

Aircraft type and registration: Bell 222 G-BLSY

No & Type of engines: 2 Lycoming LTS 101-650C3 turbine engines

Year of Manufacture: 1983

Date and time (UTC): 13 January 1987 at 1335 hrs

Location: Wickford, Basildon, Essex

Type of flight: Positioning

Persons on board: Crew — 1 Passengers — 5

Injuries: Crew — None Passengers — None

Nature of damage: Substantial to main and tail rotor blades and fuselage

Commander's Licence: Airline Transport Pilot's Licence (Helicopters)

Commander's Age: 41 years

Commander's Total Flying Experience: 7330 hours rotary wing (of which 191 were on type)

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot.

The aircraft was on a flight from Brooklands (Weybridge) to Wickford (near Basildon). The wind at the destination was from the north east at 10 knots, and there had been a recent snow shower on top of the existing snow covering of approximately 18 inches. An approach was made from the west, to a point alongside a helicopter parked on a helipad, in a field which was bounded by hedges and had a line of high tension cables 300 yards to the north (left of the approach path). The overshoot area ahead was clear of obstructions for 500 yards.

A constant angle approach was planned with the intention of making a 'zero-zero' touchdown in order to minimise the effect of rotor downwash on the snow. The approach was normal but, at a height of 10 feet just before touch-down, snow blown up by the rotor downwash enveloped the aircraft and all external visual references were lost. A go-around was initiated with a 2 degree nose down pitch attitude and 100% mast torque selected. The aircraft was allowed to yaw to the right away from the direction of the high tension cables, but no positive climb was achieved and external visual references were still obscured by the blowing snow. After approximately 10 seconds the aircraft pitched nose down, decelerated, and a sound like a multiple bird strike was heard. The pilot lowered the collective lever and shut down both engines. The pilot was wearing upper torso restraint which held on impact and there was no fire. The occupants were uninjured and evacuated the aircraft.

The aircraft had flown through a hedge on the south side of the field coming to rest upright in the adjacent field.