

SYNOPSIS

Aircraft Type and Registration: Hughes 369HS, G-CSPJ

No & Type of Engines: 1 Allison 250-C20 turboshaft engine

Date & Time (UTC): 19 July 2003 at 0849 hrs

Location: Cudham Lane South, Knockholt, Sevenoaks, Kent

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 Passengers - 2

Injuries: Crew - 1 (Fatal) Passengers - 2 (Fatal)

Nature of Damage: Aircraft destroyed

Commander's Licence: Private Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 39 years

Commander's Flying Experience: 112 hours (of which 8 were on type)
Last 90 days - 12 hours
Last 28 days - 3 hours

Information Source: AAIB Field Investigation

Synopsis

The helicopter was seen to depart normally in good weather conditions. Shortly after takeoff, as the pilot acknowledged a frequency change instruction, the helicopter was seen to enter a descending left turn from which it did not recover. Eye witnesses reported seeing the helicopter 'fishtailing' and emitting unusual noises, cyclical in nature, which they thought consistent with changes in engine power. The pilot made one more RTF transmission just before ground impact but this message did not declare the nature of any problem. The machine struck the ground in a 30° nose-down pitch attitude at about 80 kt forward speed, severely disrupting the structure and imparting fatal injuries to the family on board. There was no evidence of any pre-impact technical failure and the engine was running at impact. The reasons for the accident could not be determined. However, information recovered from a Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) or Flight Data Recorder (FDR) could have enabled the investigators to determine the likely cause but there was no requirement for either on this rented public-transport category helicopter and none was fitted. Two safety recommendations were made concerning the installation of new technology cockpit voice recorders to all public transport category aircraft.