



# **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 issuesUse of equip/system - PilotPersonnel issuesSpatial disorientation - PilotPersonnel issuesSituational awareness - Pilot

Personnel issues Visual illusion/disorientation - Pilot

Page 2 of 8 ANC24FA089

#### **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.

Page 3 of 8 ANC24FA089

### **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:		

Page 4 of 8 ANC24FA089

**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:		

Page 5 of 8 ANC24FA089

## **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
Conditions at Accident Site.	matidifient (iwo)	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°
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>		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

Page 6 of 8 ANC24FA089

#### **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.

Page 7 of 8 ANC24FA089

#### **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

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant events in other modes of transportation—railroad, transit, highway, marine, pipeline, and commercial space. We determine the probable causes of the accidents and events we investigate, and issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future occurrences. In addition, we conduct transportation safety research studies and offer information and other assistance to family members and survivors for each accident or event we investigate. We also serve as the appellate authority for enforcement actions involving aviation and mariner certificates issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and US Coast Guard, and we adjudicate appeals of civil penalty actions taken by the FAA.

The NTSB does not assign fault or blame for an accident or incident; rather, as specified by NTSB regulation, "accident/incident investigations are fact-finding proceedings with no formal issues and no adverse parties ... and are not conducted for the purpose of determining the rights or liabilities of any person" (Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations section 831.4). Assignment of fault or legal liability is not relevant to the NTSB's statutory mission to improve transportation safety by investigating accidents and incidents and issuing safety recommendations. In addition, statutory language prohibits the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report (Title 49 United States Code section 1154(b)). A factual report that may be admissible under 49 United States Code section 1154(b) is available here.

Page 8 of 8 ANC24FA089