

SERIOUS INCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	MBB-BK 117 D-2 EC145, G-HEMC	
No & Type of Engines:	2 Turbomeca Arriel 2E turboshaft engines	
Year of Manufacture:	2014 (Serial no: 20012)	
Date & Time (UTC):	15 December 2018 at 0026 hrs	
Location:	Near Hollesley, Suffolk	
Type of Flight:	Commercial Air Transport	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 2	Passengers - None
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage:	Nil	
Commander's Licence:	Airline Transport Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	37 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	3,954 hours (of which 464 were on type) Last 90 days - 62 hours Last 28 days - 24 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

Synopsis

Whilst repositioning to land during a Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) operation at night, the aircraft struck a wire. No damage was caused. Despite a reconnaissance from the air and on foot, the presence of the wire was not known to the crew.

History of the flight

The aircraft was operating a HEMS flight in a rural area at night to collect and transfer a patient to hospital. It was crewed by two pilots. The weather at the time was good, with visibility reported to be in excess of 10 km and a broken cloudbase of 3,500 ft. The crew identified a large field in which to land. After carrying out an airborne check of its suitability, they made an uneventful approach to the field, then hover taxied across to their selected landing site.

There was then a request by the medical team on the ground to reposition the aircraft to a different landing site, in the same field, to assist in loading the patient. The medical team reported there were some wires running along a road near the new landing site, so a check was carried out by one of the pilots on foot with the aid of a powerful torch. The wires were located, but there was no evidence of any further wires in the vicinity. The crew also checked an electronic map carried on the aircraft which had the position of powerlines (but not telegraph lines) overlaid on it, which again showed no other wires in the field.

The helicopter was then re-positioned to the new landing site, using the steerable landing light to check for obstacles as it taxied. The pilot reported the aircraft felt slightly unstable as he attempted to touchdown at the new landing site, so he repositioned the aircraft a short distance before landing and shutting down the engines.

The aircraft commander reported that on exiting the aircraft a single telegraph wire was found hooked over the radio antenna on the rear of the aircraft's tail. A check of the aircraft with the torch found no evidence of any damage. The telegraph wire was still intact and had no obvious damage from its contact with the aircraft. It had been pulled from a post positioned in the field which had not been seen, either during the obstacle check on foot, or whilst the aircraft was being taxied across the field.

As a precaution, the patient was transferred by road and the helicopter flown back to its base for a further inspection to be carried out. Again, no damage was found and there was no sign of any impact point with the wire.

Comment

The incident highlights the difficulty in seeing wires during such operations, despite careful reconnaissance both from the air and on the ground. Several technical solutions have been developed to assist in locating wires, but the issue remains a technical challenge. The operator is re-examining the suitability of some of these systems and is planning to develop an overlay map containing telegraph wires, for their area of operation, as such a system does not currently exist.