

SA341G Gazelle 1, N123TY

AAIB Bulletin No: 2/99 Ref: EW/G98/11/17 Category: 2.3

Aircraft Type and Registration: SA341G Gazelle 1, N123TY

No & Type of Engines: 1 Astazou 3A turboshaft engine

Year of Manufacture: 1975

Date & Time (UTC): 28 November 1998 at 1000 hrs

Location: West Harlsey, Northallerton, Yorkshire

Type of Flight: Private

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 - Passengers - 3

Injuries: Crew - Minor - Passengers - 3 Minor

Nature of Damage: Helicopter destroyed

Commander's Licence: Private Pilot's Licence (Helicopters)

Commander's Age: 40 years

Commander's Flying Experience: 71 hours (of which 31 were on type)

Last 90 days - 19 hours

Last 28 days - 4 hours

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The pilot intended to fly from a private landing site in Hartlepool to Weybridge in Surrey with a refuelling stop at Gamston. He had obtained a meteorological forecast the day before the accident which indicated that the cloudbase would be 2,500 feet falling to 1,800 feet in showers. The METFORM 215 issued by the Meteorological Office at 0314 hrs on 28 November 1998 and valid from 0600 hrs to 1200 hrs indicated that, at 0900 hrs, there would be a cold front lying from just West of Hartlepool to the Isle of Wight and moving east at 15 kt. The weather associated with this front was forecast to include a general visibility of 10 km in rain with a cloudbase of 1,000 feet occasionally falling to 500 feet with isolated patches down to 200 feet to the east of the front. The lower cloudbases would be accompanied by reduced visibility down to 1,500 metres with cloud on the hills. A meteorological aftercast obtained from the Meteorological Office indicated that there was good agreement between the forecast and the actual conditions at the time of the accident.

After take off, the pilot obtained a Flight Information Service from Teesside ATC and set heading for Gamston. On approaching the Cleveland Hills, he realised that the cloudbase was lower than forecast the previous day and he informed Teesside that he would be routing further to the west to fly through a gap in the hills. On approaching the gap, the pilot observed that the cloud was even lower and advised Teesside that he would be returning to Hartlepool. The pilot stated that he then commenced a right hand turn away from the high ground during which he entered cloud and lost sight of the ground. The ATC controller reports that the pilot transmitted that he was "850 feet on instruments". Having entered cloud the pilot then commenced a descent and regained visual contact with the ground at about 50 feet. Despite flaring the aircraft and applying power, he was unable to prevent the helicopter from impacting with the ground. Despite the severe damage caused to the helicopter by the impact, the pilot and his three passengers were able to evacuate with only minor injuries.

Helicopter pilots holding a Private Pilot's Licence endorsed for a single engine type are required to conduct flights clear of cloud and in sight of the surface at all times at the same time complying with the Rules of the Air relating to low flying. They are neither trained nor required to demonstrate their ability to fly by sole reference to flight instruments.