

Bell 206B, G-OBAY

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Aircraft Type and Registration: Bell 206B, G-OBAY

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

Year of Manufacture: 1967

Date & Time (UTC): 5 January 2001 at 0750 hrs

Location: Lake Windermere

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 - Passengers - None

Injuries: Crew - None - Passengers - N/A

Nature of Damage: Damaged beyond economic repair

Commander's Licence: Airline Transport Pilot's Licence (Helicopters) with Instructor's Rating

Commander's Age: 61 years

Commander's Flying Experience: 9,263 hours (of which 1,266 were on type)

Last 90 days - 44 hours

Last 28 days - 10 hours

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The pilot departed from Chorley, Lancashire in order to pick up the owner of the helicopter from his private residence situated by the shore of Lake Windermere. The forecast weather conditions were for calm winds, good visibility, no significant weather, temperature +2°C and a dewpoint +3°C.

Initially the helicopter flew at 1,500 feet in clear conditions descending to 1,000 feet within 2 miles of the landing site. The site, which was an open ended walled garden situated on the east side of the lake shore, allowed only for approaches towards the east or departures to the west over the lake surface. The pilot had flown into the site on many occasions and had landed there two days previously.

The helicopter arrived to the north of the landing site heading west which required the pilot to make a descending left turn for an approach to the east. During the turn the pilot reported that the visibility deteriorated, he lost all depth perception and, being distracted by having to adjust the

position of an external landing light, failed to appreciate his rate of descent. As he turned onto finals, at approximately 700 metres from the shore, the helicopter struck the water in a flat and level attitude.

The pilot who was wearing a four-point harness, exited the helicopter, via the left door, as it sank. The water temperature was between +3°C to +5°C and it took him some 45 minutes to swim to shore by which time he was suffering from mild hypothermia. He was later taken by ambulance to hospital where, after an overnight stay under observation, he was released.

The pilot assessed the cause of the accident as a loss of depth perception during a descent over a still dark lake surface in poor visibility and light conditions. The need to adjust the external landing light further added to his distraction.