Aviation Investigation Preliminary Report

Location:	Lebanon, TN	**Accident Number:**	ERA26FA035
Date & Time:	November 8, 2025, 13:41 Local	**Registration:**	N107VU
Aircraft:	Airbus Helicopters EC 130 T2	**Injuries:**	1 Fatal, 2 Serious
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 135: Air taxi & commuter - Non-scheduled - Air Medical (Medical emergency)		

On November 8, 2025, at 1341 central standard time, an Airbus Helicopters EC 130 T2, N107VU, was substantially damaged when it was involved in an accident near Lebanon, Tennessee. The pilot and flight paramedic were seriously injured, and the flight nurse was fatally injured. The helicopter was operated as a Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations Part 135 air medical flight.

The helicopter, callsign "LifeFlight1" (LF1), was operated by Air Methods LLC. dba Vanderbilt LifeFlight as part of Vanderbilt University Medical Center's (VUMC) critical care air medical transport service for VUMC and the Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital. As part of the program, Air Methods provided all air transportation services and VUMC provided all medical staffing, patient care, and clinical services. The pilot was employed by air methods, and the flight paramedic and flight nurse, were employed by VUMC. The program had 8 bases. One of which was in Gallatin, Tennessee.

About 1334, LF1 departed from the Gallatin base in response to a launch request in Rutherford County, Tennessee. About 1337, the crew was informed by the operator's communications center (AIRCOM) that the request had been cancelled. According to preliminary ADS-B data provided by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), shortly thereafter, the helicopter made a 180° turn back toward Gallatin. At the time, the helicopter was at an altitude of about 4,000 feet msl. A review of radio communications recorded by the operator's communications center revealed that at 1339, they received a radio call from LF1 stating: "Aircom…LF1…we have a medical emergency onboard with our pilot…uh were gonna…we will advise." No further transmissions were received from the flight.

During a post-accident interview, the flight paramedic recalled that after receiving the cancellation from AIRCOM, the pilot turned the helicopter around. The flight paramedic acknowledged the cancellation via radio and advised that they were returning to base (RTB).

After that point, he noticed that the pilot didn't make any noticeable movements, which was unusual because typically, the pilots would nod or give a thumbs up to acknowledge. After he did not get confirmation from the pilot that they were turning around, the flight paramedic leaned forward and tapped the pilot on the shoulder. The pilot then looked at him and the flight paramedic said "Did you hear that? We are RTB." He received no response from the pilot. He then asked the pilot if he was okay and saw that the pilot's expression was a "complete blank stare."

The flight paramedic recalled that around that time he remembered looking outside and thinking they were high. He then attempted to get the pilot's attention several more times, but he did not receive a response. He further described that the pilot's eyes were open, but there was no emotion. He saw that the pilot was trying to make an input into the GPS or possibly the autopilot, but he couldn't put his finger on the button. The pilot was still not responding or making any purposeful movement of the flight controls. The flight paramedic then took off his restraints and leaned forward to see what the autopilot was doing. He did not see that the autopilot was engaged, and he realized that he needed to slow the helicopter down.

The flight paramedic had never touched a cyclic control stick in flight before, as they were not allowed to, but from watching pilots' hands in flight, he knew that small inputs would result in small reactions, and he needed a large reaction. He then grabbed the cyclic on top of the pilot's hand, which remained on the cyclic, and pulled it back. The pilot did not resist this control input. The helicopter responded much more than he was expecting, after which he made smaller inputs to slow down. He knew from watching pilots land that he had to decrease the power, so he also reached across the pilot's lap and tapped down on the collective control because he knew that would slow them down.

The flight paramedic tried to get the helicopter into a level attitude and got to a point where it was slowing. The helicopter was in stable flight but still moving fast. There was a lot of farm land around, and the flight paramedic and the flight nurse were telling the pilot to land the helicopter. The flight paramedic pointed out a field to the pilot just left of their centerline. At this time the flight paramedic was out of his seat and kneeling over the console to reach the flight controls. The only coherent reaction he got from the pilot was when he acknowledged where the flight paramedic was pointing and said to him "there, no there…" and he pointed to a field further away and much more wide open. The flight paramedic then looked up and saw a bright yellow field lined with trees with descending terrain. While the flight paramedic was leaning over the console trying to control the helicopter, it struck the tops of the trees while approaching the field. About 10-20 feet above the ground, the flight paramedic made a hard flare and the helicopter then impacted the ground.

The helicopter was last observed by ADS-B at 1341, at a GPS altitude of 775 feet, about 0.31 miles from the accident site. This was the helicopter's last ADS-B-observed position. About 1345, personnel in the operator's AIRCOM determined that the helicopter had "landed" at an unplanned location. AIRCOM then initiated the operator's post-accident initiation plan, and

received confirmation from emergency services in the vicinity of the accident site that the helicopter had been involved in an accident. The AIRCOM personnel also received a telephone call from the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center indicating that the helicopter's emergency locator transmitter had activated.

The helicopter impacted the ground and rolled on to its left side, coming to rest on upsloping terrain oriented on a magnetic heading of 275o. All major components of the helicopter remained intact with the wreckage. The crew and passenger compartment remained intact with the forward windshield being removed by first responders. The left door was open and bent back 180 degrees. The right and left sliding doors were intact but could not be opened due to crush damage by the skid step. Both skids remained attached to the helicopter and were compressed evenly. The left skid fractured in the center of the skid. The tailboom remained attached to the fuselage.

The tailboom was bent downward staring at the center about 10 degrees. The tail rotor driveshaft was separated at the center hanger bearing. The right horizontal stabilizer showed no signs of damage. The left horizontal stabilizer was bent upwards about 30 degrees. The Fenestron had damage to the underside of the Fenestron housing. All variable pitch rotor blades and fixed blades were attached and showed no signs of impact damage. The tail rotor gearbox showed no signs of damage.

The main transmission mounts were fractured and displaced from their attachment points. All three hydraulic servos remained attached to their lower attachment points and the non-rotating swash plate and pitch hors. The three main rotor blade retention pins remained installed and the main rotor blades remained attached to the blade grips. The main rotor head remained intact but exhibited impact damage. All three main rotor blades display damage consistent with being under power at the time of impact.

The engine data recorder information was downloaded and reviewed and showed no recorded abnormalities of the engine. The fuel system integrity remained intact with no apparent fuel leaving the fuel tanks. There was no postimpact fire. Overall, the postaccident examination revealed no evidence of any preimpact mechanical malfunctions or failure that would have precluded normal operation at the time of impact.

The pilot held an airline transport pilot certificate with ratings for rotorcraft-helicopter, airplane multi-engine land, and instrument airplane. He also held a flight instructor certificate with a rating for rotorcraft-helicopter. The pilot’s most-recent second-class medical certificate was issued by the FAA on May 17, 2025, with limitations relating to the use of corrective lens(es) to meet vision standards and that the certificate was not valid for any class after (its second-class expiration). According to FAA airman records, the pilot had accrued 4,500 total hours of flight experience as of his most recent medical certificate application.

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Airbus Helicopters	**Registration:**	N107VU
Model/Series:	EC 130 T2	**Aircraft Category:**	Helicopter
Amateur Built:			
Operator:	AIR METHODS LLC	**Operating Certificate(s) Held:**	On-demand air taxi (135)
Operator Designator Code:	QMLA		

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	VMC	**Condition of Light:**	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	M54,588 ft msl	**Observation Time:**	14:10 Local
Distance from Accident Site:		**Temperature/Dew Point:**	22°C /9°C
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	**Wind Speed/Gusts, Direction:**	
Lowest Ceiling:	None	**Visibility:**	10 miles
Altimeter Setting:	29.78 inches Hg	**Type of Flight Plan Filed:**	
Departure Point:	Galltin, TN (NONE)	**Destination:**	Lebanon, TN (NONE)

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Fatal, 2 Serious	**Aircraft Damage:**	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	N/A	**Aircraft Fire:**	None
Ground Injuries:		**Aircraft Explosion:**	None
Total Injuries:	1 Fatal, 2 Serious	**Latitude, Longitude:**	36.329468,-86.382309

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Read, Leah
Additional Participating Persons:	Ian Mullins; FAA / FSDO; Nashville, TN Thierry Loo; BEA; Le Bourget, OF Seth Buttner; Airbus Helicopters; Grand Prairie, TX Bryan LARIMORE; Safran; Grand Prairie, TX Matthew Hilscher; EASA; Cologne, OF Michel Martin; Airbus Helicopters; Marignane, OF Paul-Etienne Jactat; Safran; Paris, OF Kevin M. Drew; Air Methods; Greenwood Village, CO
Investigation Class:	Class 3
Note:	