

No: 10/88

Ref: EW/C1082

Category: 2c

**Aircraft Type and Registration:** Agusta Bell 206B Jet Ranger, G-RODS

**No & Type of Engines:** 1 Allison 250-C2 turbine engine

**Year of Manufacture:** 1975

**Date and Time (UTC):** 29 August 1988 at 1455 hrs

**Location:** Uffington, near Swindon, Wiltshire

**Type of Flight:** Revenue pleasure flight

**Persons on Board:** Crew - 1                      Passengers - 5

**Injuries:** Crew - None                      Passengers - 1 (Serious)

**Nature of Damage:** Possible stressing of tail rotor

**Commander's Licence:** Air Transport Pilot's Licence (Helicopters)

**Commander's Age:** 31 years

**Commander's Total Flying Experience:** 2880 hours (of which 908 were on type)

**Information Source:** AAIB Field Investigation

The helicopter was giving pleasure flights from a clear area at one end of a showground, close to a large enclosure where a lawnmower racing event was taking place. The helicopter operating area was roped off, and passengers waiting to fly queued at a gap in the rope, which served as a 'gate' and was the only free access to the landing site. The operating company had complied with the standard requirements for safety and had provided three people to look after the ground organisation. In this report these ground crew are referred to as GC1, GC2 and GC3.

GC1 was the senior member of the party and, with GC2, was responsible for briefing passengers, escorting them to the helicopter and strapping them in. These two ground crew worked for most of the time within the helicopter operating area. GC3 looked after the safety equipment, took fares from intending passengers and organised them into groups of four. GC3 also had to ensure that the next group to fly was positioned near but not beyond the gate. Before the helicopter landed from its previous flight, GC1 and GC2 would brief the next group on safety and decide who was to occupy the front seat. When it landed, it positioned itself with its nose towards the gate and sat on the ground with its rotors turning. GC1 and GC2 would then assist the passengers from the helicopter and see them safely through the gate before escorting the next passengers to the helicopter and strapping them into their seats. Each normally escorted two passengers, with GC1 taking two to the left side of the helicopter and GC2 taking the other two to the right side. The ground party were trained to position themselves just aft of the doors to make sure that passengers could not approach the area of the tail rotor when they were approaching or leaving the helicopter.

Near the gate were two people, both female, only one of whom intended to take a pleasure flight. The one who intended to fly paid her fare to GC3 and waited to be included in a passenger load. In due course she was told by GC3 to join a family group consisting of the father, mother, a small child and a seventeen month old baby. GC3 stated that she had confirmed with GC1 that it was permissible for the baby to be carried on her mother's knee in the aircraft and had therefore formed a load of five people, including the baby. She also said that she believed she had made it quite clear to the additional passenger that she was to stand with this family group, although the additional passenger later said that she remembered only being told to stand near the gate.

When the helicopter landed and passengers had disembarked, GC1 and GC2 took only the family group to the helicopter, believing it to be a complete passenger load. On this occasion, GC1 took only the male passenger to the left side to install him in the front left seat. GC2 took the mother and the two children to the right side passenger door. The additional passenger was left standing by the gate. GC3 said later that she saw the additional passenger hesitate at the gate and told her to go forward to but not beyond GC2, who was at that time strapping in the mother and the two children.

Meantime, GC1 had installed the father in the front left seat and positioned herself at the rear left door to help strap in the rest of the family. The additional passenger went forward and stood for a short time behind GC2 but neither GC1 nor GC2 were aware of her presence there. It then appeared to this passenger that she could not readily board the helicopter from the right side but that there was room for her on the rear seat if she boarded from the left side. Ducking her head, she moved towards the tail of the aircraft. GC3 saw this movement and shouted to her to stop but her voice was drowned by the noise of the helicopter engine and the nearby lawnmower racing. As GC3 ran towards her, the passenger rounded the tail, momentarily straightened up and was struck on the outer edge of the left shoulder by both blades of the tail rotor. The pilot and GC1 felt a vibration pass through the aircraft and looked behind to see the passenger on the ground near the tail. He immediately shut down the engine.