



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Decatur, Texas	Accident Number:	CEN25LA389
Date & Time:	September 19, 2025, 10:07 Local	Registration:	N831VA
Aircraft:	ROBINSON HELICOPTER R44	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Loss of control on ground	Injuries:	2 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Instructional		

Analysis

The flight instructor reported the instructional flight initially proceeded without incident. The plan was for the pilot-receiving-instruction to work on off-airport, pinnacle landings. The pilot's first steep approach was completed with no issues. They moved about one-half mile to the west, and the pilot initiated an approach to an elevated dirt road. The road had a hump in the middle, and the pilot intentionally remained light on the skids to ensure a stable set down. However, as the nose of the helicopter began to rise due to the hump in the road, the tail rotor blades contacted the ground. The pilot subsequently lost control of the helicopter.

The helicopter came to rest on a descending embankment from the road. The forward portion of the left landing skid, the tail skid, and the aft portion of the tail boom separated. One tail rotor blade was separated near mid-span and located at the accident site. Damage to the outboard leading edge of one main rotor blade appeared consistent with contact to the tail boom.

The flight instructor stated there were no failures or malfunctions associated with the helicopter before the accident. He also noted that becoming more familiar with the helicopter before moving to complex maneuvers such as an off-airport, pinnacle landing might have resulted in a different outcome.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

The pilot's loss of control during an off-airport, pinnacle landing, and the flight instructor's inadequate supervision of the instructional flight.

Findings

Personnel issues	Aircraft control - Student/instructed pilot
Personnel issues	Decision making/judgment - Instructor/check pilot

Factual Information

History of Flight

Landing-flare/touchdown	Loss of control on ground (Defining event)
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Flight instructor Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Flight instructor	Age:	31, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Helicopter	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	Helicopter; Instrument helicopter	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Class 2 Without waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	July 17, 2025
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	August 18, 2025
Flight Time:	334 hours (Total, all aircraft), 168 hours (Total, this make and model), 277 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 82 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 48 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 5 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Private	Age:	41, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Helicopter	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Class 1 Without waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	December 4, 2024
Occupational Pilot:	No	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	May 28, 2025
Flight Time:	150 hours (Total, all aircraft), 13 hours (Total, this make and model), 105 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 52 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 17 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 0 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	ROBINSON HELICOPTER	Registration:	N831VA
Model/Series:	R44	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:	2013	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	13477
Landing Gear Type:	Skid	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	June 27, 2025 100 hour	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2500 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	70.9 Hrs	Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	3633.5 Hrs at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	C126 installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	IO-540-AE1A5
Registered Owner:	TRAVEL SYSTEMS LLC	Rated Power:	300 Horsepower
Operator:	Veracity Aviation	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	Pilot school (141)
Operator Does Business As:	N/A	Operator Designator Code:	V79S

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KLUD, 1047 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	3 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	10:15 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	143°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	7 knots / 0 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	90°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.09 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	25°C / 18°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Fort Worth, TX (AFW)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Fort Worth, TX (AFW)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	09:40 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	Decatur Municipal LUD	Runway Surface Type:	Dirt;Gravel
Airport Elevation:	1047 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry;Rough
Runway Used:	N/A	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	0 ft / 0 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Full stop

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	2 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	2 None	Latitude, Longitude:	33.2999,-97.62178

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Sorensen, Timothy
Additional Participating Persons:	Eric Goin; FAA Flight Standards; Irving, TX
Original Publish Date:	October 17, 2025
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class 4
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=201064

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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](#).