



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Decatur, Texas	Accident Number:	CEN25LA380
Date & Time:	September 15, 2025, 21:15 Local	Registration:	N407WA
Aircraft:	Bell 407	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Hard landing	Injuries:	1 Minor, 2 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Instructional		

Analysis

The operator reported that a hard landing occurred during a night training flight that was conducted for a newly hired helicopter pilot and a company flight instructor candidate. The training was being conducted by the flight instructor candidate while both pilots were being observed by a company flight instructor from the right rear seat.

After conducting numerous other training events during the flight, the flight instructor announced to the pilot-under-instruction that the next event was going to be a straight in autorotation from altitude with a power recovery. The instructor then briefed the pilot-under-instruction on how the maneuver was to be conducted.

During the descent the pilot-under-instruction initiated deceleration using aft cyclic. The instructor began increasing the throttle to the maximum position. However, the instructor noticed that the rpm was about 95% and he believed the engine had not responded appropriately. He then responded by moving the throttle towards the idle position. Recognizing his mistake, he then attempted to correct by increasing the throttle back to maximum power. After this he focused his attention outside the cockpit due to the low altitude.

Shortly after the pilot-under-instruction recalled hearing the instructor say something to the effect, it's not recoverable, prepare for impact. He attempted to arrest the decent before impact but was unsuccessful. The helicopter subsequently impacted the runway and came to rest on the lower fuselage which resulted in substantial damage to the tail boom.

The operator reported that there were no preaccident mechanical malfunctions or failures with the helicopter 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 instructor candidate's erroneous operation of the throttle during an autorotation from altitude with power recovery, which resulted in a hard landing.

Findings

Personnel issues	Use of equip/system - Instructor/check pilot
Aircraft	Prop/rotor parameters - Not attained/maintained

Factual Information

History of Flight

Autorotation	Hard landing (Defining event)
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Flight instructor Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Military	Age:	51,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	4-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane; Helicopter	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Class 2 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	November 26, 2024
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	August 14, 2025
Flight Time:	3690 hours (Total, all aircraft), 400 hours (Total, this make and model), 2490 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 21 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 1 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Flight instructor; Military	Age:	49,Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	4-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Helicopter	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Class 2 With waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	December 5, 2024
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	21331 hours (Total, all aircraft), 6 hours (Total, this make and model), 2151 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft)		

Check pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial; Military	Age:	Male
Airplane Rating(s):		Seat Occupied:	Rear
Other Aircraft Rating(s):		Restraint Used:	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):		Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):		Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:		Last FAA Medical Exam:	
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	3400 hours (Total, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Bell	Registration:	N407WA
Model/Series:	407	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:	1997	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	53222
Landing Gear Type:	High skid	Seats:	5
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	September 15, 2025 AAIP	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	5250 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Turbo shaft
Airframe Total Time:	11949.6 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	Rolls Royce
ELT:	C126 installed, activated, did not aid in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	250-C47B
Registered Owner:	MED-TRANS CORP	Rated Power:	674 Horsepower
Operator:	MED-TRANS CORP	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	On-demand air taxi (135)
Operator Does Business As:		Operator Designator Code:	M3XA

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Night/dark
Observation Facility, Elevation:	KLUD,1047 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	0 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	21:15 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	246°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	7 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	4 knots / None	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	None / None
Wind Direction:	120°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	N/A / N/A
Altimeter Setting:	30.06 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	27°C / 16°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Denton, TX (KDTO)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	Company VFR
Destination:	Decatur, TX (KLUD)	Type of Clearance:	None
Departure Time:	20:00 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	Decatur Municipal Airport LUD	Runway Surface Type:	Asphalt
Airport Elevation:	1047 ft msl	Runway Surface Condition:	Dry
Runway Used:	17	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:	4200 ft / 60 ft	VFR Approach/Landing:	Simulated forced landing;Traffic pattern

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:	33.254167,-97.580556

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC): Miller, Bradley

Additional Participating Persons: Joel Turner; FAA; Irving, TX

Original Publish Date: October 30, 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=201008>

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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](#).