



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	Cookeville, Tennessee	Accident Number:	ERA26LA048
Date & Time:	November 14, 2025, 08:14 Local	Registration:	N668TM
Aircraft:	ROBINSON HELICOPTER R44	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:	Hard landing	Injuries:	4 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Aerial observation		

Analysis

The pilot of the helicopter was performing air tour flights from a county fairground. While landing, and performing a pedal turn about 30 ft above ground level, the helicopter began descending at a rate of about 200 ft per minute. As the pilot initiated forward cyclic to position over the landing zone, the helicopter suddenly dropped from an altitude of about 10 to 15 ft, and landed hard on the skids, which resulted in substantial damage to the fuselage. The pilot reported that there were no preimpact mechanical malfunctions or failures of the helicopter that would have prevented normal operation.

Probable Cause and Findings

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

The pilot's failure to maintain an appropriate decent rate during approach, resulting in a hard landing.

Findings

Personnel issues	Aircraft control - Pilot
Aircraft	Descent rate - Not attained/maintained

Factual Information

History of Flight

Landing	Hard landing (Defining event)
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Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	24, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	None	Seat Occupied:	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	Helicopter	Restraint Used:	3-point
Instrument Rating(s):	Helicopter	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	
Medical Certification:	Class 1 Without waivers/limitations	Last FAA Medical Exam:	May 27, 2025
Occupational Pilot:	Yes	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	October 7, 2025
Flight Time:	191 hours (Total, all aircraft), 1.3 hours (Total, this make and model), 112 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 2.7 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 1.3 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	ROBINSON HELICOPTER	Registration:	N668TM
Model/Series:	R44	Aircraft Category:	Helicopter
Year of Manufacture:	2002	Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	1228
Landing Gear Type:	None; Skid	Seats:	4
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	October 31, 2025 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	2400 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:		Engines:	1 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	3557 Hrs at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	Lycoming
ELT:	Installed, activated, did not aid in locating accident	Engine Model/Series:	O-540-FLB5
Registered Owner:	On file	Rated Power:	260
Operator:	On file	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	SRB, 1024 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	6 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	08:15 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	191°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	10 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	/	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	None / None
Wind Direction:		Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	N/A / N/A
Altimeter Setting:	30.24 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	9°C / 6°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	Cookeville, TN	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	None
Destination:	Cookeville, TN	Type of Clearance:	VFR
Departure Time:		Type of Airspace:	Class G

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	3 None	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	4 None	Latitude, Longitude:	36.159574, -85.507175 (est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Boggs, Daniel
Additional Participating Persons:	Michael Salas; FAA/FSDO; Nash, TN
Original Publish Date:	January 9, 2026
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class 4
Note:	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.
Investigation Docket:	https://data.ntsb.gov/Docket?ProjectID=202037

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](#).