



# Aviation Investigation Final Report

<b>Location:</b>	Gettysburg, Pennsylvania	<b>Accident Number:</b>	ERA26LA122
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	February 21, 2026, 11:59 Local	<b>Registration:</b>	N1020S
<b>Aircraft:</b>	Hughes 269A	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Defining Event:</b>	Loss of control on ground	<b>Injuries:</b>	2 Minor
<b>Flight Conducted Under:</b>	Part 91: General aviation - Instructional		

## Analysis

The student pilot and the flight instructor performed a preflight inspection of the helicopter and then moved it from the hangar onto an area of soft, muddy ground outside. They pushed the helicopter as far away from the hangar as they could due to the soft ground, about 25 to 30 ft. The student pilot described that where the helicopter was positioned, it was “leaning back” with the aft portion of both skids several inches deep in the mud. During the subsequent takeoff attempt, the student pilot noted that the helicopter required the application of additional engine power than he had observed during previous takeoffs before it became “light on the skids.” During a postaccident interview, he postulated that the helicopter might have been “stuck in the mud.” The flight instructor then felt that the helicopter’s tail might strike the ground, so he nudged the cyclic control forward. Immediately after, the helicopter began moving forward toward the hangar in a significantly nose low attitude.

Despite their subsequent control inputs, neither pilot was able to arrest the helicopter’s forward motion and it struck the hangar less than 2 seconds later and came to rest on its right side. The helicopter’s fuselage, tailboom, and main rotor blades were substantially damaged during the accident sequence. The flight instructor reported that there were no preimpact mechanical malfunctions or failures of the helicopter that would have precluded normal operation, and FAA inspectors who examined the helicopter after the accident were unable to find evidence of a preimpact mechanical malfunction or failure of the flight controls that would have precluded normal operation. Based on this information, it is likely that the helicopter suddenly dislodged itself from the soft, muddy ground during the takeoff when the flight instructor applied nose down cyclic input, which resulted in an unexpected, rapid forward movement and collision with the hangar. Had the flight instructor recognized the abnormal amount of engine power being applied by the student and discontinued the takeoff attempt, it is likely that the accident could have been avoided.

## Probable Cause and Findings

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

The flight instructor's failure to identify the excess power required to lift off from soft and muddy ground, which resulted in a loss of control and subsequent collision with a hangar during takeoff.

### Findings

<b>Personnel issues</b>	Monitoring environment - Instructor/check pilot
<b>Aircraft</b>	(general) - Not attained/maintained

## Factual Information

### History of Flight

<b>Takeoff</b>	Loss of control on ground (Defining event)
<b>Takeoff</b>	Collision with terr/obj (non-CFIT)

### Flight instructor Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Commercial; Flight instructor	<b>Age:</b>	49, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Left
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	Helicopter	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	3-point
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	Helicopter	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	Yes
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	Helicopter	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 2 With waivers/limitations	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	January 12, 2026
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	Yes	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	February 5, 2026
<b>Flight Time:</b>	7544 hours (Total, all aircraft), 628 hours (Total, this make and model), 7420 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 79 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 28 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

### Student pilot Information

<b>Certificate:</b>	Student	<b>Age:</b>	52, Male
<b>Airplane Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Seat Occupied:</b>	Right
<b>Other Aircraft Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Restraint Used:</b>	3-point
<b>Instrument Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Second Pilot Present:</b>	Yes
<b>Instructor Rating(s):</b>	None	<b>Toxicology Performed:</b>	
<b>Medical Certification:</b>	Class 2 With waivers/limitations	<b>Last FAA Medical Exam:</b>	February 18, 2025
<b>Occupational Pilot:</b>	No	<b>Last Flight Review or Equivalent:</b>	
<b>Flight Time:</b>	62 hours (Total, all aircraft), 34 hours (Total, this make and model), 15 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 11 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft)		

## Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

<b>Aircraft Make:</b>	Hughes	<b>Registration:</b>	N1020S
<b>Model/Series:</b>	269A Undesignated Series	<b>Aircraft Category:</b>	Helicopter
<b>Year of Manufacture:</b>	1966	<b>Amateur Built:</b>	
<b>Airworthiness Certificate:</b>	Normal	<b>Serial Number:</b>	26-0467
<b>Landing Gear Type:</b>	Skid	<b>Seats:</b>	2
<b>Date/Type of Last Inspection:</b>	August 17, 2025 Annual	<b>Certified Max Gross Wt.:</b>	1670 lbs
<b>Time Since Last Inspection:</b>		<b>Engines:</b>	1 Reciprocating
<b>Airframe Total Time:</b>	5618.9 Hrs at time of accident	<b>Engine Manufacturer:</b>	Lycoming
<b>ELT:</b>	Not installed	<b>Engine Model/Series:</b>	H10-360-B1A
<b>Registered Owner:</b>	Tactical Turtle LLC	<b>Rated Power:</b>	180 Horsepower
<b>Operator:</b>	Tactical Turtle LLC	<b>Operating Certificate(s) Held:</b>	None

## Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

<b>Conditions at Accident Site:</b>	Visual (VMC)	<b>Condition of Light:</b>	Day
<b>Observation Facility, Elevation:</b>	KRSP, 1847 ft msl	<b>Distance from Accident Site:</b>	14 Nautical Miles
<b>Observation Time:</b>	11:54 Local	<b>Direction from Accident Site:</b>	223°
<b>Lowest Cloud Condition:</b>	Clear	<b>Visibility:</b>	10 miles
<b>Lowest Ceiling:</b>	None	<b>Visibility (RVR):</b>	
<b>Wind Speed/Gusts:</b>	7 knots / None	<b>Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:</b>	Unknown / None
<b>Wind Direction:</b>	320°	<b>Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:</b>	Unknown / N/A
<b>Altimeter Setting:</b>	29.95 inches Hg	<b>Temperature/Dew Point:</b>	4°C / 0°C
<b>Precipitation and Obscuration:</b>	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
<b>Departure Point:</b>	Gettysburg, PA	<b>Type of Flight Plan Filed:</b>	None
<b>Destination:</b>	Gettysburg, PA (W05)	<b>Type of Clearance:</b>	None
<b>Departure Time:</b>		<b>Type of Airspace:</b>	Class G

## Airport Information

<b>Airport:</b>	None None	<b>Runway Surface Type:</b>	
<b>Airport Elevation:</b>	542 ft msl	<b>Runway Surface Condition:</b>	Soft
<b>Runway Used:</b>		<b>IFR Approach:</b>	None
<b>Runway Length/Width:</b>		<b>VFR Approach/Landing:</b>	None

## Wreckage and Impact Information

<b>Crew Injuries:</b>	2 Minor	<b>Aircraft Damage:</b>	Substantial
<b>Passenger Injuries:</b>		<b>Aircraft Fire:</b>	None
<b>Ground Injuries:</b>		<b>Aircraft Explosion:</b>	None
<b>Total Injuries:</b>	2 Minor	<b>Latitude, Longitude:</b>	39.81853,-77.25508

## Administrative Information

<b>Investigator In Charge (IIC):</b>	Monville, Timothy
<b>Additional Participating Persons:</b>	James E. Williams; FAA/FSDO; Harrisburg, PA
<b>Original Publish Date:</b>	June 25, 2026
<b>Last Revision Date:</b>	
<b>Investigation Class:</b>	<a href="#">Class 4</a>
<b>Note:</b>	The NTSB did not travel to the scene of this accident.
<b>Investigation Docket:</b>	<a href="https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=202481">https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=202481</a>

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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](#).