

No: 8/88

Ref: EW/G88/05/09

Category: 2c

Aircraft Type and Registration: Enstrom F-28C, G-BHAX

No & Type of Engines: 1 Lycoming HIO-360-E1AD piston engine

Year of Manufacture: 1979

Date and Time (UTC): 24 May 1988 at 1740 hrs

Location: Little Wedlock Farm, Tenby, Wales

Type of Flight: Positioning for pipeline inspection (Aerial Work)

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 Passengers - 1

Injuries: Crew - None Passengers - None

Nature of Damage: Minor damage to pitot tube and scorch mark on cabin nose

Commander's Licence: Commercial Pilot's Licence (Helicopter) with Instrument Rating

Commander's Age: 29 years

Commander's Total Flying Experience: 916 hours (of which 57 were on type)

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot, ATC reports and further enquiries by AAIB

The helicopter was en route from Swansea Airport, where it had refuelled, to Milford Haven prior to conducting a pipeline inspection when the pilot decided to land in a field due to adverse weather conditions. The pilot had obtained an actual report of weather conditions at Swansea at 1715 hrs which included visibility of 9000 metres in drizzle with total cloud cover at an estimated height of 700 feet. He was further advised by Swansea ATC that cloud cover had been as low as 200 to 300 feet in a visibility of 7000 metres. By 1728 hrs the pilot considered that conditions had improved sufficiently for him to re-position the helicopter to a more suitable site for a night stop.

He flew towards a field with which he was familiar and had obtained the owner's permission to use. He made a right hand orbit and observed the owner of the field standing facing into wind. He also noticed power lines on the western side of the field as he approached it from the north east. At a late stage in the approach, his helicopter contacted an 11 kV power line which ran across the northern part of the field and at an oblique angle to the approach path.

The pilot reported that, on contacting the wires, there was a white flash but he was able to complete a safe landing in the field. He also reports that he experienced difficulty in seeing the power line by virtue of its neutral colouring and the obscuration of the canopy which was covered in moisture from the prevailing drizzle. This was the pilot's first landing at the site. The pilot and his passenger, who was an experienced observer, escaped injury and there was no fire.