / 2700 ft agl	Visibility	10 Miles
Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:	16 knots/ 25 knots, 330°	Visibility (RVR):	
Altimeter Setting:	30.29 inches Hg	Visibility (RVV):	
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Springfield, MO	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	Company VFR
Destination:	Springfield, MO	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	2310 CST	Type of Airspace:	

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor, 2 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	1 Minor, 2 None	Latitude, Longitude:	36.931944, 93.280278 (est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Timothy Sorensen	Adopted Date:	06/09/2015
Additional Participating Persons:	James Seabolt; FAA Flight Standards; Kansas City, MO Michael Koenes; Air Methods Corp.; Englewood, CO		
Publish Date:	06/09/2015		
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.		
Investigation Docket:	http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/search/dockList.cfm?mKey=90458		

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