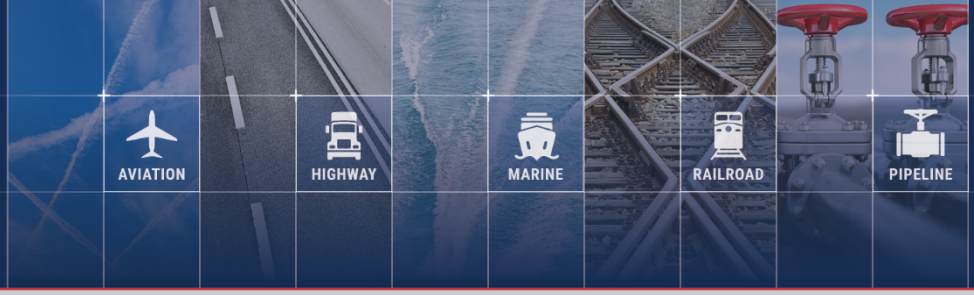

Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	King Salmon, Alaska	**Accident Number:**	ANC24FA089
Date & Time:	September 7, 2024, 09:24 Local	**Registration:**	N306FW
Aircraft:	Bell 206B	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Defining Event:	VFR encounter with IMC	**Injuries:**	1 Fatal, 4 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 135: Air taxi & commuter - Non-scheduled		

Analysis

The commercial, instrument-rated pilot was departing under special visual flight rules clearance in instrument meteorological conditions. Shortly after takeoff the pilot encountered a dense fog bank while flying over the calm water of a river. He stated he attempted to turn around, but he lost his visual reference with the river. The pilot stated he then attempted to climb but became disoriented and a few seconds later the helicopter impacted the water.

Examination of the airframe and engine revealed no evidence of any preaccident mechanical failures or malfunctions that would have precluded normal operation.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be:

The pilot's decision to initiate the visual flight into instrument meteorological conditions, which resulted in his spatial disorientation, failure to maintain helicopter control and subsequent impact with water.

Findings

Personnel issues	Decision making/judgment - Pilot
Environmental issues	Low visibility - Effect on personnel
Environmental issues	Below VFR minima - Effect on personnel
Personnel issues	Aircraft control - Pilot
Personnel issues	Use of equip/system - Pilot
Personnel issues	Spatial disorientation - Pilot
Personnel issues	Situational awareness - Pilot
Personnel issues	Visual illusion/disorientation - Pilot

Factual Information

History of Flight

Enroute	VFR encounter with IMC (Defining event)
Maneuvering-low-alt flying	Loss of control in flight

On September 7, 2024, about 0924 Alaska daylight time, a Bell 206B helicopter, N306FW, sustained substantial damage when it was involved in an accident near King Salmon, Alaska. A passenger was fatally injured; the pilot and three passengers sustained minor injuries. The helicopter was operated as a Title 14 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 135 flight.

The accident helicopter, owned and operated by Egli Air Haul, was transporting four passengers to a sport fishing camp located to the south of the King Salmon Airport (AKN). According to archived FAA data, the accident pilot contacted the AKN control tower specialist on duty to request a special visual flight rules (SVFR) clearance to depart to the south. The controller on duty issued the pilot a SVFR clearance and instructed the pilot to report clear of the Class D airspace to the south. The helicopter then departed to the south.

Shortly after the helicopter departed, the control tower specialist received a phone call from an observer to the south of the airport indicating that a helicopter had just crashed into the Naknak River, near Grassy Point. The control tower specialist then attempted to reach the departing helicopter, but no further radio communications were received.

The pilot reported encountering a very dense fog bank while flying over the calm water of the Naknek River; he subsequently lost all visual reference and became disoriented when he attempted to climb. The helicopter then descended and subsequently impacted the surface of the river.

Witnesses reported that it was foggy at the airport before the helicopter departed. One witness, who was walking along the riverbank, reported that it was so foggy that she could not see the opposite side of the river. This witness saw the helicopter just before the impact and stated it was flying less the 100 ft above the water.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	**Age:**	42,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	**Seat Occupied:**	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	**Restraint Used:**	4-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane; Helicopter	**Second Pilot Present:**	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	**Toxicology Performed:**	
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Without waivers/limitations	**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	October 2, 2023
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	November 20, 2023
Flight Time:	3077 hours (Total, all aircraft), 2392 hours (Total, this make and model), 2913 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 188 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 81 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 0 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Passenger Information

Certificate:		**Age:**	
Airplane Rating(s):		**Seat Occupied:**	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):		**Restraint Used:**	4-point
Instrument Rating(s):		**Second Pilot Present:**	No
Instructor Rating(s):		**Toxicology Performed:**	
Medical Certification:		**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	
Occupational Pilot:		**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	
Flight Time:			

Passenger Information

Certificate:		**Age:**	
Airplane Rating(s):		**Seat Occupied:**	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):		**Restraint Used:**	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):		**Second Pilot Present:**	No
Instructor Rating(s):		**Toxicology Performed:**	
Medical Certification:		**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	
Occupational Pilot:		**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	
Flight Time:			

Passenger Information

Certificate:	**Age:**	
Airplane Rating(s):	**Seat Occupied:**	Center
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	**Restraint Used:**	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):	**Second Pilot Present:**	No
Instructor Rating(s):	**Toxicology Performed:**	
Medical Certification:	**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	
Occupational Pilot:	**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	
Flight Time:		

Passenger Information

Certificate:	**Age:**	
Airplane Rating(s):	**Seat Occupied:**	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	**Restraint Used:**	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):	**Second Pilot Present:**	No
Instructor Rating(s):	**Toxicology Performed:**	
Medical Certification:	**Last FAA Medical Exam:**	
Occupational Pilot:	**Last Flight Review or Equivalent:**	
Flight Time:		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Bell	**Registration:**	N306FW
Model/Series:	206B	**Aircraft Category:**	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:	1986	**Amateur Built:**	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	**Serial Number:**	3940
Landing Gear Type:	Skid	**Seats:**	5
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	July 18, 2024 100 hour	**Certified Max Gross Wt.:**	3350 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	74 Hrs	**Engines:**	1 Turbo shaft
Airframe Total Time:	27792.6 Hrs as of last inspection	**Engine Manufacturer:**	ALLISON
ELT:	C126 installed, not activated	**Engine Model/Series:**	R-250-C20J
Registered Owner:	EGLI AIR HAUL INC	**Rated Power:**	317 Horsepower
Operator:	EGLI AIR HAUL INC	**Operating Certificate(s) Held:**	Rotorcraft external load (133), On-demand air taxi (135)

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Instrument (IMC)	**Condition of Light:**	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	PAKN,66 ft msl	**Distance from Accident Site:**	1 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	08:54 Local	**Direction from Accident Site:**	349°
Lowest Cloud Condition:		**Visibility**	0.25 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	Indefinite (V V) / 200 ft AGL	**Visibility (RVR):**	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	5 knots / None	**Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:**	/ None
Wind Direction:	170°	**Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:**	/ N/A
Altimeter Setting:	29.97 inches Hg	**Temperature/Dew Point:**	7°C / 7°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	Moderate - None - Fog		
Departure Point:	King Slamon , AK (AKN)	**Type of Flight Plan Filed:**	Company VFR
Destination:	Nakalilok Bay, AK (PVT)	**Type of Clearance:**	Special VFR
Departure Time:	09:15 Local	**Type of Airspace:**	Class D

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	1 Fatal, 3 Minor	**Aircraft Fire:**	None
Ground Injuries:		**Aircraft Explosion:**	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal, 4 Minor	**Latitude, Longitude:**	58.659147,-156.64661

The fuselage was intact with all major components still attached. The tail rotor blades, and gear box were undamaged. Cyclic and collective flight controls were traced from the cockpit controls to the pitch control rods attached to the main rotor hub assembly. Anti-torque control (yaw) was traced from the anti-torque pedals to the tail rotor with fractures consistent with impact damage at the bottom and top of the flight control “broom closet.” Tail rotor pitch control operated smoothly and freely. No damage was observed with the flight control hydraulic servos. All hoses were attached and undamaged. All fuel, oil, and electrical lines in the engine compartment were undamaged and connected. The fuel control unit was undamaged. Throttle control from the cockpit was traced to the fuel control unit. Rotational scoring was observed on the tail rotor drive shaft under the engine and on the input shaft to the K-flex.

Survival Aspects

The passenger who was fatally injured was unable to exit the helicopter when the helicopter went under the water. The passenger was in the front left seat using a 4-point seatbelt restraint system.

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Ward, Mark
Additional Participating Persons:	Mitch Deremer; FAA; Anchorage, AK
Original Publish Date:	August 20, 2025
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class 3
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=195072